

**AN EXPLORATION OF POSTSTRUCTURALIST
DISCURSIVE CRITIQUE AND ITS IMPLICATION
FOR A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISCOURSE
ON PORNOGRAPHY**

by

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SUMMARY

This study explores the implications of the post-structuralist discursive theories for a new approach to the study of communication. Drawing on the theories of discourse developed by Foucault and Bourdieu, the study suggests a theoretical framework for a critical analysis of discursive practices. The framework is applied to the analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa. The application of the theoretical framework illustrates the utility of such a framework as a method for analysis and critique of discourse and provides insights into the controversy about pornography. The implication of the discursive theories for the study of communication are explored.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For once to pose the questions here with a *hammer* and ... that which would like to stay silent *has to become audible*.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1978:21)

1.1 THE TOPIC AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

A problem for thought, philosophical and scientific theorising and study appears, disappears or changes as a result of a new vocabulary that is chosen to be used (cf. Rorty 1980:xxiii). Likewise, a *social problem* facing a society "exists primarily in terms of how it is defined and conceived in a society" (Blumer 1971:300). Stated differently, a problem is what people say it is, rather than any objective phenomenon or condition in reality, for example, very often we do not recognise a problem or a phenomenon until it has acquired a *name* and signification. To use the words of Max Weber (1977:31), a problem is "a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance". What is implied by the foregoing assertions is the assumption that a problem is constructed in a process of communication. According to McKeon (in Cooper 1984:1), if we were to consider that the problems of an age arise in what is said - in the communications of the age - it stands to reason that they cannot be formulated accurately or effectively without taking into account how they arise or in what context they are stated. Therefore, the first task in confronting the study of a problem is to question the vocabulary, discourse and patterns of communication in which it is stated before the problem itself can be considered seriously (cf. Rorty 1980:xxiii).

This study is motivated by the assumption that underlies the foregoing discussion, namely that a problem confronting a society is constructed in the communication of the society. In order to understand such a problem, both the communication process and the social context in which such a problem is constructed need to be analysed.

When confronted with the task of analysing discourse and communication, one encounters numerous traditional theoretical approaches and methods of analysis from which an arbitrary selection must be made. For example, two alternative dominant paradigms for conceptualising communication within society are provided by functionalism and critical theory (cf. Lyotard 1984:11-14), while two broad trends and methods for the analysis of communication have dominated the social sciences and disciplines during this century: interpretation and formalisation - that is, hermeneutics (and varieties of phenomenology) and structuralism (cf. Foucault 1989a:299).

However, these approaches and methods of analysis are problematic. In order to study communication in society, the researcher is first forced to conceptualise what model of society to adopt and what role communication should have in such a society. From these perspectives, communication is conceptualised as existing apart of society; that is to say that it is assumed that first there is an independent social reality and then there is communication about it (cf. Williams 1979:11). Thus, from the perspectives offered by the dominant paradigms, either one adopts the model of homogeneous society provided by functionalism, or alternatively one adopts the model of intrinsic duality of society as provided by critical theory. The choice is difficult and arbitrary, while contemporary society does not resemble any of these models (cf. Lyotard 1984:11-14).

Contemporary society and its culture have undergone considerable changes and have become a *media society* or a *postmodern society* (cf. Jameson 1984:vii). A characteristic of contemporary society is the centrality of communication both as a reality and as an issue of social and political concern (cf. Lyotard 1984:16). Therefore, when conceptualising communication in society,

it would be superficial to reduce its significance to the traditional alternative between manipulatory speech and unilateral transmission of messages on the one hand, and free expression and dialogue on the other (Lyotard 1984:16).

The alternative approaches of structuralism and hermeneutics conceptualise society as a form of communication. From these perspectives "the whole of culture is signification and communication and that humanity and society exist only when communicative and significative relationships are established" (Eco 1979:22). Both communication and society can be considered as systems of signs and meanings, that may either be described in their formal relationships and rules of operation or interpreted for their deep and hidden meanings. However, the two interpretative perspectives perform an abstraction by reducing all human existence, action and experience as if it were a text made only for reading. Such a reduction disregards the fact that communication is also a practical social action and involves relations of power. Thus these perspectives are still based on the dualistic epistemology that they cannot transcend while their exclusive emphasis on the search for meaning has proved to be a hindrance (cf. Sontag 1967:14; Wuthnow 1987:22). In short, phenomenology, structuralism and hermeneutics have not lived up to their self-proclaimed expectations (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xvii)¹.

The changing society and new modes of communication demand new theoretical approaches to communication (cf. Grossberg 1982:84; McCormack 1987; Penman 1988; Littlejohn 1989:284). The demand for new approaches to communication "is intensified by recent calls for radically new models of communication to deal with new technological possibilities and new political realities" (Grossberg 1982:84). Traditional communication theory is challenged and doubts are raised about its basic assumptions which are in need of reconsideration (cf. Sless 1986). The fact is, that

the world in which we live may have changed in many ways, but the concepts and modes of analysis in terms of which we have continued to make sense of the present have remained deeply rooted in the nineteenth-century thought (Smart 1987:1).

¹ A full discussion and critique of structuralism and hermeneutics is provided in Chapter 2. See also the brief discussion on the problems of the various theoretical approaches in 1.3.1 below.

According to Grossberg (1982:83), while communication is considered to be a grounding for accounts of all other aspects of human life, the concept of communication itself remains largely unquestioned. Mainstream communication theory is characterised by parochialism and the perpetuation of old and discarded communication models that are inadequate for the explication of the new social realities (cf. McCormack 1987:46).

Reviewing the state of theory and research in mass communication, Budd and Ruben (1979:11-12) observe that traditional thinking has restricted understanding of communication and prevented new approaches from emerging. The result is that research is in a rut, and theory "is frequently reduced to a set of loosely strung platitudes, aphorisms, and proclamations which seem to gain credence and acceptability ... through age and repetition" (Budd & Ruben 1979:10).

While some attempts are made, a new paradigm is not yet fully emergent (cf. Littlejohn 1989:284). However, a new approach is also effectively blocked because of the inability of communication scholars to re-examine basic assumptions (cf. Grossberg 1982:83). Basic assumptions and old research paradigms are preserved, not because they provide better insight into the objects of study but because of ideological commitments to the institutional legitimation of communication science as a discipline. As a result the history of communication science has been "one of simultaneous institutional success and intellectual bankruptcy" (Sperber & Wilson in Wilson 1993:137).

The problem of communication studies is found in their traditional epistemological framework. It is assumed that communication theory and research should be based on the anthropological assumption that considers human beings as possessing a fixed universal truth (cf. Arnold & Frandsen 1984:3; Chomsky in Rabinow 1986:3; Jansen 1989:ix-x; Jansen & Steinberg 1991:3; Mouton & Marais 1988:12). The basic assumptions of communication theory are based on the concepts of individualism, subjectivism, intentionality and universality of communication. However, such assumptions reflect the ideology of humanism rather than universal truths (cf. Lannamann 1991:198).

As ideological frames of current ... communication inquiry, individualism, subjectivism, intentionality, and ahistoricism each contribute to the reification of contemporary thought. To the extent that these ideological frames remain the unquestioned structures ... the field affirms existing power relations and participate in their reproduction. The result of this tacit affirmation is an inherently conservative form of communication scholarship (Lannamann 1991:198).

A new emerging contemporary theoretical framework is derived from the writings of various French post-structuralists and in particular from the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu. These theorists, which are grouped under the *discursive approach*, are identified by various scholars as providing an alternative approach to the study of society, culture and communication (cf. Barrett 1991:160-161; Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xiii; Grossberg 1979:222; Fraser 1992:51; Megill 1987:256; Sholle 1988:35; Smart 1987:73). The discursive approach is discussed in Chapter 2.

Foucault had a profound impact on virtually every field in the humanities and the social sciences. One of his most valuable contributions has been to show the link between discourse, power, truth and knowledge and points out how power is an integral aspect of personal and social life (cf. Best & Kellner 1991:68-69). For communication theory, Foucault provides a contemporary interpretative framework able to deal with the new social and communicational realities (cf. Poster 1984:164; Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xiii). The main theme of Bourdieu's work - who has produced a new and original social theory - is an attempt to reintegrate the economic and cultural dimensions of society. Bourdieu's work on discourse and power (Bourdieu 1977b), social analysis of knowledge (Bourdieu 1983) and a theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977a; Bourdieu 1990), has new insight for communication theory.

While the post-structuralist theories are gaining recognition within the social science, they have also come in for criticism. The post-structuralist challenge to the accepted epistemology is criticised as being a relativist and anti-scientific assault on scientific objectivity, truth and reason. The post-structuralists are also accused of turning their theory into political activity (cf. Harland 1988:3). There is also controversy about Foucault's theoretical position because of the difficulty of classifying his work within the intellectual and disciplinary divisions and

he is criticised for not providing a comprehensive and unified theory and method of social analysis (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983; Kurzweil 1980:221-223; Megill 1987:227-232; Sheridan 1986:1-2). Bourdieu has been criticised for his reliance on Marxist insights for the study of discourse and his emphasis on the formal aspects of language and neglect of its content (cf. Thompson 1990:64-65).

The specific research problem for this study is whether the *discursive approach* can be used as an alternative theoretical framework for a critical analysis of communication. In order to answer this question, two areas need to be addressed:

- (1) The theoretical framework and method of analysis of the post-structuralist *discursive approach* need to be explored and explained.
- (2) In order to explore the value and usefulness of the theoretical framework it needs be applied to the analysis of a contemporary social problem. For the purpose of this study, the discourse on pornography is analysed.

1.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Discursive analysis is essentially a descriptive and diagnostic method.

Briefly defined, the discursive approach studies communication practices (discussed in Chapter 2). However, communication is not conceptualised according to the accepted information model of communicator-message/medium-recipient because communication is more than the transmission of information, or sets of signs with syntactical organisation and semantic correlation. Discursive analysis is not limited to the customary elements of linguistics, semantics and grammar, nor to basic units such as sentences or propositions. Communication is more than the contents of messages because it is not simply a mirror reflection of some unmediated reality (cf. Finlay 1987:12-13). As studies of oratory and rhetoric have already shown, communication involves more than the manifest contents, information and meaning of the messages. Communication also involves more than messages transmitted from communicator to recipient. Communication involves the actual social

construction of the participants themselves and the construction of their society (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:79-80).

The complexity of communication is captured by the discursive approach that conceptualises communication as *discourse*. Discourse is language practice which is a particular form of social practice of primary importance in society.

According to Eco (1979:158), communication always takes place within a larger framework of material, economic, biological and physical conditions. To communicate means that one is concerned with extra-semiotic circumstances (cf. Eco 1979:158). From this perspective communication can be conceptualised as "communicative praxis" (Schrag 1986:17-31), or "discursive practice" (Foucault 1986:46).

A discursive analysis and critique studies the way in which objects and ideas are spoken about and uncovers the social rules by which particular statements are made while others are excluded, and the institutions that control the production and circulation of discourse.

Discursive analysis

attempts to uncover the rules and procedures which subtend and legitimate the things we say and believe. It attempts to demonstrate not what a statement means, though that is not unimportant, but rather why that statement was produced, when it was, and as it was. It holds that if we can understand why and how statements are produced, we will have gained a new insight into their meaning (Finlay 1987:3).

The importance of uncovering the rules of social discourse is derived from the fact that what people say is not arbitrary but governed by social rules. Discursive analysis attempts to describe such rules and systems of social relations.

1.3 APPLICATION OF DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS: A CASE STUDY OF THE DISCOURSE ON PORNOGRAPHY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The discourse on pornography was selected for a case study because pornography is considered a significant and problematic contemporary social problem that poses a challenge to communication theory.

The problem of pornography is described as a *paradox* (Randall 1989:ix), or *the puzzle of pornography* (Gillmor 1965:365), which is a site of contradictions in contemporary culture (cf. Stewart 1988:162).

Since the 1950s there has been a growing interest in pornography. The production, circulation and consumption of pornography have increased steadily to become, according to some critics, an international multi-billion-dollar industry that employs many people (cf. Dworkin 1984:201; Malamuth & Donnerstein 1984:xv; Soble 1986:3). With the increased availability and public visibility of pornography, it has also increasingly become a topic of heated public debate and controversy. All in all, pornography and the controversy and debate surrounding it have become topics of mass media appeal.

However, despite the already large and ever-increasing volume of scholarly and popular writing, no clarity seems to emerge about pornography. The plethora of studies and profusion of debates have generated much passion but contributed very little to the understanding of the issue (cf. Paden 1984:17). Not only is the phenomena *one of the most controversial topics of our time* (Gorman 1988:11), but so too is the study of pornography because it immerses the researcher into a battle-field of controversy and dispute from the outset. The study of pornography raises important issues about the nature of any social enquiry and social critique, as it highlights "the impossibility of constructing a metadiscourse on pornography once we recognize the interested nature of all discursive practices. We cannot transcend the pornography debate, for we are in it" (Stewart 1988:163). In short, the puzzle of pornography subsists in its being a familiar, yet inaccessible object; it seems to be one of the "unanswered questions that our culture presents to itself" (Ellis 1980:81), a question that has persisted over almost half a century and just won't go away (cf. Segal 1992:1).

In order to find answers to what is at issue, scholars have suggested that one should examine the **debate** on pornography (cf. Jarvie 1987:257), or the **discourse** on pornography (cf. Paden 1984:19). It is in discourse that pornography and the discourse on pornography are interlinked.

The word *pornography* designates the representations and writing about sexuality and not *real-life sex* itself (cf. Kappeler 1986:2). Pornography is essentially a work of art, literary or visual fiction that "makes important and open use of sexual activity as its subject matter" (Charney 1981:5). In other words, it is speech and communication (cf. Anderson 1987:144), and "a mode of discourse, a way of thinking, talking and depicting sexual practices" (McCormack 1989:331).

It is as discourse that both pornography and the debate on pornography have their similarities. This is seen from the fact that a study of pornography, such as the report by the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, is also considered to be pornography (cf. Huer 1987:9; Stewart 1988). Pornography and the debate on pornography may possibly share the same underlying logic as they are the product of the same culture (cf. Stewart 1988:162-163).

Both pornography and the debate on pornography are industries producing discourse in the form of texts. The various sciences, and the legal, philosophical, religious and political institutions involved in the debate on pornography are also discourses or language games. The production of discourse on pornography is one of the conditions of production of works of pornography itself, as no cultural product exists by itself (cf. Bourdieu 1983:317).

Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it, which is thus designated as worthy object of legitimate discourse ... and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. Every critic declares not only his judgement of the work but also his claim to the right to talk about it and judge it (Bourdieu 1983:317).

Therefore, pornography as a problem could only exist as discourse and in discourse.

Further, the study of the discourse on pornography is also justified from a practical consideration: the research for this study was conducted in South Africa where pornography, for all practical purposes, is non-existent as it is not legally available, although a discourse on pornography does exist.

The study of discourse is essentially a study of communication. However, the study of discourse on pornography from a communicological perspective presents some basic problems: (1) there is a general lack of research from communication scholars, and (2) pornography itself challenges the basic assumptions of traditional communication theory. As a result there is a need to provide an alternative theoretical framework and method of analysis within communication theory because the debate on pornography and other contemporary issues cannot be discussed "within the established vocabularies of contemporary intellectual discourse" (cf. Jansen 1988:3).

1.3.1 Communication scholarship and the study of pornography

Rosenfield (1973:413) expresses surprise that while pornography is widely available, communication scholars have no interest in the phenomenon.

It strikes me as odd that students of persuasion, who claim an interest in messages as they affect people, should have maintained a nearly complete silence on the clearest instance of their subject, pornography ... Examination of persuasive messages remain incomplete insofar as they fail to acknowledge pornography's relation to other "public address" (Rosenfield 1973:413).

Rosenfield (1973:417) points out that pornography is a "paradigmatic rhetorical" event as it exerts impact on the feelings, imagination, motives and physiology of the recipient, and yet communication scholars have largely ignored its study.

Fourteen years after Rosenfield's (1973) plea for research, another communication scholar observes that

communication scholars have been remarkably, indeed, conspicuously silent in the public debates about pornography research and public policy. Is it

because we have some doubts in our minds about our own models of media effects? Or is it some "failure of nerve" in a conservative political environment? (McCormack 1987:46).

McCormack's observations highlight the *double trouble* of pornography and communication scholarship. As a communication phenomenon, pornography has its own specific characteristic that challenges the basic traditional concept of communication. Pornographic communication cannot be described in terms of the usual sender-message-receiver model of communication (cf. Jarvie 1987:272). Pornography is described as

a 'short-circuiting model of mass communication', since it by-passed the usual sender-receiver model and concentrated instead on the fact of the message being controversial and not on the content of the message. Media controversy transcends the particulars of controversial messages, and involves many more persons than were exposed to the message (Jarvie 1987:272).

Characteristic of the debate on pornography is the fact that the participants seem as if they are talking in *different languages*: "everyone seems to be talking about something different, although, each thinks that their point of view is obvious, transparent, self-evidently right" (Brown 1990:132).

A hermeneutic interpretation of the meaning that people have of pornography may be considered as one method for the analysis of the debate. However, though such an enterprise will provide a wide variety of possible meaning, we cannot be sure that these are all the interpretations of the meaning of pornography and whether the same meanings will be there tomorrow. Interpretation of subjective meanings of pornography are also futile because many surveys of public opinion show that people's opinion is not really subjective but is selected from readily available meanings and interpretations. Essentially people give voice to current conflicts between institutional practices and ideological positions (cf. Cottle *et al.* 1989:322).

A structural analysis will uncover the *deep* meanings of pornography and show that conflicting attitudes towards pornography adopted by liberals and conservatives are essentially similar (cf. Paden 1984:35). However, once a deep meaning of pornography is

uncovered it is still not possible to claim that this is the *real* meaning, nor does such an approach tell why pornography is a problem in the first place.

The debate on pornography is paradoxical, filled with contradictions and nonsense. It would be pointless to examine the contents and meanings of what is said or consider the logic and truth of the various arguments presented for or against pornography. The debates on pornography are characterised by illogic and inconsistent arguments (cf. Schachter 1988:94)². Rational arguments, logic and proof are precisely the things that are ignored while misrepresentations, contradictions and evasions are pervasive (cf. Anderson 1987:145-146; McCormack 1988:249). Arguments are accepted or rejected not because they are true or false but are based on faith alone (cf. McCormack 1988:494). The debate resembles a conflict between different systems of belief whereby the various groups seem to speak past each other in "an endless cycle of assertions" (Kimmel 1991:306).

The first task is to *demythologise* or demystify the discourse, as Nietzsche (1978:21) suggests "for once to pose questions here with a hammer". According to Jarvie (1987:257), views regarding pornography resemble a system of beliefs and such a system cannot be understood through its own concepts. Rather, one needs to step outside such a system and consider its ideas and concepts in terms other than those provided by the debate itself (cf. Jarvie 1987:257). As Mauss (in Bourdieu 1969:113) points out about the problem in approaching a system of beliefs:

For the judgments and arguments of witchcraft [or pornography] to have any validity they must have a principle which cannot be submitted to examination. One may discuss whether the mana is present in such and such a place or not, but one does not question its existence.

The problem is that such a system provides its own network of questions and compulsory themes and concepts that define the debate and conflict between doctrines and mask the participants themselves (cf. Bourdieu 1969:116).

² See Chapter 3 for a review of the current debate on pornography.

Thus, if the contents of the debate on pornography seem paradoxical, this is because we fail to consider its form and function. What is needed, is to ask different questions of the debate on pornography. Instead of asking what pornography is, the questions to ask should be: where, how and why does discourse on pornography flourish? What is at stake in such debate? Who is addressed by such debate and how? In other words, the question is not what the debate on pornography means but *what it does*. The question most often asked about pornography, for example, is *where does one draw the line* and introduce censorship (cf. Cline 1974:x). Instead, we should rather ask: Who wants to draw such a line and why? (cf. Kaplan 1955:546).

It is in fact the emphasis on *meaning* and interpretation that has contributed to the mystification of the debate on pornography. The search for meaning undertaken by the disciplines and human science has been a hindrance (cf. Wuthnow 1987:22). Interpretation attempts to look beyond the texts, discourses and communication to find some *deeper meanings*. However, at best, interpretations are speculative guesses. The only things available to study are the discourses themselves. When we refuse to interpret and take the debate as discourse it becomes transparent. According to Foucault (Deleuze 1988:54), everything is always said in the discourses of every historical age. Each historical age and each society "articulates perfectly the most cynical elements of its politics, or the rawest element of its sexuality" (Deleuze 1988:54). In fact, nothing is ever a secret or concealed in what is said by the different discourses, however, the problem is that one needs to know how to read it. Such a way of "reading" is provided by the post-structuralist theories of discourse discussed in Chapter 2.

1.4 COMPOSITION OF THE STUDY

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical assumptions of the post-structuralist *discursive approach* derived mainly from the work of Foucault and Bourdieu. A strategic model for the analysis of discourse is developed.

Chapter 3 demonstrates the application of the strategic model for discursive analysis by applying it to a case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa. The discourse

on pornography is located in historical context and its structure and functions are described and analysed.

Chapter 4 draws conclusions about the theoretical framework and method of discursive analysis, its application to the case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa and the implications of the discursive approach for the study of communication.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY OF DISCURSIVE PRACTICE AND THE PRACTICE OF DISCURSIVE THEORY

Theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice.

Michel Foucault (1988a:208)

Critique ... should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn't have to lay down the law for the law. It isn't a stage in a programming. It is a challenge directed to what is.

Michel Foucault (1991:84)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to explicate a theoretical framework for a critical analysis of discourse based on the post-structuralist theories of Foucault and Bourdieu. Such a theoretical framework, emerging under the name of *discursive approach* provides insight into the central importance of discourse and its relationship to social power and knowledge. As is pointed out in Chapter 1, an understanding of the nature of discourse and its functioning in society is necessary in order to gain an understanding of society and its contemporary problems.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part provides an overview of the structuralist and post-structuralist theoretical approaches to the understanding and study of language and the way these approaches provide new insights into the understanding of man

and society. The second part of this chapter explains the post-structuralist *discursive approach* and concludes by outlining a theoretical framework for the study of social discourse.

2.2 THE LINGUISTIC REVOLUTION OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

One of the most significant intellectual developments of the twentieth century has been the *linguistic revolution* or the *linguistic turn* of the humanities and social sciences (cf. Eagleton 1983:60). For these disciplines and sciences the study and understanding of the working of language have become the central problem (cf. De Beer 1991:142) or a *universal problematic* (cf. Derrida 1970:249; 1978:6)¹, because language provides the key to understanding all human and social phenomena. The primary importance of language² lies in the fact that no reality or social phenomena can be grasped without recourse to a conceptual linguistic framework that provides the means for representing such reality and its signification to the human mind (cf. Dallmayr & McCarthy 1977:7; Rorty 1980:3).

The concern with language as a topic for study is not only a matter of philosophical contemplation. In contemporary society actual social practices increasingly have come to rely on circulation of symbolic forms, language and communication. Of course, every society is and has always been dependent to a large extent on the production and circulation of symbols such as gestures, actions, works of art and knowledge, but in modern society these forms have taken on primary importance (cf. Thompson 1992:1).

The development of the mass media since the nineteenth century, and progress in methods of communication such as photography, radio and television culminated in what is today known as the *communication explosion* (cf. Agee *et al.* 1988:4). The rapid expansion of the institutions of mass communication, increased computerisation, and the introduction of new

¹ The distinction between a *problematic* and a *problem* was introduced by Althusser. The concept "problematic" implies, according to Althusser, a sort of a framework that allows one to formulate new questions or problems for investigation (cf. Visker 1990:444). Language is thus a problematic that provides such a framework and is also the problem being investigated within such a framework.

² The concept "language" is used not only to refer to natural language but also designates any system of signs (*langue*) used for communication.

media technologies resulted in fundamental social and cultural changes during the second part of the twentieth century (cf. Best & Kellner 1991:302). Consequently, the most advanced Western societies have been transformed to *post-industrial* societies and their cultures have entered the *post-modern* stage (cf. Jameson 1984:vii; Lyotard 1984:3).

The implications of the communication revolution and the subsequent social and cultural changes are that the reality of contemporary social existence has been transformed and is now *discursive or communicational*. Dominant economic practices have shifted from the production of material goods to the production of symbolic goods (cf. Finlay-Pelinski 1982:257-259). Economic activity in modern societies has become almost entirely dependent on communication. More profoundly, the production and circulation of *symbolic goods*, information and knowledge have become in themselves the principle force of economic production and are valuable commodities in their own right. The production and transfer of information are increasingly becoming a major stake in the international competition for power (cf. Lyotard 1984:5).

Characteristically, the post-industrial society has become an *information society*, whereby communication is a *heavy industry* (Eco 1987:135) producing signs, symbols and messages for exchange and consumption. These signs and symbols have ceased to be merely representations of, or references to, any reality but are produced, exchanged and consumed in their own right, as signs and symbols and nothing else (cf. Baudrillard in Harland 1988:182). According to Lash (1990:4-5), this implies a new post-modern *regime of signification*, by which the traditional relationship between signifiers, signifieds and referent is eroded and the signifiers now also function as their own referents (cf. Lash 1990:194-195). In other words, in contemporary society, signs and images are consumed more eagerly than are real objects. Thus in contemporary society, for the first time since the Renaissance, symbolic or cultural practices have been liberated from direct servitude and subordination to religious, social, economic and political interest and can claim to have achieved autonomy (or more precisely a relative autonomy), as fields of production and consumption of *symbolic goods* (cf. Bourdieu 1985:14-16). In these societies, the "communication component is becoming more prominent day by day, both as a reality and as an issue" of social, political and scholarly concern (Lyotard 1984:16). Therefore, it is not surprising that the major

disciplines, sciences and technologies have concerned themselves with the study of language and problems of communication (cf. Lyotard 1984:3-5).

2.3 APPROACHES TO SOCIAL ANALYSIS BASED ON THE MODEL OF LANGUAGE: FROM HERMENEUTICS TO POST-STRUCTURALISM

The interpretative orientations and strategies available to the contemporary social sciences and disciplines are closely linked to the way language is conceptualised. Historically, several changes or *epistemological shifts* in the way language has been understood are evident (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xix; Paden 1986:25).

Ever since Plato, language has been considered as part of the natural order of the world. Until the seventeenth century language was considered to consist of signs that stood for things in reality; language was essentially an instrument for accurate *representation* of and communication about the world. Language was considered as a natural connection between words and things. A new conception appeared during the nineteenth century when it was realised that language had an existence in its own right as a dense, enigmatic object rather than being a simple tool for representation (cf. Eagleton 1989b:183; Foucault 1989a:42-44).

The naïve view of the classical period was replaced by a more critical perspective in which language was taken, not simply as an isomorphic reflection of the structure of the world, but as an object, which, with other empirical factors, interposed itself between the subject and the world (Paden 1986:25).

During the twentieth century it has been realised that far from being representational and neutral, language itself *signifies*, that is, it contains meaning and constructs or *constitutes* much of the meaning and signification of the world for human beings. Language sets the limit for human thought because the nature of language dictates what can and what cannot be done with and within it. It is evident that "we are already, before the very least of our words, governed and paralysed by language" (Foucault 1989a:298).

The revolution in the conceptualisation of language has brought with it a crisis of representation (cf. Jameson 1984:viii). The crisis implies a radical change in the way fundamental truths and scientific activities are understood³. What has emerged is a sense of increasing vulnerability of things, institutions, practices and discourses.

A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence - even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and our everyday behaviour (Foucault 1980:80).

The crisis reflects a challenge to "an essentially realistic epistemology, which conceives of representation as the reproduction, for subjectivity, of an objectivity that lies outside it - projects a mirror theory of knowledge and art, whose fundamental evaluative categories are those of adequacy, accuracy, and Truth" (Jameson 1984:viii). Language is no longer considered as a *mirror of nature* (cf. Rorty 1980:12), but rather as a nonrepresentational practice that constitutes its objects. Truth is not derived from reality but from speech and facts are neither true nor false but linguistic (cf. Murphy 1988:97).

For the humanities and the social sciences language is essentially the *topic, resource and circumstances*, because the fundamental scientific activity consists of "reflecting upon and repairing language" (Lemert 1979:290). Language provides both the means for the study of man and society and is also the object of such study because,

science is not linked with that which must have lived, or must be lived ... but with that which must have been said - or must be said - if a discourse is to exist that complies, if necessary, with the experimental or formal criteria of scientificity (Foucault 1986:182).

In other words, for the sciences, the objects of study and the possibility of such study originate in the order of language (cf. Schrag 1980:14).

³ Such crisis is also found in communication science, as was discussed in Chapter 1.

Moreover, language as topic and resource is not limited to the activities of the social sciences but extends to the natural sciences (or *hard* sciences) as well, because for the sciences there are no *bare facts*. What can be considered as *facts* and accepted as knowledge are essentially ideas and interpretations (cf. Feyerabend 1980:19). Therefore, both the natural and human sciences are essentially in the business of construction and interpretation of reality (cf. Toulmin 1982:94; see also Kaplan 1964:32).

The contemporary scientific and social enquiries share a broad approach termed *textuality* or *textualism* (cf. Cheney & Tompkins 1988:456). The central methodological insight provided by this linguistic paradigm is that the various scientific enterprises are broadly engaged in the *reading* and interpretation of *texts*⁴. In other words, the common ground of all the human sciences lies in the fact that they all deal with texts as their data and exegesis is their methodology. Within such a broad approach linguistics plays a central role by providing the unifying concepts (cf. Foucault 1989a:381).

Two broad methods of analysis have dominated the social sciences and disciplines during this century: *interpretation and formalisation* - that is, hermeneutics (and varieties of phenomenology) and structuralism (cf. Foucault 1989a:299).

Phenomenology, the first modern general theory of language, considers human beings as both subjects and objects who discover and attribute meaning to the world and themselves through language. Phenomenology considers human beings as existing in an entire signifying milieu, a kind of complex of signs that covers the human beings field of perception. The human being both discovers meaning in language and makes use of language to discover meaning (cf. Ricoeur 1979:247). As a method, phenomenology attempts an in-depth exploration of the complex range of meanings associated with the symbols as experienced by individual human beings.

Both hermeneutics and structuralism are methodological reactions to phenomenology that attempt to overcome the Cartesian subject/object distinction and eliminate the Kantian

⁴ The concept "text" does not refer merely to linguistic written material but is used in the most broad sense to refer to any social and cultural phenomena that is considered to have meaning.

conception of human beings as the source of meaning. Hermeneutics and structuralism locate meaning in the activities and texts that are produced by human beings (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xix). The reaction to phenomenology takes a diametrically opposite epistemological direction. Hermeneutics bases its assumption on the characteristic mode of thought variously termed atomism, empiricism, psychologism or behaviourism (cf. Sturrock 1986:33), and the philosophy of *individualistic subjectivism* (cf. Volosinov 1973:48). Structuralism, on the other hand, finds its assumptions in the intellectual orientation of *systematic universalism* (cf. Sturrock 1986:34) or *abstract objectivism* (cf. Volosinov 1973:48). More broadly this opposition between approaches within the social sciences is known as *subjectivism* and *objectivism* (cf. Bourdieu 1990:25).

hermeneutics *structuralism*

Hermeneutics is an interpretative approach and method of analysis aimed at understanding *texts*, literary material and the variety of social products that can be *read* and their meaning discovered. Hermeneutics is concerned with reconstructing and understanding the *deep* meanings that can be found in the contents of various linguistic expression, texts, cultural products and so on, which have been embedded there by their human authors or subjects.

Structuralism dispenses with the idea of the meaning-giving subject by reconstructing the universal rules governing the possible production of meaning by the various *texts*. For structuralism the content or meaning of a text is derived from its formal and systematic structure. Objectively identified rules are said to govern and give significance or meaning to all texts. Structuralism (more broadly termed *formalism*) tends to dominate all other contemporary approaches to language (cf. Pêcheux 1982:6), and has displaced other critical approaches for the study of culture and society (cf. Anderson 1983:33).

any social or cultural phenomena considered to have meaning

Structuralism, in particular, has introduced a revolutionary understanding of language and claims to provide a methodology for a *scientific* study and understanding of all human phenomena. This was made possible by two developments in the study and understanding of language (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:1). First, advances in linguistics following the original work of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure made it possible to understand language as a self-sufficient system or structure (*langue*) of underlying rules of operation that make each individual act of speech (*parole*) intelligible. For Saussure the linguistic sign comprises

two interrelated parts: a *signifier*, the acoustic-visual component, and the *signified*, the conceptual component. The linguistic sign is arbitrary as there is no natural link between the signifier and signified; they are linked only through a cultural convention. The sign is also *differential*; it is part of the system of language whereby signs or words acquire signification or meaning only by reference to other signs within such system and their difference from each other. Second, following on Saussure's proposal to study the *life of signs in society*, the knowledge gained in modern structural linguistics is extended beyond language to the study of all sign systems and forms of communication. The science of signs is now known as semiology or semiotics (cf. Hawkes 1985:124)⁵. A further extension of Saussure's insights beyond natural language which is not limited to signifying systems is made by the structuralists. For the structuralist, all social and cultural phenomena, even though not primarily signifying systems, could be considered as if they were systems of signs, communication and language (*langue*). Structuralism, the application of structural-linguistic concepts to the human science is pioneered by Lévi-Strauss who studies the underlying structure of mythology, kinship relations and other anthropological phenomena. Lacan develops structural psychoanalysis and interprets Freud's theory in terms of linguistic concepts; and Althusser develops structural Marxism (cf. Best & Kellner 1991:18). The main assumption of the structuralists is that social relations and practices can be understood as exchanges of meaning, and are, therefore, forms of communication between the participating human subjects. Thus both structuralism and semiology could be considered as forming part of a larger and more embracing discipline called *communication* (cf. Hawkes 1985:124). For such a discipline, language has become the prime model or metaphor to describe all human phenomena and the starting point for enquiry into mankind, social history and the way society functions (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:1; Foucault 1989a:381-382; Lyotard 1984:15; Grossberg 1979:189; 1982:83).

The implications of such a paradigm are that language and communication are considered as primary ways in which man and society are continually formed and changed. Society can be conceived as a form of communication (cf. Williams 1979:10-11). In other words, language

⁵ The science of signs is known as semiotics and/or semiology. The term semiotics is preferred by English-speaking theorists utilising the theories of the American philosopher C. S. Peirce, while semiology is preferred by theorists who follow on the work of Saussure (cf. Hawkes 1985:124).

and communication are basic and primary social institutions and are the *modus operandi* of social life (cf. Hertzler 1961:177). All social and cultural phenomena may be understood as if they were symbolic systems of meaning or language and their study requires interpretative methodologies. Therefore, the central scientific activity is essentially concerned with developing methodological strategies aimed at understanding and deciphering the central problem of meaning.

Since the late 1960s post-structuralism has emerged as an alternative to the dominant approaches and rejects such emphasis on meaning and symbolic abstractions.

Although post-structuralism is commonly associated with the theory of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, his is not the only version of post-structuralism. The term "post-structuralism" (or post-modernism)⁶ is generally applied to a range of theoretical positions developed in writing of, *inter alia*, Barthes, Boudrillard, Bourdieu, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, Lacan, Lyotard and Kristeva (cf. Harland 1988:124; Weedon 1987:19). While post-structuralism became prominent in the late 1960s it was anticipated as early as the 1920s in the Marxist philosophy of language developed by Bakhtin and Volosinov (cf. Sturrock 1986:136).

Post-structuralism is also not a unified body of theory but is characterised by a diversity of theoretical positions. However, the various post-structuralist theories share a certain underlying framework of approach based on language. Post-structuralism can be regarded as a critique of structuralism conducted from within: that is, while post-structuralists' theories accept Saussure's and the structuralist insights about language, they radically transform and transcend them (cf. Sturrock 1986:137)⁷.

⁶ Without entering into the debate and controversy over post-modern theory, the term "post-modern" can be applied to designate post-structuralism and both terms can be used synonymously (cf. Sarup 1988:118). More precisely, post-structuralism forms a subset of a broader range of theoretical, cultural and social tendencies of post-modern theory (cf. Best & Kellner 1991:25). Post-modernism refers to broad shifts in the cultural domains of contemporary society and indicates a break from previous *modernist* cultural practices.

⁷ The term *superstructuralism* is suggested as more appropriate to describe the shared larger intellectual phenomenon which can include both structuralism and post-structuralism (cf. Harland 1988:1).

2.3.1 The post-structuralist reformulation of the epistemological implication of structuralism

The study of language and structuralism in particular has made important contributions to human understanding and provided means to demystify the traditional epistemological assumptions about man and society that underlie the human sciences and philosophy. However, while structuralism has provided these insights, it was not able to take them to their ultimate conclusion (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:2). Such a task is performed by the post-structuralist critique of structuralist assumptions concerning metaphysics, the human subject and truth (cf. Sarup 1988:4).

Intro.

Structuralism and its theory of language have provided an important way to understand man and society.

Because all the practices that make up a social totality take place in language, it becomes possible to consider language as the place in which the social individual is constructed. In other words, man can be seen *as language*, as the intersection of the social, historical and individual (Coward & Ellis 1986:1).

✂

The definition of language is, implicitly or explicitly, a definition of human beings in the world because it is realised that all our conceptual categories such as *world, reality, nature* and *human* are themselves constructed in language (cf. Williams 1985:21). Language provides the conceptual framework for human thought because "it is through language, and within it, that thought is able to think" and that "things attain to existence only in so far as they are able to form the elements of a signifying system" (Foucault 1989a:381-382). Studies in psychoanalysis by Lacan have brought to light that all human experience is made both meaningful by, and possible through the structured and structuring nature of language. Meaning itself is nothing more than the surface effect of the structure of language. Simply put, human phenomena should be understood for what they really are, "elements of a communication system" (White 1973:23).

The nature and operation of language show that language and the various symbolic systems (art, religion, science) are *structuring structures*, they are instruments by which reality is

constructed and they exercise power as instruments of cognition and knowledge. The power of language and other symbolic systems to structure cognition is derived from the fact that these are themselves *structured structures* (cf. Bourdieu 1977c:112-114). The structuring power of the structured symbolic systems is seen by the way language shapes human-cognition, for example, through the acquisition of language a person enters an already preconstituted social system of meaning that provides the words to be used for communication, the objects that one can speak about and the system of established social relationship. In other words, it is the *world of words* that constructs the *world of things* (cf. Archard 1984:63). According to Barthes (1982:460), language is characterised less by what it allows the user to say and more by what it compels the user to say. Language can be considered as "a dwelling place for man" (Heidegger in Megill 1987:168). Language has control over human beings rather than human beings having control over language (cf. Shapiro 1981:59). The dominance of language over people is seen by the fact that they are

expressing their thoughts in words of which they are not the masters, enclosing them in verbal forms whose historical dimensions they are unaware of, men believe that their speech is their servant and do not realize that they are submitting themselves to its demands (Foucault 1989a:297).

From this it follows that the nature of language is such that it can be considered without reference to the human subject (cf. Peirce in Eco 1979:316; Foucault 1989a:xiv, 342). The structured and structuring reality of language no longer needs man at its centre. The constitutive nature of language shows that the human subject is not the source of meaning but is itself constructed by language and the various symbolic systems (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:3). As Foucault (1989a:xxiii) points out, man "is probably no more than a kind of rift in the order of things, or, in any case, a configuration whose outlines are determined by the new position he has so recently taken up in the field of knowledge". Concepts such as *man*, *individual*, *subjectivity*, *consciousness* and *humanity* that are believed to be eternal are shown to be linguistic categories - the result of speech and the effect of language (cf. Ijsseling 1976:127; Williams 1985:21). These concepts are essentially *respectable names* coined during the nineteenth century as the result of economic and legal demands (cf. Foucault 1987:92). However, their historical and linguistic fabrication is forgotten and now they are naïvely accepted as normative, self-evident and universal essences (cf. Foucault 1988c:15).

The realisation that language is the human reality, demystifies the traditional anthropological and ontological assumption on which social analysis is based. The anthropological assumption - literally meaning *the logic of man* - privileges man as the centre and source of meaning and knowledge (cf. Lemert & Gillan 1982:128). Traditional social theorising and research begin from the assumptions that man has some universal and invariant nature that may serve as the grounding foundation (cf. Jansen & Steinberg 1991:3-4). However, the priority of language shows the anthropological assumption as an ideological point of view (cf. Lemert & Gillan 1982:128; Foucault 1989a:340-342), or as Foucault says, it is at best a theological notion (cf. Sturrock 1979:15). The concept *human subject* is a metaphysical hybrid, an offspring of Christian spiritualism and of the Cartesian dogma of the *spirit in the machine* (cf. Bourdieu 1968:690). Yet such metaphysical presuppositions coexist with critical motifs in every system of semiotic research (cf. Derrida in Norris 1986:48). Foucault (1989a:309) observes that *man* is a recent invention, "he is a quite recent creature, which the demiurge of knowledge fabricated with its own hands less than two hundred years ago". What must be accepted is the fact that "nothing in man - not even his body - is sufficiently stable to serve as the basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men" (Foucault 1988a:153).

The primacy of language also dispenses with the need to make basic assumptions about society before it can be studied scientifically. It is now possible to consider the entire network of social relations as linguistically based, and

there is no need to resort to some fiction of social origin to establish that language games are the minimum relation required for society to exist: even before he is born, if only by the virtue of the name he is given, the human child is already positioned as the referent in the story recounted by those around him, in relation to which he will inevitably chart his course. Or more simply still, the question of the social bond, insofar as it is a question, is itself a language game, the game of inquiry (Lyotard 1984:15).

2.3.2 The prison-house of language

Having demystified the anthropological concept of *man*, it is obvious that the study of human and social phenomena should not be based on phenomenology which considers the human being as the meaning-giving transcendental subject, who somehow contorts himself by

simultaneously discovering pre-existing meaning in himself and his world as well as giving meaning to himself and his world (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:xix; Foucault 1989a:xiv). It is therefore, futile to search in language for an authentic, conscious human expression and intended meaning, as is practised by the interpretative approaches. From the perspective of hermeneutic interpretation, human speech and other symbolic representations are considered as commentaries or acts of translation that claim to discover some ideal or authentic human essence revealed in language and symbols. Hermeneutics and interpretative approaches are based on two paradoxical assumptions. The first assumption is that all discourse originates from something that is *already said* and is endlessly repeated. The second assumption proposes that human discourse is both exuberant and deficient; exuberant because every human expression always says more than it intends and deficient because what is said, is always incomplete as not everything can be expressed in a material medium such as language⁸. Thus interpretation is either a search for some secret origin beyond history, or is an attempt to hear the *already said* that is at the same time *not said* (cf. Foucault 1986:25; 1989c:xvi). All interpretations are attempts at "the re-apprehension through the manifest meaning of the discourse of another meaning at once secondary and primary, that is more hidden but also more fundamental" (Foucault 1989a:373). However, there is nothing hidden or more primary to discover because language resembles a *mirror of infinity*, self-representing and "giving birth to its own image in a play of mirrors that has no limit" (Foucault 1988a:54). As Derrida (Murphy 1988:97) suggests, speech is the representation of itself. Language condemns man to speak about speaking, to constructing *discourses about discourses* and reinterpreting interpretations (cf. Foucault 1989c:xvi). Interpretation is, therefore, an endless task because there is absolutely nothing primary or essential to interpret, and at best, all that can be discovered are already interpretations of other interpretations (cf. Foucault in Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:107). According to Foucault (1989c:xvii), such an attempt at interpretation "which listens, through ... the symbols, the concrete images ... to the Word of God, ever secret, ever beyond itself" is futile, because "for centuries we had awaited in vain for the decision of the Word". All such interpretations proceed

⁸ Most clearly such paradoxical position is found in the existentialist philosophy of Ortega y Gasset who claims that every utterance is both deficient and exuberant because we can never communicate absolutely everything we wish and because no material form can suffice to render the depth and spirit of man (cf. Van Schoor 1986:15).

from men, from God, from knowledge or fantasies, toward the words that make them possible; and what it reveals is not the sovereignty of a primal discourse, but the fact that we are already, before the very least of our words, governed and paralysed by language (Foucault 1989a:298).

In contrast to the interpretative approaches, structuralism is concerned with the formal aspects of language that give meaning to the individual acts of speech or other signifying human phenomena. From the structuralist perspective, acts of speech (*parole*) are merely the by-product or surface effect of an underlying structure (*langue*). However, in its attempt to discover the structure or formal system of language, structuralism is not radically different from hermeneutics. For hermeneutics, language as it manifests itself in written or spoken discourse (or any cultural *text*) is something that must be penetrated and bypassed in order to discover deeper meaning that expresses the intention of human individuals. Structuralism, too, looks beyond the manifest instances of *parole* and attempts to uncover an ideal structure beyond it. However, interpretation is not entirely opposed to formal or structuralist analysis, because in order to interpret, the pure form of language must first be described, and conversely, to formalise what language is supposed to be, it is first necessary to interpret all those forms as having some intended meaning. The close interrelationship between hermeneutics and structuralism is not surprising because both are historical *twins* and a product of the same epistemology. Both are essentially involved in commentary on the visible manifestation of language and produce another discourse that claims to reveal a deeper *true* meaning (cf. Foucault 1989a:299).

According to Foucault (Major-Poetzl 1983:32), if all the interpretative methods since the Greeks were to be examined, it would be found that a single trend runs through them all: the search for another ideal reality behind or apart from language. Such approaches are reductionist and reflect Platonic idealism. Platonic idealism reduces all diverse manifest phenomena to a generative principle or ideal *essence* supposedly hidden behind any and every phenomena. Idealism and reductionism deny the real complexity of language and cultural phenomena by reducing them to mere semblances of some ideal structure they supposedly contain (cf. Bennett 1979:70-71). Such approaches also reflect a *speculative mysticism* because they consider the material and concrete reality of signs that are exchanged in

communication to be a mere appearance of an ideal and unseen *reality* (cf. Silverman & Torode 1980:3-4).

2.3.3 From language to discourse

The problem with the approaches of structuralism and hermeneutics is that they consider language as an abstraction. Structuralism creates its own *symbolist fallacy* by reducing all social phenomena and relations to relations of communication (cf. Bourdieu 1977c:115). The structuralists construct a theoretical model of language structure (*langue*) and then reify this model as if it were reality itself, this is to slide "from the model of reality to the reality of the model" (Bourdieu 1990:39). This *symbolist fallacy* is found in the prevailing assumption of the human sciences that have adopted the structuralist methods. The transfer of the structuralists' methods to these sciences was easy because it was conceded that language is essentially an instrument for communication and, therefore, it is made for understanding and deciphering. Extending such analogy, it is claimed that the social world is a system of symbolic exchanges and social actions are primarily acts of communication. However, what is forgotten is the fact that people do not encounter language as an abstract system of signs and rules (*langue*), but always encounter instances of particular articulated language, used in actually occurring instances of communication within specific social and historical contexts (cf. Thompson 1992:286). Language is an empirical phenomenon, it manifests itself in spoken and written *discourse* in particular historical and social situations. Language is not only made for understanding but is also an instrument of action, power and domination (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:645-646). In other words, all social relations are power relations and should not be reduced to relations of communication (cf. Bourdieu 1977c:115)⁹.

Context

It is evident that the whole tradition of Western thought and philosophy since Plato attempts to disregard the material nature of language as it manifests itself in human speech or

⁹ The theory of Habermas is possibly the worst expression of such *symbolist fallacy* elevated to a universal claim to truth (cf. Lyotard 1984:65-66). Habermas (1981:314) makes a claim to universal truth by postulating that "our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus". Such consensus is reached through unconstrained dialogue and rational discussion "free from domination" and based on the power of the best argument (cf. Habermas 1977:7). According to Lyotard (1984:60-61, 65-66), this would disregard the fact that power is the best argument and consensus is only a stage in the language game.

discourse. The various contemporary approaches to language such as structuralism, phenomenology and hermeneutics consider language to be an essentially symbolic, signifying or semiological system of signs rather than a human activity (cf. Ricoeur 1979:83-86, 247). From such perspectives, language use in speech and discourse is seen merely as a *waste product* that may be disregarded in favour of an abstract system or code that makes it possible and intelligible (cf. Bourdieu 1977a:24). Of course when approached in such a manner, human speech is considered a universal activity and is in need of interpretation: "words are wind, an eternal whisper, a beating of wings that one has difficulty in hearing in the serious matter of history" (Foucault 1986:209). In its appearance, discourse can be deceptive because speech seems *humdrum and grey*, appearing to be of little importance (cf. Foucault 1971:8).

Discourse is really only an activity, of writing in the first case, of reading in the second and exchange in the third. This exchange, this writing, this reading never involve anything but signs. Discourse thus nullifies itself, in reality, in placing itself at the disposal of the signifier (Foucault 1971:21).

From such a perspective, discourse is nothing more than a text made for reading and it implies

the reduction of discursive practice to textual traces; the elision of the events that are produced there in order to retain nothing but marks for a reading; the invention of voices behind the text in order not to have to analyze the modes of implication of the subject in discourse (Foucault in Harari 1980:41).

Such view of language betrays a certain uncertainty, doubt and a faint suspicion that behind such simple activity as speaking and writing, some powers and dangers are concealed (cf. Foucault 1971:9). Western civilisation displays a "profound logophobia, a sort of a dumb fear ... of this mass of spoken things" (Foucault 1971:21). Such fear of language is displayed in the whole complex of social control over discourse. Discourse operates within institutions and under strict control in every society.

However, discourse was not always considered as a *thing*, a product or possession. The use of language was originally seen as an activity, a gesture full of risks and danger (cf. Foucault

1988a:124). A distinct change in conception of discourse has been evident since Plato. Before Plato, for the Greeks of the sixth century discourse was a potent ritualised act.

True discourse - in the meaningful sense - inspiring respect and terror, to which all were obliged to submit, because it held sway over all and was pronounced by men who spoke as of right, according to ritual, meted out justice and attributed to each his rightful share; it prophesied the future, not merely announcing what was going to occur, but contributing to its actual event, carrying men along with it and thus weaving itself into the fabric of fate (Foucault 1971:10).

However, a century later the highest truth of discourse was not in the ritual nor in what discourse was or what it did, but in what it said - "its meaning, its form, its objects and its relation to what it referred to" (Foucault 1971:10). From then onwards "Western thought has seen to it that discourse be permitted as little room as possible between thought and words" (Foucault 1971:20). Thus it seems as if language had disappeared or rather become invisible and accepted as if it were a neutral instrument of communication. However, according to Foucault such a disappearance of language, while making it transparent also makes its operation more subtle and more insidious as a form of control over its human subjects (cf. Said 1978:708). Methods of interpretation and the search for meaning are the primary modes of such stifling control over discourse (cf. Foucault 1971:13; Sontag 1967:7). Methods of interpretation (hermeneutics), essentially involve commentary guarantee that the interpreter while seemingly speaking *ad infinitum* only repeats what has already been said (cf. Foucault 1971:13; 1986:25).

For a different perspective and in an attempt to escape the *prison-house of language*¹⁰, theorists such as Bourdieu and Foucault draw on the insights of the Marxist tradition's emphasis on the political function of symbolic systems. They argue that "the world is more than a galaxy of texts"; language, social and cultural phenomena involve social relations of power (cf. Selden 1986:98). Language cannot be considered exclusively as a signifying process or simply as a means of communication because it does not only serve communicational functions but is invested with all possible social functions (cf. Bourdieu

¹⁰ This formulation is by Nietzsche quoted by Jameson (1972:i) and is also the title of Jameson's book on structuralism.

1977a:14; 1977b:646; 1977c:115). While language is a process of communication it is simultaneously a process of non-communication imposing social barriers and distinctions (cf. Pêcheux 1982:9-10); it is an instrument of action, power and domination (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:648). Language is a primary medium of social reproduction.

It is as structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge that 'symbolic systems' fulfil their political function as instruments of domination (Bourdieu 1977c:115).

Therefore, what is needed is to consider the social function of language which entails the reintroduction of the whole social world into the science of language (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:650). The reintroduction of the social world into language opens up the structuralist self-enclosed symbolic universe and restores to the understanding of language the fact that language is primarily an act of speech - *discourse* (cf. Ricoeur 1979:83-84).

The introduction of the concept *discourse* marks the post-structuralists' shift away from the structuralists' emphasis on *language* (cf. Eagleton 1983:115), and brings into focus the social and historical conditions and their effects (cf. Thompson 1990:234). In other words, the concept *discourse* is able to free itself from its grounding in the idealist epistemology and metaphysics of Western tradition and provides a *materialist* rather than merely an abstract theory of language and society.

2.4 POST-STRUCTURALIST APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE: FROM DISCOURSE TO DISCURSIVITY

Before turning to elaborate the view on discourse in the work of Bourdieu and Foucault, it is necessary to clarify the confusion that the widely used and much abused concept *discourse* has created within the social sciences. While the concept *discourse* was introduced to provide clarity and precision over the concept *langue*, "within the human sciences this term is becoming embarrassingly overloaded and more likely to induce confusion than any clarity it might originally have been set to produce" (Cousins & Hussain 1984:77).

The confusion is derived from the fact that discourse is used in most varied and loose ways to designate different things. For example, for linguists discourse refers to segments of text larger than a sentence. For social theorists discourse can designate numerous concepts within Marxist theories of ideology, studies of subjectivity in language and philosophy of knowledge (cf. Cousins & Hussain 1984:77-78). In addition to the above, discourse is also used in its common-sense meaning, defined as "to talk, converse, discuss; to speak or to write at length on a subject; a talk, a narrative" (cf. Barrett 1991:125).

The concept discourse has its origin in a dissatisfaction with Saussure's and the structuralists' basic linguistic model. The linguist Hjelmslev introduces the concept of language *usage* to designate the function of language and bridge the gap between Saussure's original distinction between *langue* and *parole*. The term *usage* is neither as abstract as the system of language nor as idiosyncratic as individual acts of speech (*parole*) but refers to the social system within which language functions (cf. Terdiman 1985:30). Extending on the work of Hjelmslev, the linguist Emile Benveniste introduces the term *discourse* to designate the use of language by individuals for communication (cf. McCabe 1989:14).

Within post-structuralism the concept *discourse* has distinct usages within two separate theoretical approaches: *Textuality* and *discursivity* (cf. Barrett 1991:124).

2.4.1 Textuality

The textuality approach, identified mainly with the work of Derrida, places the study of literature at its centre and treats all other phenomena as if they were literary genres. The meaning and truths of such texts is claimed to be found *behind* or *within* such texts.

Textuality designates a general label within literary and cultural theory that follows on the structuralists' insights that language is neither *representational* nor simply a medium for communication of meaning but is a producer of meaning in its own right. From this perspective the emphasis is on the study of formal structure of literary texts and communication messages. Here the term *discourse* replaces the concept *language (langue)* and is used to refer to language as it manifests itself in literary works, books, mass media

messages, *et cetera*. These texts are studied in their own terms *as texts* rather than as a reflection of some reality, or referring to historical, biographical, and social context (cf. Barrett 1991:124). The textuality approach may be considered as a variant of semiotics and assumes that it is language, signs, codes and signifying systems that organise the human psyche, society and everyday life. Such an approach could be designated as *linguistic idealism* or *pan-textualism* because it considers all phenomena as structured semiotically by systems of signs and codes (cf. Best & Kellner 1991:27).

Following from the *structuralist revolution*, the study of discourse has become a vast field for the various disciplines, *inter alia*, philosophy, linguistics, sociolinguistics, cultural studies and literary theory (cf. Van Dijk 1983:22). From within these perspectives various methods of analysis emerge which are used mainly within sociology and sociolinguistics and are known under the general label of *discourse analysis* or *conversation analysis* and are mainly concerned with the study of message structure in communication. Here the concept *discourse* is used as a flexible category to designate the study of the organisation of spoken texts and units larger than a single sentence (cf. Coulthard 1983:6). By now a vast body of literature has accumulated in which a variety of discourse analysis is deployed (see a review of such approaches in Van Dijk 1983 and Thompson 1990:98-126). However, limitations have been revealed in the various discourse analyses. According to Van Dijk (1985:4), the existing methods based on structural analysis of texts and conversations still resemble the traditional linguistic analyses of conversation, sentences and structure of messages and may be too far removed from actual language use. On the other hand, studies of language in social context tend to focus on rather trivial or uncritical examples of language use. According to Thompson (1990:8), the various discourse analyses, while providing important insights, have generally produced disappointing results because of their limited concern with either an analysis of (1) grammatical, syntactic, or semantic structure in formal linguistic units larger than a sentence, or (2) instances of linguistic expression by individuals in social interaction. In both cases the concept *discourse* "simply functions as a cover for linguistic formalism or sociological subjectivism" (McCabe 1989:8). Bourdieu (Thompson 1990:43) points out that

linguistic 'formalism' ... ignores the social and political conditions of the formation and use of language, and a sociological 'interactionism' ... fails to see that there is no linguistic exchange, however insignificant or personal it

may seem, which does not bear the traces of the social structure that it helps to reproduce.

What such discourse analyses have not solved is the gap between the study of text and the study of society and no adequate theory within the *textuality* approach has been able to relate texts to their social use (cf. Newcomb 1984:34-35). In one form or another most of these contemporary discourse analyses are linked to the traditional trinity of *proposition-subject-meaning*, based on the assumption that (1) human ideas are expressed in logically formed linguistic propositions, (2) ideas are supposedly mental representations produced by an individual human subject and (3) that ideas have their existence in language because the identity of an idea is its meaning and its basic units are sentences (cf. Cousins & Hussain 1984:78-79).

In contrast to the *textuality* approach, an entirely different and distinct post-structuralist alternative view of discourse can be labelled as a *discursive* or *discursivity* approach (cf. Barrett 1991:124).

2.4.2 Discursivity

The *discursive approach*, identified mainly with the work of Foucault and Bourdieu, may be termed a *worldly* or *materialist* version of post-structuralism because it considers discourse as a material practice within social context. The meaning of texts and other symbolic systems is considered as produced in the interaction between the reader and the text (cf. Sarup 1988:3). Language is considered as a social practice (discursive practice), which, together with other non-discursive practices, forms the social body (cf. Callinicos 1985:86).

The discursive approach has its beginning in structuralism which it reformulates while also incorporating insights provided by analytical philosophy of language (e.g. speech-act theory), Wittgenstein's study on language, Marxist philosophy of language and Nietzsche's writing on language and philosophy. The *discursive approach* places the emphasis on the interaction between language and social subjects and on the character of language as a practice and a

form of social action rather than text and meaning. Thus rather than looking *behind* or *in* language for deeper meanings, language and its social use are the primary areas of concern.

The post-structuralist *discursive approach* shows how the central search for meaning has hindered rather than advanced social enquiry. Post-structuralists reformulate methods of social analysis in ways that go beyond the problem of meanings (cf. Wuthnow 1978:22). Post-structuralists take symbols literally, as opposed to the structuralists who consider them as standing for something else. Thus symbols and signs are taken simply at face value, because it is assumed that "they communicate, because they exist, but the essential question has less to do with *what* they communicate than with *how* they communicate and the thrust of investigation, therefore, focuses on the arrangement of symbols and their relations to one another, not primarily their meaning" (Wuthnow 1978:53). The *discursive approach* examines the pragmatic aspect of symbol arrangement, that is, the way symbols are arranged and used in society.

Theorists within the discursivity approach, *inter alia*, Bourdieu, Foucault, Bakhtin, Lyotard, Pêcheux and Ricoeur, reject the linguistic idealism that reduces everything to textuality. According to Foucault, while discourse is a central human activity, nevertheless, the world is more than a galaxy of texts and discourse is also involved in social relations of power and domination (cf. Selden 1986:98). The discursivity approach is based on a material¹¹ and pragmatic conception of language-use as a *discursive practice* within institutional and social contexts.

¹¹ The concept *materiality* or *materialism* of language has two distinct usages in post-structuralism. Within the textuality approach language is considered to be *material* in the sense that it has an opacity and density of its own and provides meaning beyond those intended by the speaker or user of language but by the immanent laws of signification (*langue*); here language is considered as if it itself speaks (cf. De Beer 1992:25). This is an idealist understanding of materiality. Within the discursivity approach, language is material in the sense that it is a practical human activity, part of this world as it were and producing material things (text).

2.5 DISCURSIVE PRAXIS: LANGUAGE USE AS SOCIAL PRACTICE

In the most general way discourse is defined as the use of language, or simply as *language-in-use*. In this sense discourse designates the use of any system of natural or artificial signs (*langue*), such as writing, speech, visual images, drawings and so on through which meaning is transmitted (cf. Racevskis 1983:16).

Characteristic of language, or any signifying system, is that it does not exist as an abstract system or structure (*langue*) but manifests itself in actual usage and communication - as discourse - within specific historical and social conditions (cf. Foucault 1986:113). In fact, the idea of an abstract structure of language (*langue*) is dependent for its existence on a series of speech acts that both construct and actualise it. "The structure of a language - the general system of its rules and regularities - is derived from and determined by events: by acts of communication" (Culler 1979:163).

While language (*langue*) may provide the *code*, actual communication takes place in *discourse*. Discourse, the use of language in speech or writing, is the very substance of communication, and presents itself as the most visible and real aspect (cf. Bourdieu 1990:30).

Discourse is part of this world and not simply something that belongs to the realms of idea or *spirit*. Language manifests itself materially as speaking and writing in texts. Texts should not be considered as existing outside reality because they have a material substance and also lead a life of their own (cf. De Beer 1991:119).

Texts have ways of existing, both theoretical and practical, that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstances, time, place, and society - in short, they are in the world, and hence are worldly (Said 1980:165).

Foucault contends (1981:11) that language in its appearance is an empirically observable *discursive fact*,

... the fact that speaking has taken place as events in relation to their original situation, and that they have left behind traces which continue to exist and

exercise, in their very subsistence internal to history, a certain number of manifest or secret functions (Foucault in Lemert & Gillan 1982:21).

In its concrete appearance and mode of being, language is manifest in the *statement* (Foucault 1986:113). That is, discourse is made up of statements. The use of language entails making utterances or statements (*énoncé*), which are the actually occurring and specific expressions. In other words, while language exists as an abstraction in a system of rules (*langue*), people always encounter language in its articulated form. Indeed, it is only at this level of the statement or actual utterance that language actually *says* something, short of this it says nothing (cf. Ricoeur 1979:87).

Every statement has a literal meaning. Understanding such meaning is not really problematic because this is the general condition of all communication (cf. Lyotard 1984:9). As Foucault (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:46) points out, statements have literal meaning regardless of other possible levels of interpretation and the existence of such literal meaning exempts one from looking for any *deep* meaning. In fact, in the common use of language in everyday communication the literal meaning is used almost exclusively as people give voice to meanings that are already available. According to Lacan (in Shapiro 1981:130), the common use of language resembles an exchange of a coin "whose obverse and reverse no longer bear any but worn effigies, and which people pass from hand to hand in silence". Meaning has a social origin and is not the product of individual thought. Of course, human subjects may also create their own meanings, but even here it is limited to the available meanings provided by discourse. Thus to paraphrase Marx (1972:437), men make their own meaning but not under conditions of their own choosing (cf. Grillo 1989:20).

Just as it would be incorrect to attempt to derive a language merely from observing a single individual, who speaks not a language of his own but rather that of his contemporaries and predecessors who have prepared the path for him, so it is incorrect to explain the totality of an outlook only with reference to its genesis in the mind of the individual. Only in a quite limited sense does the single individual create out of himself the mode of speech and thought we attribute to him. He speaks the language of the group; he thinks in the manner in which his group thinks. He finds at his disposal only certain words and their meanings. These not only determine to a large extent the avenues of approach to the surrounding world, but they also show at the same time from

which angle and which context of activity objects have hitherto been perceptible and accessible to the group or individual (Mannheim 1979:2).

What is said in language - the content or meaning - is not the only thing of importance about language. The distinction between *form* and *content* or between *what is said* and *how it is said* is rather false.

Because the saying, the 'utterance' (énonciation), is what *constitutes* a 'content', a 'referent', or an 'object' of discourse. Until discourse arises against the silence of mere existence or within the 'murmur' of a pre-verbal 'agitation of things', there is no distinction between signifier and signified, subject and object, sign and meaning (White 1979:86).

While meaning in the abstract system of language (*langue*) may always be indeterminate, as claimed by Derrida (cf. Norris 1986:28-29), meaning in discourse is always particular to specific social and historical contexts and, therefore, it is articulated at the same time as the signifier, utterance or statement (cf. Grossberg 1982:97)¹². What is said is itself dependent on the activity of saying it and its social context and the meaning of a statement is determined by its use and function (cf. Wittgenstein 1988:54).

Meaning is dependent at least as much on linguistic factors as on extra-linguistic factors and implies a whole set of social relations of power that legitimate it (cf. Bourdieu 1977a:25-26). Meaning is not a neutral entity that somehow exists in words or language but it is the result of a social process of production whereby words are *made to mean*. Such a process involves a social struggle for, and mastery over specific meaning that prevails and wins credibility (cf. Hall 1985:67, 77). This suggests that meaning is in fact a *value*, and different meanings of the same linguistic expression obtain a different *price* depending on the markets they are

¹² According to Derrida, the meaning of a particular signifier always refers to or is in *free play* with the whole chain of signifiers within language (cf. Norris 1986:28-29). Meaning is not found in the *signifieds* but in the *signifiers* themselves and the way they relate to other signifiers (cf. Harland 1988:134-135). According to Derrida, such difference and deferral of meaning (*différance*) implies that language is in perpetual motion and *slippage* and meanings are always unfulfilled (cf. Harland 1988:135). The problem of language thus becomes one of *fixing* of meaning. Meaning is dependent at least as much on linguistic factors as on extra-linguistic factors and implies a whole set of social relations of power (cf. Bourdieu 1977a:25-25).

offered and also are dependent on the value of the person using discourse (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:646, 652).

Every verbal expression - chatter between two friends, the "official" statement of an "authorized" spokesman, a scientific report - bears, in its form and content, the mark of the conditions which the field in question provides for the person who produces it, depending on the position he or she occupies in that field (Bourdieu 1977b:657).

Therefore, while it is obvious that discourses are composed of signs, what they do is more than use these signs to designate things and it is this *more* that neither the language (*langue*) nor meaning can quite exhaust (cf. Foucault 1986:28, 49). This *more* is derived from the social nature of language use¹³.

Discourse as social use of language is an activity that involves a whole complex set of relations that must exist for statements to be made. For example, a statement is made by a speaker, is addressed to someone and is about something and refers to a *world*¹⁴ it claims to describe or represent (cf. Ricoeur 1973:92; Ricoeur 1979:86-87). But it also includes the act of making the statement, the context of making the statement and the status of the person making the statement - the concept *énonciation* describes such a complexity (cf. Sheridan 1986:99). Not only does discourse imply a set of social relations needed for its actualisation but it also constitutes and reproduces such relations. This implies that the statement is actually a type of *speech act*¹⁵ or *verbal performance* as described by the English philosopher J. L. Austin (cf. Foucault 1986:107). Indeed Austin's (1984:94) important contribution to

¹³ That is to say that all meaning is ideological, in both the descriptive and critical sense of the word (cf. Thompson 1990:3-5), or more correctly, it is political (cf. Gramsci 1986:326) because without words and signs there is no ideology and meaning and ideology are coextensive (cf. Volosinov 1973:9). Therefore, all the taken-for-granted or commonsense meaning is in fact an imposition of particular meaning by a dominant power group.

¹⁴ The term *world* does not simply refer to the real world but includes such *possible worlds* as those described by literary fiction and so on.

¹⁵ Foucault's concept of discourse is similar to Searle's concept of *speech act* (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:46-47) and Wittgenstein's concept of *language game* that contains its own rules and every speech act is a *move* within that language game (cf. Lyotard 1984:10).

the understanding of language is to point out that to speak and "to say something is in the full normal sense to do something". To speak is to engage in social activity - a practice - that is always socially and historically situated (cf. Foucault 1986:46)¹⁶. To use language is a social way of acting; it is in fact a particular form of social practice: a *discursive practice*.

Discourse as social practice refers to the possibility of making and using statements that are appropriate and relevant to the social situation and takes into consideration the social relations of power existing during the act of communication (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:646). What such socially appropriate use of language demonstrates, is the fact that it is nothing else other than the mastery of the social conditions for such use. The use of language is a matter of *kairos* - of doing the right thing at the right time (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:656).

The use of discourse in appropriate circumstances means that discourse is characterised by a certain *poverty* or *rarity* of its statements as against the plentitude of language. In discourse only the significant or *effective* group of statements is made (cf. Foucault 1986:118). The rarity of the statements is the result of the operation of constraint and censorship within and around discourse.

The appropriate use of language also implies that discursive practice is not simply a free use of language, a demonstration of linguistic competence, or a play and animation of the structure of language by an individual. It is an institutionalised and complicated social performance that has important consequences (cf. Foucault 1986:121, 209).

The importance of discursive practice is derived from its being the primary mode of social action. Discursive practice is a means of communication - a *signifying practice* - a process for creating signification and knowledge (cf. Coward & Ellis 1986:80). However, such a process is more than simply creation of semantic meaning because it is a social *event*, taking

¹⁶ Foucault's concept of practice is informed by Althusser's insightful application of this economic term to that of theoretical practice. For Althusser, the economic practice consists of transforming raw material into products by the application of labour (cf. Bennett 1979:111). In a similar manner, intellectual activity is seen not as some mysterious act of genius but as the result of real intellectual labour, using identifiable conceptual instruments with which existing concepts are transformed and new concepts and theories are elaborated (cf. Benton 1984:36).

place in space and time and arranging speakers and hearers. It is *constitutive* of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge. In other words, linguistic communicative practices have two characteristics: that of using language and that of being conditioned by language and its use (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992:162).

Discourse is not exclusively a medium for the expression of ideas and meanings. Discourse is a praxis, and as such, is not simply an intellectual activity that relates to abstract knowledge and ideas; a praxis is an integration of knowledge and action. Praxis involves social communication¹⁷, exchange and association (cf. Schrag 1980:37; Schrag 1986:22-31). The use of language in discourse is a practical social activity like any other (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992:164). Being a *praxis*, discourse is made for use in strategies invested with all possible functions and not only communication functions (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:646). Thus, while discourse serves a communication function (or semiotic function), it is also an important instrument of knowledge and power (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:648).

Discursive practices are constitutive or society-shaping but at the same time they are also socially and historically situated practices and are themselves socially shaped. Discursive practices are shaped by society but are not shaped in a uniform manner, as envisaged by the structuralists. The structuralist conception of a universal system of rules (*langue*) which is actualised by all speakers of a language within a homogeneous linguistic community is a poor abstraction. According to Bourdieu (Thompson 1990:44) and Bahktin (1981:270-271), the extent to which a uniform language and linguistic community may exist, is the result of an arbitrary imposition of unity by dominant political and social forces. However, even within a seemingly unitary linguistic system such as a national language (e.g. Afrikaans or English) there are internal stratifications and at every moment the unity is contested (cf. Bahktin 1981:270). There is no homogeneous linguistic community, "there is no language in itself, nor any universality of language, but a concourse of dialects, patois, slangs, special languages" (Deleuze & Guattari in Macdonell 1986:9). Language consists of different communities of speakers which bring different sets of rules into play in their use of language (cf. Bennett 1979:72). Hence language always contains a diversity of

¹⁷ Communication is understood here as the practical application of a system of signs, or the use of a system of *signification* for practical purposes (cf. Eco 1979:4).

* social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, languages of the authorities, of various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even the hour (Bahktin 1981:262-263).

Society is made up of such a variety and plurality of discursive practices existing in hierarchical order, tension and conflict. Thus, if discourse in general is described as a social *field* made up of the totality of all effective statements (statements actually made and accepted as legitimate and correct), within this general field one finds a large variety of discourses ranging on a continuum from the personal to the more formal, well-defined and institutionalised discourses or *discursive formations*. The various discourses have different socially determined *values*, importance and authority. (cf. Foucault 1971:12). Of particular importance are the specific and distinct *discursive formations*, the institutionalised discourses of politics, economics, religion, juridical, literature, and science (cf. Foucault 1986:27).

Discursive formations are institutionalised discursive practices, each characterised by coherent unity, regularity and regulation of their statements. More clearly, a discursive formation is both a discursive practice and a configuration of statements produced according to particular rules and procedures. For example,

physics: discourse dealing with the ideal structure of bodies, mixtures, reactions, internal and external mechanisms; metaphysics: discourse dealing with the materiality of incorporeal things - phantasms, idols, and simulacra (Foucault 1988a:170).

These discourses claim to be true discourses of knowledge and are accorded special status in society (cf. Foucault 1986:108). Such specialised or *serious speech acts* are relatively autonomous because their statements have passed some sort of institutional test and affirmation, for example, the rules of dialectical argumentation, inquisitional interrogation, or empirical confirmation (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:48). Being relatively autonomous, the serious discourses of experts are divorced from local situations of assertion and are accorded a special status and significance in a society. Speakers using such discourses are accorded privilege, authority and power beyond their personal range of experience (cf.

Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:47-48). These discursive practices are of primary importance because they are important means of social reproduction and are the surface on which social systems of knowledge manifest themselves.

While the serious discourses of knowledge claim to be autonomous they could not be understood without their social and political contexts. In fact, even the seemingly simple acts of everyday speech make no sense without considering their social context. The social context of discursive practice means that discourse, like all other social practices, operates under control in society. However, while all social practices are controlled, discourse is more so because it is the primary mode of social production and reproduction. It has essentially a "political role in the formation of meanings - the meanings necessary for the constitution of man's images of himself", his world and society (cf. Racevskis 1983:16). Thus discursive practices are political practices and reflect the political and power structure of society (cf. Shapiro 1981:129). As a primary mode of social production and reproduction, discursive practice is interrelated to all other aspects of social life such as politics, culture, economics and other social institutions. This situates discursive practice in interrelationships of dependencies and correlations with the ensemble of all other social practices (cf. Foucault 1978b:19). Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse, they are embodied in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behaviour, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which at once, impose and maintain them" (Foucault 1988a:200).

Discursive practice involves actual human labour, material work, the use of physical force for production of linguistic expression, production and modification of physical linguistic material and so on (cf. Rossi-Landi 1992:163-164). Therefore, discourse owes its important characteristics to the linguistic (or symbolic) *relations of production* within which it is produced and these are themselves a particular expression of the structure of social power relations between the groups using language or any other symbolic systems (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:647). The logic or *raison d'être* of language or any symbolic system is not to be found in any abstract structure (*langue*), but rather in its historical and social conditions of production, reproduction and use (cf. Bourdieu 1990:40). Thus, according to Bourdieu (cf. 1977b:647) and Foucault (Racevskis 1983:16), an approach to understanding and the study

of discourse must replace the familiar emphasis on *form* and *content* with an emphasis on the *discursive event* and its historical conditions that make particular modes of discourse possible.

Social conditions based on the whole set of social power relations, conflicts and struggles provide discourse with its conditions of emergence and possible *existence* (cf. Foucault 1980:115). Every linguistic or symbolic exchange contains traces of the social structure that it reproduces; the whole social structure is present in discourse (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:653).

The material conditions of existence determine discourse through the linguistic production relations which they make possible and which they structure. For they govern not only the places and times of communication (determining the chances of meeting and communicating, through the social mechanisms of elimination and selection) but the forms of the communication, through the structure of the production relation in which discourse is generated (the distribution of authority between the speakers, of the specific competence, etc.) which enables certain agents to impose their own linguistic products and exclude other products (Bourdieu 1977b:653).

According to Foucault, discourse unfolds in every society within the context of external restraints that appear as rules of exclusion and permission and determine what can be said, who may have the right to speak on a given subject, what will constitute reasonable statement and what will count as *true* and what as *false*. Such rules provide the conditions of existence of discourse in different ways in different times and places (cf. White 1979:89).

The conception of discourse as a social practice suggests that it is the primary mode for constructing and communicating social knowledge and meaning. Being a social way of action, discourse is interlinked with the structure of social power relations. The interrelationship of discourse with the whole structure of society implies that in order to understand and study discourse one must look to locate signification within the context of a theory of power, and not a theory of power interpreted through signification (cf. Grossberg in McCoy 1988:75).

Power

2.6 DISCOURSE, POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

2.6.1 Power: the logic of discursive practice

Power is a fundamental concept in social science (cf. Russell 1960:8). However, while power and the way it operates is considered a crucial aspect of society and communication, not much attention is being given to its study by communication theorists (cf. McQuail 1984:91). In communication theory two basic approaches to the understanding of power are evident. Power is conceptualised as a possession and some scholars assume that to study the ownership and control of the mass media is to study power. Another approach conceptualises power as an entity and is reduced to the crude operation of the stimulus-response model. Scholars using this model focus their studies on the effects of the mass media, assuming that power is the magical ability of messages to influence the recipients.

Within the social sciences traditional approaches to the conceptualisation of power are also limited because they view it as a commodity and possession, being centralised and vested in the hands of the state, and almost exclusively as a sovereign or juridical apparatus (cf. Foucault 1980:102). From these perspectives power is seen essentially as repressive and can only formulate prohibitions (cf. Foucault 1981:81; 1980:118). However, according to Foucault (1980:119), such conceptions of power are negative, skeletal and limiting.

Power in the *substantive* sense, as a possession vested in a fixed social centre does not exist (cf. Foucault 1980:198). Power is a relation of forces and is exercised in a multiplicity of diffused centres in society. Such multiple relations of power permeate, characterise and constitute the social body (cf. Foucault 1980:93). Indeed, to the extent that power is centralised, it is dependent on the existence of local *relations of forces* that are consolidated into larger strategic alliances. In a society power is everywhere, comes from everywhere and is thus not an institution, possession or structure but "the name one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society" (Foucault 1981:93).

Power is coextensive with the whole social body and everyone is always "inside power and there is no escaping it or a position that is outside power relation" (Foucault 1981:95).

Power is the way relations of forces are deployed and therefore it should be conceptualised in terms of struggles, conflicts and war (cf. Foucault 1980:90). Relations of power within a society express themselves primarily in war and are translated into the order of political power (cf. Foucault 1981:102). Politics broadly involves the manipulation of symbols, goods, and violence (cf. Lasswell 1960:196). Thus politics is quite simply war conducted by other means, because the relations of power within a society are the result of relations of force that were established in a historically specific moment, in and through war, and such relations continue the unfinished battles of war (cf. Foucault 1980:90-91).

Foucault also suggests that power cannot be predominantly repressive. Indeed, if it were so, it would be a poor resource and unable to make anyone obey and submit to it. In order to be accepted and tolerated, power conceals itself and its operations (cf. Foucault 1981:86). The history of Western society is characterised by the fact that power was able to conceal itself in the guise of knowledge and truth. This is so because power makes it possible to determine the particular meanings of discourse and its social value.

Power is not entirely negative and repressive but is rather a productive network that runs through society.

What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasures, forms of knowledge, produces discourse (Foucault 1980:119).

Subject

The individual subject is a primary product of power. The subject is the result of "certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals" (Foucault 1980:98). The individual is the product of technologies of power, punishment, supervision and constraints and it is through such operations of power that the human *soul* is fabricated (cf. Foucault 1987:29). It is through such procedures that the human being is made a conscious subject and an object of knowledge. In other words, while the individual is constructed through language as a meaningful subject, this construction is motivated and driven by power relations.

NB

A characteristic of relations of power is the fact that where power is exercised there is also resistance. Power relations and resistance are expressed as social and historical struggles. The social world is characterised by its distribution of power monopolies. What is at stake in relations of power is the ability to win positions of dominance and control.

Relations of power expressed in conflicts (*agonistics*) and contest (*agon*) are the principle foundation of all aspects of society and culture (cf. Lyotard 1984:10, 16; Huizinga 1970:49, 198). The conflict is the *generative* and unifying principle and provides the *logic* or the *raison d'être* of any social and cultural field or discursive practice (cf. Bourdieu 1983:316). The social field of discursive practice, its structure and functioning is determined by the relations of forces that are the regulating *rules* of discursive practice.

2.6.2 The power of rules and the rules of power

All discursive practices are socially regulated practices and function according to *rules*. Such rules are not those of language (*langue*), logic or semantics but are the *practical rules* of discourse (cf. Foucault 1978b:18; 1986:28, 46, 48).

Discursive practices are governed by "a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical, or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function" (Foucault 1986:117). The rules that determine the operation of discourse reflect the *rule* (domination) of society over its language use. What at first seems like timeless *rules*, the systematic rules of language, logic of argumentation, norms, procedures for verification and interpretation *et cetera*, are in fact "a complex group of relations that *function as a rule*"¹⁸ and provide the possibility that a person may speak about this or that object, make specific enunciations, use certain concepts, form certain theories, *et cetera* (cf. Foucault 1986:74).

¹⁸ Emphasis has been added.

The rules, norms and regularities of discursive practice are not some universal *laws* but are social controls and regulations that developed in historical struggles, conflicts and wars. Mobile relations of power control and provide the *rules* for the operation of discourse. Owing to the fact that power conceals itself, these rules are *misrecognised* as being eternal moral directives, norms of truth, scientific normativity, principles of logic *et cetera*, rather than what they really are - expressions of social power relations (cf. Paden 1986:35)¹⁹.

The rules of discourse are not some metaphysical laws found in the conscious or unconscious minds of individuals. The use of discourse according to rules does not mean that people using discourse either follow rules or are governed by rules. Rules are customs, uses and institutions; following a rule simply means to obey an order and is the result of training; obeying rules is a practice, simply put, it is *the way things are done* (cf. Wittgenstein 1988:80-82, 85). Rules that determine the legitimate operations of discursive practices are themselves a consequence of the discursive practice and subject to contestation. Thus rules are not antecedent and consequently determine the discursive practice but are in dialectical interdependence with the discursive practice. Rules are constructed by the discursive practice and construct the discursive practice (cf. Lyotard 1984:10,17; Schrag 1980:111). Discursive practice operates under the rules of social constraint that *constrain* and *enable* it - that is, they enable because they constrain (cf. Fraser 1981:285).

The inscription of violence and marks of power function as rules and are accepted as norms of truth in discourse. Rules are empty in themselves as they do not have any essential meaning and can be bent to any purpose. Through successive struggles, these rules are taken over by those who are capable of taking possession of them, replacing those who have used them, inverting their meaning and using them against those who initially imposed them (cf. Foucault 1988a:151). According to Foucault (1988a:139), "the world of speech ... has known invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys" and, as a result, words have not retained their meaning and ideas have not retained their logic. One method for providing meaning is through the act of interpretation. However,

¹⁹ "Basically there is hardly any difference between the process that leads to the announcement of a new scientific law and the process preceding passage of a new law in society", both involve power politics and propaganda (cf. Feyerabend 1980:302-303).

interpretation is the violent or surreptitious appropriation of a system of rules, which in itself has no essential meaning, in order to impose a direction, to bend it to a new will, to force its participation in a different game, and to subject it to secondary rules (Foucault 1988a:151-152).

Meaning is a social process and is always linked to power. The history of society's domination over its language is a hidden dimension of meaning and inscribed in everyday speech (cf. Marcuse 1970:147). Words, language and discourses in themselves have no power. Power comes to discourse from outside, the power of words is never anything but the power to mobilise the authority to use those words (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:649). The power and effect of discourse do not reside in the symbolic system²⁰ but in the relationship between those who exercise power and those who undergo it.

What makes the power of words, the power of words to command and to order the world, is the belief in the legitimacy of the words and of him who utters them, a belief which words themselves cannot produce (Bourdieu 1977c:117).

Man: patriarch speaks
NB : he is believed to be legitimate speaker

The numerous mechanisms of social control over the use of language points to the fact that discourse is always related to power because the importance of discourse is found in its being the primary practice for the construction of social meaning and knowledge.

As an instrument of power, discourse is institutionalised and operates under the control of the powerful groups in a society.

→ Men speak

In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality (Foucault 1971:8).

The controls over discourse are manifest internally within various discourses, for example the discourse of the sciences, whereby various formal and informal rules are used to police the statements and the making of statements. Such *policing* of discourse also operates on a

²⁰ To believe that words and symbols have power in themselves, is to believe in the magic power of words.

large social scale. However, while it is possible to isolate the various internal and external rules and procedures that govern discourse they are, nevertheless, interrelated in a complex manner. For example, discourse is policed by external *rules of exclusion*, expressed as prohibitions regarding the objects of discourse, the circumstances where discourse may be used and the privileged right of someone to speak on a particular subject. Other such regulations relate to procedures of *division and rejection*, and criteria of *truth and falsity*. Internally within particular discourses, similar strategies in the guises of philosophical doctrines and formal methods of classification, division, verification *et cetera* are in operation (cf. Foucault 1971:8-10). These internal and external rules are, however, interlinked and they reinforce and compliment each other in a complex web (cf. Foucault 1971:8). All these internal and external procedures create one great edifice and have the same aim: the subjection of and control over discourse (cf. Foucault 1971:19). Therefore, even though there may be a distinct set of internal and external rules, it is not relevant to make this a principle dichotomy and concentrate either on external or internal rules nor consider discourse either as an autonomous, transcendent field of ideas capable of operating according to its own rules (such as *pure science, pure art et cetera* as a field of disinterested cultural production) or, as being entirely and directly determined by social and economic conditions (as Marxists suggest). The rules should rather be considered in their mutual interrelationships (cf. Bourdieu 1983:314-316; Bourdieu 1975:22; Foucault 1978b:19; Foucault 1983:218).

Such regulation prescribes the legitimate objects that may be spoken about, the ritual and circumstances of speech and the privilege and exclusive right of people to speak on particular subjects (cf. Foucault 1971:8). Social regulation of discourse, based on relations of power, determines the regularities, structures and functions of discourse, authorise the use of legitimate language, legitimate the objects of discourse, legitimate knowledge and legitimate speakers and listeners (cf. Foucault 1988a:199; Bourdieu 1977b:648-649). NB 9.

The fact that power is the motivating force behind discourse means that the traditional conceptions of knowledge and its interrelationship with power can be reformulated.

2.6.3 Discourse and knowledge

Discourse is a regulated way for giving, communicating and contesting meaning of the world, acquiring knowledge, organising social institutions, and constructing the individual sense of self. Discourse is the visible praxis of what is termed *thinking*, because "thinking is nothing but the organization of signs as an ongoing process" and it is "the only evidence whatsoever not only for thinking but for all human knowing and doing" (Reiss 1982:9-10). Whether human thought can exist as some ideal intelligibility independent of discourse is still a point of debate, but in any event, human thought is nothing until it can manifest itself materially in discourse.

Discourse provides the means for human beings to apprehend reality and to *represent* such reality to their consciousness. Human thought is primarily *discursive cognition*, symbolic means such as signs, language and discourse provide the conceptual framework, or the dominant organising principle and classification by which the world may be perceived. Heidegger points out (in Lawson 1985:80) that "words and language are not wrappings in which things are packed for the commerce of those who write and speak. It is in words and language that things first come into being and are". The language that is used (discourse) provides the conceptual means or an *operating table* and *tabula* that enable thought to operate on the entities of the world, to put them in order, to divide and to classify. Whatever the world may be, it is only knowable, understood and operated upon in the *non-place* of language (cf. Foucault 1989a:xvii).

Knowledge exists in the statements of the various discursive practices and may be found at any level within the society; in daily conversation, in literature, in the laws, in the moral codes and in scientific and semi-scientific disciplines (cf. McDonnell 1977:549), in narratives, institutional regulations and political decisions (cf. Foucault 1986:183-184).

Not all knowledge is equal. Different discourses contain different categories of knowledge each with its particular value. The English word *knowledge* does not allow to show such a distinction, however, in the writing of Foucault, Bourdieu and Lyotard, the word knowledge denotes two particular terms, *connaissance* and *savoir*. *Savoir* is knowledge in general, the

totality of knowledges that exist in a particular society at a specific historical moment and are generally accepted as self-evident *doxa*. *Connaissance* designates formal knowledge gained through *scholarship* and the particular methods for acquiring such knowledge is found in the various disciplines and sciences. *Savoir* provides the conditions for the formation of *connaissance*, the particular formal knowledge within specific discourse which is legitimated as the *orthodoxy* or the correct opinion (cf. Foucault 1986:15; Bourdieu 1977a:167-168; Lyotard 1984:18-19; Lemert & Gillan 1982:133). A characteristic of our society is the fact that more and more discursive practices are becoming epistemologised and acquire power (cf. Foucault 1986:195).

Knowledge is essentially what may be said and accepted as true within any discourse and thus is dependent on socially accepted criteria or *norms of truth*. Being discursive, knowledge is not something objective that may be discovered but is historically and politically constructed within an entire network of social power relations. There is no universal *Truth*. *Truth* is not some timeless concept but is *a thing of this world*, is socially determined and produced only under social constraints (Foucault 1980:131).

Each society has its régime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the type of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (Foucault 1980:131).

Knowledge is not simply the ability to know the right and true things and to make true statements. Knowledge involves competence - *know-how* - and goes beyond the simple determination and application of the criterion of *truth*, or making correct statements (cf. Lyotard 1984:18). Knowledge involves an imposition of a whole set of technologies and procedures on the knowing human subject (cf. Foucault 1971:11). Within formal discourses of knowledge (i.e. the various human sciences and disciplines), the position of the subject in relation to the object of knowledge is determined by a complex set of rules and prescriptions that provides the legitimate ways for talking and acquiring knowledge (cf. Foucault 1986:182-183).

Le
Sujet

Knowledge is a historical invention that has proved useful for the appropriation of the things that are necessary for survival (cf. Foucault 1988a:150). There is no basic distinction between *interested* and *disinterested* knowledge (cf. Foucault 1987:28). Knowledge is not simply a natural and universal will to know or a neutral and disinterested way of understanding the world. As Nietzsche points out, "knowledge is not made for understanding; it is made for cutting" (Foucault 1988a:154). As a result, knowledge in a particular discourse is not the totality of knowledge (i.e. the totality of statements that can be made regarding a particular subject matter), but is limited to what is considered relevant within the particular discourse. Each discourse contains both truths and errors (cf. Foucault 1971:15)²¹. Therefore it should not be surprising that discursive practices entail

discursive production (which also administer silences, to be sure), of production of power (which sometimes have the function of prohibiting), of the propagation of knowledge (which often cause mistaken beliefs or systematic misconceptions to circulate) (Foucault 1981:12).

In other words, knowledge is a mask that conceals the human *will to power* (cf. Foucault 1971:11-12).

2.6.4 Discourse as a locus of power-knowledge

In Western society the *will to power* has been concealed as *true* knowledge and is mainly associated with scientific discourse and institutions. Therefore, it is a mistake to consider the truth of science as being based entirely on consensus arrived at through unconstrained dialogue and rational discussion free from domination whereby the power of the best argument is the only valid criteria, as is claimed by Habermas (1977:7). According to Lyotard (1984:60-61, 65-66), this is to disregard the fact that power is itself an efficient means to validate truth. Interested forces, propaganda, brainwashing techniques and brute

²¹ In the human science there is a common *ideological fallacy* that consists of believing that one own's approach is not ideological because it is supposedly *neutral* or *objective*. However, all inquiry is motivated. "Theoretical research is a form of social practice. Everybody who wants to know something wants to know it in order to do something. If he claims that he wants to know only in order 'to know' and not in order 'to do' it means that he wants to know it in order to do nothing, which is in fact a surreptitious way of doing something, i.e. leaving the world just as it is (or as his approach assumes that it ought to be)" (Eco 1979:29).

force play a much greater role than is commonly believed in the growth of knowledge. The use of good argument and correct logic does not guarantee the acceptance and success of scientific knowledge. What is the use of good arguments if they leave people unmoved? If the arguments turn out to be too weak, the propagators of new theories and the defenders of old ones resort to *stronger* means - they stop reasoning and turn to propaganda and coercion (cf. Feyerabend 1980:25). The use of brute force and the killing of opponents have been favourite methods to win approval for knowledge throughout history (cf. Peckham 1969). Indeed, there is no document of civilization that is not at the same time a document of barbarism (cf. Benjamin 1973:258).

Of course, power and knowledge must not be considered to be identical - knowledge is not power and power is not knowledge - but rather they have a complex interrelationship (cf. Foucault 1988b:43, 265). Historically the sciences have become practical domains and acquired a degree of relative autonomy and self-regulation (cf. Foucault 1986:121-122).

These types of practices are not just governed by institutions, prescribed by ideologies, guided by pragmatic circumstances ... but possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and 'reason' (Foucault 1991:75).

However, such relative autonomy cannot be understood without recourse to social and intellectual conditions of possibility. Their rules of operation cannot be formulated in their own right without taking into consideration their social contexts. The social sciences are not neutral and outside power, the knowledge of man produced by these sciences is always linked to politics (cf. Foucault 1989a:328). The serious discursive practices, even if they seem autonomous, are continually affected by the forces of the economic and political fields that surround them (cf. Bourdieu 1983:320).

Knowledge is subject to political and economic demands, it is circulated and consumed in society, and produced under control and restraints. For the past 200 years the sciences have proved themselves useful in making man both an object of knowledge and a subject of power. The political importance and status that these sciences have acquired in society are linked in part with their social usefulness for power relations. At a basic level science is

influenced directly by the political regime and the best known examples are found in the Nazi and Stalinist eras but also in other seemingly more democratic societies (cf. Kaplan 1964:5). According to Foucault, knowledge is not so much true or false but rather legitimate or illegitimate for a set of power relations. In other words, all knowledge is political not only because it is politically useful but because it has its condition of possibility in power relations (cf. Sheridan 1986:220).

Discourse is of primary importance in the exercise of power because relations of power cannot be established, consolidated or implemented without "the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of discourse" (Foucault 1980:93). Power and knowledge are joined together in discourse (cf. Foucault 1981:100). "There is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice; and any discursive practice may be defined by the knowledge that it forms" (Foucault 1986:183). Knowledge is dependent on discourse because it is a linguistic product.

No body of knowledge can be formed without a system of communications, records, accumulation and displacement which is in itself a form of power and which is linked, in its existence and functioning, to the other forms of power. Conversely, no power can be exercised without the extraction, appropriation, distribution or retention of knowledge. On this level, there is no knowledge on the one side and society on the other, or science and the state, but only the fundamental forms of knowledge/power (Foucault in Sheridan 1986:131).

There is a constant articulation of power on knowledge and knowledge on power; the exercise of power creates objects of knowledge and discourse and conversely, knowledge induces effects of power (cf. Foucault 1980:51-52). Such interrelationship between power and knowledge permeates the whole society.

In any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterise and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subject to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth (Foucault 1980:93).

The interrelationship of power-knowledge means that any advances in the accumulation of knowledge are also advances in the exercise of power. It should be evident that power produces knowledge, "power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1987:27). In other words, a site where power is exercised is also a place at which knowledge is produced (cf. Smart 1988:64).

It is the production of effective instruments for the formation and accumulation of knowledge - methods of observation, techniques of registration, procedures for investigation and research, apparatuses of control. All this means that power, when it is exercised through these subtle mechanisms, cannot but evolve, organise and put into circulation a knowledge, or rather apparatuses of knowledge (Foucault 1980:102).

There is no *exteriority* between power and knowledge and no one can be outside power (cf. Foucault 1981:98). Therefore, "the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations" (Foucault 1987:27-28). Power-knowledge relations channel, determine and structure discursive practices and determine what may be spoken about, who may speak and who must listen.

2.6.5 The structure and function of discursive practice

The social space of discourse is constructed as the result of long term practices and through the play of forces at a particular historical moment. On such space various objects and subjects are constructed and engage in battle. What takes place on such a field are not merely verbal exchanges between speaking subjects but battles with serious social consequences (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:109). The social field of discourse is a battlefield where the identities of individuals are constructed and political forms of society are defined and contested. Discourse is not a reflection of some *ideal* reality, nor does it carry any deep or hidden meaning - it is as it appears.

The structure and functioning of discourse is determined by the relations of forces in society. The field of discourse is itself an expression of the relations of power in society. All social and cultural fields of discourse - the discourses of science, art, literature, religion, law, politics, *et cetera* - are fields of forces with their distribution of power and monopolies, struggles, strategies, interests and profits. [What is at stake in these struggles is the monopoly over positions of authority, legitimacy and power] (cf. Bourdieu 1975:19; Bourdieu 1977b:647; Bourdieu 1983:312). These relationships determine the objects of discourse, the role of the subjects and the social speech act.

♂ vs ♀

2.6.5.1 *Objects of discourse*

Discourse is not simply a neutral medium for representing an objective reality but rather it is *constitutive* and *non-referential*, as it brings into existence a reality for human beings. In other words, discursive practices are "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1986:49).

There is no pre-existing natural *order of things* waiting patiently to be discovered (cf. Foucault 1986:44-45). The world does not have prior signification but it is a mere disorder (cf. Foucault 1971:22). The existence of things depends firstly on their being objects of discourse (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:50). There is no direct access to a raw reality. No unmediated perception can distinguish differences and similarities between things without a culturally constructed discursive *grid* of intelligibility.

objet

The fundamental codes of culture - those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices - establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical order with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home (Foucault 1989a:xx).

However, the codes of culture do not merely define "the dumb existence of a reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the ordering of objects" (Foucault 1986:49). To the extent that human beings see an ordered reality, such an order is the imposition of discourse and power.

We should not imagine that the world presents us with a legible face, leaving us merely to decipher it; it does not work hand in glove with what we already know; there is no pre-discursive fate disposing the world in our favour. We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them (Foucault 1971:22).

Objects

The objects of discourse are the real or imaginary *references* of discourse - that is, the things one can know, may speak about, name, analyse, classify, explain and challenge within a particular discourse (cf. Foucault 1986:46).

The objects of discourse are not formed once and for all but are constantly modified and changed through discourse (cf. Foucault 1986:47). New objects arise not because of continuous progress, revolutionary scientific discoveries, construction of superior means of observation and the refutation of errors. New objects of discourse are the result of a reorganisation of knowledge and a shift in the use of discourse that define the objects that are to be known (cf. Foucault 1989c:x).

Not that reason made any progress; it was simply that the mode of being of things, and the order that divided them up before presenting them to the understanding, was profoundly altered (Foucault 1989a:xxii).

The objects of discourse emerge from a set of complex social relations established within the discursive practice and determined in historical and social conditions. An object of discourse is constructed in particular social institutions, by individuals who are authorised to talk about such specific objects according to particular accepted procedures used to define and classify such objects (cf. Foucault 1986:41-42).

The emergence of the objects of discourse is also related to the speaking individual making statements. Like the objects of discourse the subjects are assigned roles within the discourse. NB

2.6.5.2 Roles for human subjects in discourse

Discourse provides a particular role that may be filled by different individuals (cf. Foucault 1986:93-95). While, seemingly, discourse provides a place for anyone to speak, speaking is not a free activity. It is obvious that "we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone finally, may speak of just anything" (Foucault 1971:8). To speak implies that one is in a position of power to speak because "speech presupposes a legitimate transmitter addressing a legitimate receiver, one who is recognized and recognizing" (Bourdieu 1977b:649).

2 The right to speech is the right to power through speech. Words and speech in themselves have no power. The power of words is derived from the power of the speaker to mobilise the institutionalised authority to use such words (cf. Bourdieu 1977b:649). For example,

medical statements cannot come from anybody; their value, efficacy, even their therapeutic powers, and, generally speaking, their existence as medical statements cannot be dissociated from the statutorily defined person who has the right to make them, and to claim for them the power to overcome suffering and death (Foucault 1986:51).

In order to speak with any meaning and authority the speaker needs to acquire an institutionalised position. Such a position requires a whole complex of rules and conditions that the speaker must satisfy. These conditions for entering into discourse include educational qualifications, membership of social groups and adherence to available theoretical doctrines, *et cetera*. These provide the institutional *sites* from which the subject is empowered to speak and define the role of the speaker (cf. Foucault 1986:122).

The individual may only speak about specific objects that are collectively established as legitimate objects of discourse. In order to speak with any authority and credibility the individual must produce statements that are considered *true* otherwise he is totally ignored and his statements are considered to be meaningless (cf. Foucault 1971:16-17).

eg. profession
+ deny this

The position and power of the individual producing discourse are defined in relation to other positions available within the institutions. Every discursive position is defined in relation to the other positions constituting the field of discourse (cf. Bourdieu 1983: 312). Different historical periods provide different conditions for discourse and positions for the speaking subjects. Different discourses also position human subjects differently, for example

according to a certain grid of explicit or implicit interrogations, he is the questioning subject and, according to a certain programme of information, he is the listening subject; according to a table of characteristic features, he is the seeing subject, and according to a descriptive type, the observing subject (Foucault 1986:52).

One of the clearest examples of discursive positioning is seen by the grid of perception provided by the discourse of Empiricism which began in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This discourse

sketched out a schema of possible, observable, measurable and classifiable objects ... imposed upon the knowing subject - in some ways taking precedence over all experience - a certain position, a certain viewpoint, and a certain function (look rather than read, verify rather than comment) ... prescribed .. and .. determined ... the technical level at which knowledge could be employed in order to be verifiable and useful (Foucault 1971:10-11).

The subjects producing discourse are "determined in their situation, their function, their perceptive capacity, and their practical possibilities by conditions that dominate and even overwhelm them" (Foucault 1989a:xiv). However, these conditions must not be considered as imposing a rigid limitation on the initiative of the speaker, but rather provide the possibilities in which the individual's initiative can operate (cf. Foucault 1986:209). In other words, discursive practice is a field of objectively defined and institutionalised *positions* but it also allows a limited degree of individual initiative for *taking a position* within such a field (cf. Bourdieu 1983:312).

The speaker is empowered by the institution and is also able, to a limited degree, to confer power on himself by association with the group or institution. The power of the speaker and his institution is determined by the social hierarchy and distribution of power in the

discursive practice. While the role and positions of the individual subjects are institutionally conferred, the institutions themselves (e.g. a particular discursive formation, a certain group of people, a theoretical school, *et cetera*) are in turn defined by the individuals who represent them. The institution is nothing other than what represents it.

The representative, the individual who represents the group, in every sense of the term, who conceives it mentally and expresses it verbally, names it, who acts and speaks in its name, who gives it concrete incarnation, embodies it in and through his very person; the individual who by making the group seen, by making himself seen in its place, and above all, by making the group seen, by speaking in its place, makes it exist (Bourdieu 1987:14).

Therefore, the roles for the subjects can be identified according to a grid of (1) the specific individual who is accorded the right and status and is qualified to use such discourse; (2) the institutional site from which the individual makes his discourse and from which the discourse derives its legitimacy; (3) the legitimate position that the speaking individual must take in relation to the object of his discourse (cf. Foucault 1986:50-52). From such a complex matrix, the objects of discourse come into being and accredited speakers can make their statements.

2.6.5.3 *Statements: speech acts on a battlefield*

Discursive practices consist of making statements. The statements are not free and isolated *atoms* of discourse nor basic units. Statements are functions of discourse and can be located by reference to the objects and subjects of discourse (cf. Foucault 1986:87).

A statement is always part of an *enunciative field* and is related to, surrounded by and interacts with other statements in discourse (cf. Foucault 1986:97, 106). There is no statement that does not re-actualise other statements and serve as a reference for subsequent statements.

At the very outset, from the very root, the statement is divided up into an enunciative field in which it has a place and a status, which arranges for it a possible relation with the past, and which opens up for it a possible future.

Every statement is specified in this way: there is no statement in general, no free neutral, independent statement; a statement always belongs to a series or a whole, always plays a role among other statements, deriving support from them and distinguishing itself from them: it is always a part of a network of statements in which it has a role, however minimal it may be, to play ... There is no statement that does not presuppose others; there is no statement that is not surrounded by a field of coexistences, effects of series and successions, a distribution of functions and roles (Foucault 1986:99).

The meaning of a statement is not its grammatical, semantic or logical meaning, nor is it linked to the existence of a real referent. The meaning of a statement is defined by its *use* and function in the discursive practice (cf. Foucault 1986:90). In other words, the meaning of a statement is derived from the fact that it was actually *made*, or said.

The meaning of a statement would be defined not by the treasure of intentions that it may contain, revealing and concealing at the same time, but by the difference that articulates it upon the other real or possible statements, which are contemporary to it or to which it is opposed in the linear series of time (Foucault 1989c:xvii).

The meaning of a statement is its value within discourse,

a value that is not defined by their truth, that is not gauged by the presence of secret content; but which characterizes their place, their capacity for circulation and exchange, their possibility of transformation (Foucault 1986:120).

The statement is a commodity that people can be "manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy" (Foucault 1986:105).

Thus the statement circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realisation of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and in struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry (Foucault 1986:105).

The struggle and rivalry is derived from the fact that discourse is the primary mode of defining social reality. The structuring of cognition is not simply a provision of a conceptual schemata or a neutral frame of intelligibility, nor is it a matter of providing a theory that

explains reality, but it is a true political practice. Human thought is not simply a theoretical reflection, it is a certain mode of social action.

As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action - a perilous act (Foucault 1989a:328).

Thought expressed in a formal theory or dogma is a site of social struggle over **how** to represent and construct reality and the means of changing it. A theory is in fact a *strategy* for organising concepts, objects and enunciation and in turn, these organise reality (cf. Foucault 1986:64). Even a seemingly non-theoretical practice conceals its arbitrary mode of knowing and representing the way things are. Thus a theory, is not simply a matter for philosophical contemplation but a tool box, an instrument that is functional and useful in social combats, "theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice: it is practice" (Foucault 1988a:208).

Discourse is not simply something that exists in the realm of ideas, but it is an activity that has practical significance because it articulates strategies by reality may be mastered (cf. Megill 1987:233). According to Foucault (Gordon 1980:245), discourse defines its object simultaneously as a target area for intervention and as a reality to be brought into existence. Discourse is used to fabricate or *fiction*²² both past and present realities. "One 'fictions' history on the basis of a political reality that makes it true, one 'fictions' a politics not yet in existence on the basis of a historical truth" (Foucault 1980:193).

Owing to the fact that the existing social order is discursively constructed, it can also be discursively attacked, contested and re-made (cf. Megill 1987:238). Discourse as an object of practice is, therefore, an asset over which a struggle for political power is waged (cf. Foucault 1986:120). However, discourse is not simply a medium for the representation of

²² The word *fiction* is used here in a double sense: to imply an activity of creation, or the *manufacture* or fabrication of things as well as a reference to an imaginary fantasy.

social conflicts and systems of domination. Discourse is itself an object of man's desire and the very object about which conflict arises, it is the thing *for* which, and *by* which conflicts are fought (cf. Foucault 1971:8-9).

Discourse is a tactical instrument, a weapon of attack and defence in the relations of power and knowledge and social battles are fought "among discourses and through discourses" (Foucault 1978a:x-xi). These are battles of great consequence because they define social reality.] NB

The social demands for knowledge and truth, which are motivated by the *will to power*, demonstrate that certain areas of social existence, certain practices, objects, types of persons, *et cetera* at certain historical moments may be problematised and become *social problems*. The objects so established became a domain for intervention, control and contest by institutional practices. Thus, if a certain object or domain has become an area of investigation,

this was because relations of power had established it as a possible object; and conversely if power was able to take it as a target, this was because techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse were capable of investing it (Foucault 1981:98).

For example, Foucault's studies of madness (1989b), sexuality (1981) and imprisonment (1987) point to the fact that while these concepts, institutions and practices may today appear as self-evident entities, they do not, however, signify any real anthropological entities but are arbitrary historical constructs which, through a whole network of discursive practice, became

a group of objects that can be talked about (or that it is forbidden to talk about), a field of possible enunciations (whether in lyrical or legal language), a group of concepts (which can no doubt be presented in the elementary form of notions or themes), a set of choices (which may appear in the coherence of behaviour or in systems of prescription) (Foucault 1986:193).

By producing discourse on particular objects a whole regime of power-knowledge-pleasure comes into existence. Such a regime empowers some groups that are able to control discourse

to dominate other groups. However, discourse should be considered merely in the simple dichotomy of being either subservient to power or raised in opposition to power. There is no simple division between dominant discourse and subjugated discourse. Discourse is both an instrument and the effect of power and a hindrance and starting point of opposition to power (Foucault 1981:101). Indeed, one aspect of the operation of power is that it encounters resistance. Discourse of power and authority is always confronted by a *counter-discourse* of resistance (cf. Foucault 1988a:209). Thus discourse transmits and produces power, it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (cf. Foucault 1981:101). A complex multiplicity of discursive elements and various strategies are always in operation (cf. Foucault 1981:100-101). For example,

a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another time as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality (Foucault 1980:194-195).

2.7 METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF DISCURSIVE THEORY

Discourse conceptualised as a social practice is linked to power and knowledge and provides a distinctive level for the study of the systems of thought and knowledge and power relations of a particular society (cf. Foucault 1971:8-9; Foucault 1988a:200). Therefore, discursive practices provide material for the analysis of society (cf. Foucault 1978a:xi-xii).

The complexity of discourse provides some difficulty for its study. Discourse is both dependent and independent. On the one hand, the *serious* discursive practices (or discursive formations) of knowledge (the human sciences) have attained a certain autonomy through institutionalisation, have visible formal structure and "possess up to a point their own specific regularities, logic, strategy, self-evidence and reason" (Foucault 1991:75). Yet their intellectual conditions of possibility and existence are dependent on social conditions, and are regulated by institutions and ideologies. Discursive practices are interlinked and enmeshed in a complex way with a multiplicity of social and historical processes, and are situated in a whole field of social relations of power from which they cannot be separated. Foucault

points out that social reality consists of three spheres of activity: (1) the field of objects, production and transformation of the real world; (2) the field of communication and production of meaning; and (3) the field of power relations, of action of men upon other men and domination (cf. Foucault 1983:218)²³. However, while these spheres seem to be distinct, they are not separate but overlap one another, support one another reciprocally, and use each other mutually as means to an end. It makes no sense to consider discourse in isolation from its social context because discursive practices are deployed among other practices and are articulated on them (cf. Foucault 1983:218; 1986:194). The social *regimes of discursive practices* and *regimes of knowledge and truth* are dependent on, and grounded in the *regimes of social power relations*.

Because of the complex networks and the continually shifting field of the power-knowledge relations, the traditional approaches provided by hermeneutics and structuralism are inadequate. According to Foucault (1980:114), in order to describe the complexity of discursive events a model of war and battles is more appropriate than model of language (*langue*).

Neither the dialectic, as logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts. 'Dialectics' is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality conflicts by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton, and 'semiology' is a way of avoiding its violent, bloody and lethal character by reducing it to the calm Platonic form of language and dialogue (Foucault 1980:114-115).

Such an approach does not look for a single method but rather for a tactical means that can function strategically in the continually shifting field of power-knowledge relations (cf. Bernauer 1990:145; Foucault 1991:76). This is not a specific methodology but rather a framework for a patiently documentary decipherment that provides insights and intelligibility on a field of complex discursive events (cf. Foucault 1988a:139; 1991:74). In order to be able to capture the complex relationships that are involved, Foucault suggests the use of a

²³ Discursive practice is one of the three primary modes through which interaction between human beings and their world takes place: the *signitive*, the *actional* and *fabricational* (cf. Dauenhauer 1980:146).

strategic model - the *apparatus (dispositif)* (cf. Bernauer 1990:145), for a *descriptive and analytical* diagnostic analysis of discursive practices (cf. Gordon 1980:244).

2.7.1 A strategic framework for the analysis of discursive practice

As will be recalled, discursive practices are socially and historically situated "places where what is said and what is done, the rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and taken for granted meet and interconnect" (Foucault 1991:75).

In order to make sense of such practices the researcher constructs a flexible heuristic model (*apparatus*), a grid of analysis that can function strategically and make these practices intelligible and reveal the power and knowledge relations involved (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:121-122). The apparatus brings together the discourse and its social context and eliminates the traditional dichotomy that conceptualises texts as representations existing apart from the *real* world of institution and social action (cf. Kuhn 1989:4-5).

The *apparatus* or *grid of intelligibility* (Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:121) brings various elements together. The *apparatus* is

a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions - in short, the said as much as the unsaid (Foucault 1980:194).

The apparatus also consists of the systems of relations that can be established between these elements in discursive practices (cf. Foucault 1980:194). The aim is to make sense of these practices and to decipher what is going on without recourse to the explanation given by the human participants themselves.

The first aim in examining discursive practices is to describe what is really going on and to identify why a particular object or domain has become a centre of attention for such practices. The task is to *deconstruct* and disturb the self-evidence of these practices. There is a need to go beyond the traditional answers that claim, for example, that a particular

object, such as pornography is being put into discourse because it is objectively recognised as a serious social problem and is in need of investigation. However, there is no special reason why, at a particular historical moment, a certain object rather than another is taken up, constructed and modified by discursive practices. For example, there is no reason why mad people have to be considered as mentally ill, no reason that sexuality or pornography are the main focus of interest (cf. Foucault 1991:76). Discursive objects have no prior signification, their signification is constructed in and through historical battles over signification (cf. Foucault 1971:22). If such objects are constructed, problematised, brought into, and modified by discursive practices, this simply means that relations of power are able to establish such objects as objects of discourse. Conversely, if power is able to take hold of such objects as its target, this means that techniques of knowledge and procedures of discourse are available for such operations (cf. Foucault 1981:98).

The first question that a critical researcher will ask is why one object is problematic while another is not. The way to begin answering this question is by means of a historical examination to determine whether such an object has always been an object of discourse in the past (cf. Harvey 1990:209). For example, regarding pornography the question that would be asked is whether pornography has always been a problem in the past? Such a historical examination involves a move back in time to find out the beginning of such problematisation²⁴ and to retrace its historical development. However, such a re-reading of history cannot be conceived within the traditional approaches to historical analysis. Traditional modes of historical analysis usually construct the history of the past in terms of the present and thus involve two basic fallacies of *presentism* and *finalism* (cf. Foucault 1987:31; Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:118).

Presentism means that the researcher takes a model, concept, institution or symbol from the present and attempts by definition to determine whether it had a parallel meaning in the past. This involves projecting the researcher's own present interests, institutions and politics back into history. The researcher then claims to have discovered that the concept, symbol or

²⁴ Problematisation is the totality of discursive and non-discursive practices that introduce something into the play of true and false and constitute it as an object for thought in the form of moral reflection, scientific knowledge, political analysis, etc (cf. Foucault 1988b:257).

institution had in earlier times the same meaning as it now has. The other fallacy of *finalism* is a kind of history that finds the kernel of the present at some distant point in the past and shows that there was some finalised providential necessity for the development from the past right up to the present. From this framework, everything is shown to have happened as if according to a preordained plan that progressed to its ultimate perfection in the present; everything is seen to have had its proper order, meaning and situation according to the final goal that it will attain (cf. Dreyfus & Rabinow 1983:118). In order to overcome these fallacies, an analysis must begin from the assumption that nothing has any prior signification, that history is a series of chance events and signification is determined by the play of forces (cf. Foucault 1980:114-115; 1988a:154)²⁵.

Once a different discourse is found, its history, structure and function can be traced to the present through a two-dimensional process of *deconstruction* or decomposition of the discursive events into their multiplicity of constituting elements, and *reconstruction* of the relationships between the various elements (cf. Foucault 1991:76; Smart 1988:58)²⁶.

The aim of *deconstruction* is to find the various elements that come together in a particular historical moment to constitute a discursive practice. The aim is to account for the fact that a particular object, for example, pornography is spoken about, to discover who does the speaking, the position and viewpoint from which they speak and the institutions that prompt people to speak about it and store and distribute the information (cf. Foucault 1981:11). This involves a patient and documentary description and results in drawing a map of positions, relationships and social conflicts. Once these elements are mapped it is possible to begin a reconstruction of the relationships of power and strategies of discourse that are put into practice. The *reconstruction* involves careful reading of the events and

²⁵ "History is full of accidents and conjunctures and curious juxtapositions of events and it demonstrates to us the complexity of human change and the unpredictable character of the ultimate consequences of any given act or decision of men" (Feyerabend 1980:17).

²⁶ This approach follows in the general framework of critical research. Critical research involves interrelated deconstruction and reconstruction of the research object. Critical research follows on three lines of enquiry: (1) asking what essentially is going on and why certain objects, practices, etc. have been demarcated in a particular way; (2) a historical examination and (3) determining what social structures reproduce the social practice under investigation (cf. Harvey 1990:208-209)

rediscovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, play of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what subsequently counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary (Foucault 1991:76).

Such an analysis should reveal the effects of power generated by what is said, the links between discourses, effects of power and pleasure invested in them and the knowledge formed from such linkages. Such an analysis involves a multiple process that leads to an increasing polymorphism as the analysis progresses: diversity of the elements that are brought into relations, a diversity of relations; and diversity of domains of reference (cf. Foucault 1991:77).

In order to account for the fact that a particular object, such as pornography for example, is spoken about, the relevant questions to ask are:

- What knowledge, procedures of discourse and relations of power made it possible for a discursive practice to emerge?
- Where and in what places and institutions does the object of discourse begin to emerge?
- Who is doing the speaking? Who is excluded from the discursive practice?
- What institutionalised positions and viewpoints do the speakers occupy?
- Which institutions prompt and incite speech, and store and distribute what is being said?
- What counter-discourses of resistance emerge?

The usefulness of such a framework for a critical analysis can be tested by applying it to the discourse on pornography. Such an application to a case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa is illustrated in Chapter 3.

2.8 SUMMARY

This chapter explains the theoretical background of the post-structuralist *discursive approach* and draws mainly on the theoretical writing of Foucault and Bourdieu. A theoretical framework for the understanding of discourse as a social practice is explained and a strategic

model for the analysis of discourse outlined. The model for analysis of discourse is applied in a case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa (Chapter 3). The application of the discursive framework will demonstrate the utility of the *discursive approach* and provide insight into the controversy surrounding pornography.

CHAPTER 3

AN APPLICATION OF DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN DISCOURSE ON PORNOGRAPHY

The fact that pornography is branded as 'communistic infiltration' in South Africa and as 'Western propaganda' in some Eastern-Bloc countries suggests that morals as such have very little to do with the matter.

Andre Brink (1983:240)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research question posed in Chapter 1 asked whether a theoretical framework developed from the post-structuralist *discursive approach* could be used to elucidate a contemporary social problem. The underlying assumption motivating the research question is that in order to understand any social problem, it is necessary to approach it from a communication perspective and examine the discourse in which such a problem is constructed. It was argued that the available approaches have proved inadequate for the analysis of contemporary social problems and that an alternative approach and method of analysis that could illuminate such problems is derived from the post-structuralist *discursive approach* explained in Chapter 2. The answer to the research question requires that the theoretical framework and method of analysis be applied to a contemporary social problem. The discourse on the problem of pornography in South Africa was selected for such a case study. The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the application of the discursive framework to a case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa. The application of the *discursive framework* provides an

illustration of the theory and method in practice. Such an application also provides a description and analysis that illuminates the controversy surrounding pornography.

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part provides a review of the *problem of pornography* and highlights the contradictions and issues of contentions regarding pornography. The second part applies the discursive framework for an analysis of the South African discourse on pornography.

3.2 THE PUZZLE OF PORNOGRAPHY: A REVIEW OF THE CONTROVERSY

The word pornography means the writing about and representation of sexuality and not real-life sex itself (cf. Kappeler 1986:2). As such pornography is essentially communication, it is "a mode of discourse, a way of thinking, talking and depicting sexual practices" (McCormack 1989:331). Pornography, which is nothing more than a collection of images, words and discourses on sexual activity, is not a new phenomenon.

Descriptions of sex are as old as sex itself. There can be little doubt that talking about sex has been around as long as talking, that writing about sex has been around as long as writing, and that pictures of sex have been around as long as pictures (Attorney General's Commission on Pornography 1986:9).

Historically, the production of what is considered *pornography* is a very common human activity. Literary and visual depictions of sexuality or *erotic art* have existed in abundance in every period and in every culture of humanity (cf. Christensen 1990a:2; Foxon 1963; G. N. Gordon 1980:36; Kinsey *et al.* 1948:22; Roth 1977:2; Williams 1981:93; Wagner 1990), and even in the Bible (cf. Geldenhuys 1979:2).

Every medium of communication to date has been used for the communication of pornography "not on a limited basis but to whatever extent that technology - and the inventive mind of man - could contrive, regardless of so-called 'public attitudes' at the time or the law" (G. N. Gordon 1980:33).

The increased availability and public visibility of pornography have also increasingly become a topic of heated public debate and controversy. Pornography has become one of the most controversial topics of our time (cf. Gorman 1988:11). The controversy focuses on the demand for restriction on its production, circulation and availability in society because of its presumed effects. Pornography is claimed to be the cause of a mixed variety of influences and phenomena in society. For example, pornography is claimed to be the cause of

sexually aggressive acts of a criminal nature, unlawful sexual practices, nonconsensual sex acts, incest, sexually perverse behavior, adultery, illegal sexual activities, socially disapproved sexual behavior, sexual practices harmful to the self, deadly serious pursuit of sexual satisfaction, dehumanized sexual acts, preoccupation or obsession with sex, a change in direction of sexual development away from the natural pathway, blocking of psychosexual maturation, misinformation about sex, moral breakdown, homicide, suicide, delinquency, criminal acts, indecent personal habits, unhealthy habits, unhealthy thoughts, rejection of reality, ennui, submission to authoritarianism, sex attitudes, sex values, sex information, sex habits, draining off of illegitimate sexual desires, the providing of an outlet for otherwise frustrated sexual drives, the release of strong sexual urges without harming others, pleasure, entertainment, provision of safe discharge of antisocial sexual appetites, and assistance in the consummation of legitimate sexual responsibilities (Wilson 1973:12).

For the majority of people, pornography is not a *problem* but rather something to be enjoyed (cf. McConahay 1988:32). However, while pornography is an innocuous stimulus (cf. Howard *et al.* 1973:145), and not the most important social problem nor the *life and death* issue facing Western society (cf. Clor 1969:3; Simpson in Hawkins & Zimring 1988:ix), surveys of public perceptions of pornography produce paradoxical results. While the majority of respondents simultaneously assert that pornography may cause harm, they also feel that it produces good and beneficial effects; again, the same respondents assert that pornography should be banned yet they also express acceptance of its existence in contemporary society (cf. Cottle *et al.* 1989:304-306). Some people also believe, for example, that there is more explicit sex presented on television than any objective content analysis could find (cf. Greenberg & D'Alessio 1985:310).

The sustained attention to the issue by noisy and violent minorities have made pornography seem a major social problem, one that presents a "more serious threat than economic problems, the environment, or even nuclear war" (McConahay 1988:31). For such people,

... sexual words and pictures are perceived as quite a bit more offensive and dangerous than anything having to do with violence or aggression. Especially where children are concerned, it is felt that murder is preferable to intercourse as a suitable topic for fiction or even the six o'clock news (Baron & Byrne 1984:565).

Groups objecting to pornography, such as politically aligned right-wing Christians and feminists, see it as their duty to protect the morals of society against the *dangers* of pornography. For these groups, threats, intimidation, violence and even murder of opponents have become acceptable means (cf. Anderson 1987:144; Gillmor 1965:363-364).

Since the end of the Second World War an increase in censorship and prohibitions of so-called *subversive and obscene* publications is evident in many countries (cf. De Vleeschauer 1959:3). More specifically, since the late 1950s, beginning with a series of court cases in the United States, pornography has become the centre of controversy in many Western societies (cf. Wilson 1973:7). The years between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s could justifiably be called the "Era of the Pornography Commissions", as pornography has been considered as a sufficiently important social problem to establish two major investigations in the United States, one in Canada and one in Great Britain (cf. Hawkins & Zimring 1988:3). Numerous other governmental, parliamentary, semi-official and privately sponsored investigations were carried out in other Western countries (e.g. Barlow & Hill 1985; Longford 1972; Working Party on Obscenity and Community Standards 1979; Van Rensburg 1985, the list is not exhaustive).

Since the mid-1980s, pornography has become a political issue (cf. Pratt & Sparks 1987:3). Conservative and religious groups have singled out pornography as their main target for political action. For feminist groups, pornography has become *the* main issue of the decade (cf. Berger *et al.* 1991:1; Segal 1992:3). In Eastern Europe pornography is fast becoming

a public issue as the newly gained freedom makes pornography legally available for the first time (cf. Segal 1992:1).

Pornography is the focus of renewed attention as the AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) *panic* gains momentum (cf. Parmar 1988:120-121). Medical experts argue that pornography ought to be openly used as a means for providing information about safe sexual activities (cf. Money 1988:177). As a result of the AIDS epidemic, pornography may also become a valuable and *safe* substitute for actual sexual activity (cf. Christensen 1990a:109). However, regardless of such considerations, the distribution of information about AIDS and sex education is hampered by charges that these are *pornographic* (cf. Watney 1987:58). Such censorship attempts are described as a dangerous denial of a "potentially life-saving intervention" (Gorna 1992:172).

The interest in pornography and the public controversy has given various scholars and social scientists something to debate and write about (cf. Soble 1986:3). For a few decades pornography has been an important and exciting area of study for numerous disciplines and interdisciplinary enquiry. At the same time, it has been one of the most hotly contested social issues (cf. Cottle et al. 1989:303), characterised by greater controversy and dispute than any other area of social enquiry. In their debate and study of pornography, scholars have not neglected their own industry. The sustained interest in pornography, in particular following the involvement of the behavioural sciences since the 1960s (cf. Wilson 1973:15), has made it into a respectable object for academic research (cf. Wagner 1990:3). The result of this interest is that scientific and scholarly studies of pornography have proliferated to "become something of a growth industry of late" (cf. Brannigan & Kapardis 1986:260), reaching the proportion of "a large industry employing many people" (cf. Jarvie 1987:270). It is suggested that the industry devoted to the study and debate on pornography is in fact larger than the pornographic industry itself (cf. Jarvie 1987:273). Such wide-ranging interest confirms Michel Foucault's (1981:77) observation that a characteristic of Western civilisation is the *talking sex*. After all, ours is the only civilisation "in which officials are paid to listen to all and sundry impart the secret of their sex" and the urge to talk about it and the interest aroused by so doing has "far surpassed the possibilities of being heard, so that some individuals have even offered their ears for hire" (Foucault 1981:7).

3.2.1 Pornography: the study of controversy and the controversy of studies

Clor (1969:3) suggests that the sustained interest in pornography "reflects concern (however unarticulated) that vital questions, ultimate questions, lie beneath the surface of what may appear to be a relatively insignificant matter of social policy". Therefore, the study of the problem of pornography could contribute to the understanding of much more than this particular issue (cf. Clor 1969:280). Hawkins and Zimring (1988:ix) point out that even though pornography may not be the most important issue, it is, nevertheless, an interesting one, because it illuminates social, political, legal and cultural conflicts.

The sustained attention and efforts devoted to the study of and discussion on pornography by important groups in society such as academics, lawyers, philosophers, journalists, politicians and clergymen suggest that important knowledge has been gained and that the debate may be "a market in ideas where some intellectually significant question is tackled" (cf. Jarvie 1987:268). Indeed, scholars have for a long time considered pornography to be a source of important data for a better understanding of man, society and sexuality (cf. Kinsey *et al.* 1948:22; Money 1973; 1985; 1988), culture, human relations and communication (cf. Carey & Kreiling 1974:241-242), mass communication (cf. Howitt 1982:105), literature (cf. Gubar 1987; Sontag 1969), and the intellectual development of the entire historic age of the Enlightenment (cf. Wagner 1990).

However, while pornography has been studied for over 30 years, no new insights have been advanced and the debate lacks any significant intellectual ideas (cf. Jarvie 1987:268; Berger *et al.* 1991:1). It seems that we have advanced no further in understanding pornography than where we were more than 20 years ago, when a United States supreme court judge, Potter Stewart, could not define it beyond saying that "I know it when I see it" (cf. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography 1986:8).

The inability to define pornography is a characteristic of the social controversy surrounding it. Most debates begin by grappling with definitions and most often also end there as well, because there is no comprehensive definition that can be applicable to all cases of

pornography (cf. Kimmel 1991:306). Most attempts to define pornography are aimed at arriving at a workable definition for the purpose of censorship. However, the problem, as Kaplan (1955:544) observed many years ago "is not what to do about obscenity, but what to make of it".

The fact that pornography eludes definition seems rather strange, because pornography is, supposedly, "sexually explicit material" (cf. Attorney General's Commission on Pornography 1986:8). Being explicit implies that nothing is concealed and everything must be clearly visible. Therefore, how is it possible that what is by definition the most exposed and visible remains at the same time undefined?

✧ From its etymology, the word pornography is considered to be of Greek origin: *porne* - meaning harlot, and *graphy* - meaning writing, which would signify writing and representations about or by prostitutes. However, neither was the word *pornography* known by, nor was prostitution a problem for the ancient Greeks. The word pornography has no *authentic* timeless meaning because in the Western world the word was not used prior to the mid-nineteenth century (cf. Weeks 1982:21). During its short history the term *pornography* has acquired almost exclusively negative connotations. Originally the term pornography was used descriptively to designate medical and public health issues relating to prostitution. As early as 1769 the French writer Nicholas Edme Restif de la Bretonne published a proposal for the management of prostitution and proudly named himself the *pornographer* (cf. Kendrick 1987:19-20). During the late Victorian era, while still used descriptively as a medical term referring to public hygiene, pornography also began to acquire a negative moral evaluation referring to *obscene* subjects in literature and art (cf. Kendrick 1987:17). In the twentieth century, the term *pornography* is used interchangeably with other terms such as *obscenity* and *erotica* (cf. Theron 1988:169), and is applied pejoratively to designate a large variety of materials. Aesthetic, philosophical and political statements, novels with sexual content, militant anti-racist attitudes and music have been termed *pornographic* (cf. Clignet 1981:290). Comic books and a variety of literature are defined as *pornography of death*, *pornography of sex*, or *pornography of violence* (cf. Gorer 1955:52; Kaplan 1955:558). Even scientific studies on human sexuality and sex education material are defined by some as *pornography* (cf. Geddes 1954:267). Ironically, studies on pornography are also considered

to be *pornography*, as is seen from the accusation against the publication of the report of the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (cf. Huer 1987:9; Stewart 1988). In fact, almost anything has been termed pornographic or obscene at some stage or other, including the entire Western patriarchal society (cf. MacKinnon 1986:69), and contemporary culture which is described as the pornographic or "obscene ecstasy of communication" (Baudrillard 1983:130).

The range of materials to which people are likely to affix the designation "pornographic" is so broad that it is tempting to note that "pornography" seems to mean in practice any discussion or depiction of sex to which the person using the word objects (Attorney General's Commission on Pornography 1986:7).

Since the 1980s, and because of the rise of feminist pressure groups, pornography has become associated almost exclusively with violence. Feminists define pornography as rape and assert that it is a form of violent anti-female propaganda (cf. Brownmiller 1986:395; Dworkin 1984; Gubar & Hoff 1989). In short, to call something pornographic is to criticise it. The term *pornography* is not a neutral description or definition but an evaluation that expresses condemnation. All the conflicts over the definition of pornography are attempts to draw a line between what is *good* and permitted and what is *bad* and needs to be restricted; such a division always considers pornography as something different from something else, thus, what is found on the *wrong* side of such line is always defined as *pornography* (cf. Wilson 1992:24). Gloria Steinem sums up such irony by pointing out that it amounts to saying "If I like it it's erotica, if you like it it's pornography" (cf. Kimmel 1991:306).

The inability to define pornography has not prevented the controversies and public debates from continuing. The debates usually begin from the assumption that there is a general agreement that pornography is a "pathological symptom and a problematic commodity" and that it must be suppressed (cf. Sontag 1969:37). According to Hawkins and Zimring (1988:20), "what is puzzling about this is the assumption of unanimity about the desirability of suppressing some unidentified phenomenon".

In an attempt to find answers and to provide some solid research data, the social sciences have made pornography an important area of study since the late 1960s.

3.2.2 Pornography and the social sciences

The social sciences have come to regard pornography as an administrative problem that is reducible to scientific analysis and, therefore, focus almost exclusively on the single question of whether or not pornography has negative *effects*, and whether it incites violence or rape (cf. Paden 1984:17). A shared and simplistic *stimulus-effect* paradigm, derived from conservative and feminist approaches, dominates scientific studies on pornography. For conservatives, pornography is a symptom of the breakdown of civilisation and thus a source of anti-social influence, such as crime and rape. For feminists, pornography is seen as degrading to women, inciting men to rape and indoctrinating women to accept their oppression (cf. McCormack 1989:333-334). Paradoxically, however, while feminists claim that pornography indoctrinates women, they also assert that "women do not read pornography ... [and] ... do not enter those places or neighbourhoods where it is sold" (Griffin 1988:3). In short, both conservatives and feminists claim that pornography both depicts and causes violence against women - *pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice* (cf. Segal 1992:3).

However, to date, social science research evidence supporting the claims on the harmful effects of pornography is sparse and inconsistent (cf. Donnerstein *et al.* 1987:171; Segal 1992:7), and evidence to support the claim that pornography incites violence is anecdotal (cf. Christensen 1990a:138). What research evidence over the past decades has demonstrated conclusively is "that sexual images per se do not facilitate aggressive behavior, change rape-related attitudes, or influence other forms of antisocial behavior or perceptions" (Donnerstein & Linz 1986:601). However, regardless of the available data, superstitions, commonsense assertions and ideological beliefs prevail in the public debate on pornography. In the scientific debate on pornography, cultural and ideological biases are also pervasive.

Nowhere does one find stronger opinion than in the domain of the effects of pornography. We think it fair to say that most of the current opinions concerning the effects of pornography - whether lay or "expert" - are

ill-informed and probably erroneous. When data appears that contradicts such opinions, the data are ignored (Amoroso & Brown 1973:187).

The systematic disregard of data that does not support the preconceived belief that pornography is harmful is evident, for example, in the manner that the *Attorney General's Commission on Pornography* (1986) ignored evidence and misrepresented scientific research data in order to condemn pornography (cf. Anderson 1987:146; McCormack 1988:249; Smith 1987). According to the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography, the "absence of evidence ... should by no means be taken to deny the existence of the causal link" between pornography and anti-social activities (cf. Anderson 1987:146). Such a conclusion is based on the Commission's belief that if no harm is possible to prove then "some things must be taken on faith alone" (McCormack 1988:494).

Reviewing the accumulated research on the effects of pornography, scientists commissioned by the Canadian department of justice point out that "We would be seriously remiss if we failed to emphasize our level of astonishment at some of the nonsense going on and worse still, being treated seriously in this research" (McKay & Dollff in Brannigan & Goldenberg 1986:420). However, *nonsense* is rather a mild term for what is described as *intellectual dishonesty*, misrepresentations and lies that are propagated as true knowledge in scientific research (cf. Christensen 1990a:87). The nonsense is invested with power and accepted as *true* within the scientific, religious, juridical, political and journalistic communities that are ideologically opposed to pornography (cf. Brannigan & Goldenberg 1986:249), and an impression is created that opposition to pornography is based on solid scientific evidence and not merely on moral evaluation (cf. Altimore 1991:117). Indeed, nonsense and misrepresentations in particular, inform the debate and official policy regarding pornography in South Africa. For example, the former Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, Professor Kobus Van Rooyen (1987:63), considers the groundless pronouncement by the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography as a *significant statement* (cf. Sonderling 1990:43).

Much of the debate on pornography is based on blatant misrepresentation of what pornography supposedly represents and portrays. Most discussions are informed by the

assumption that pornography both depicts and causes violence against women (cf. Prince 1988:32; Segal 1992:5). Pornography supposedly contains a mixture of sex and violence and features grotesque and sadistic victimization of women (cf. Griffin 1988:111-112). Pornography is claimed to be genocide, "contributing to sexual violence against women and to sex discrimination and sexual inequality" (Itzin 1992:1).

However, such claims are exposed as fraud when the content of most popular pornography is examined. A discrepancy is found between the evidence from specific pornographic texts and the claims made about them. For example, violent imagery is extremely rare in popular pornographic films (cf. Prince 1988:36-37; Reiss 1986:174; Segal 1992:6), nor is there any admixture of sex and violence and women are not predominantly portrayed as victims of male violence (cf. Molitor & Sapolsky 1993:234). Far from an increase in depiction of violence in pornography, there has been a steady decline in violent imagery since 1977 (cf. Segal 1992:6). Pornography does not exclusively concern itself with the portrayal of female sexuality; in popular pornographic films male and female bodies and experiences of sexual pleasure are equally represented (cf. Prince 1988:34-36). Research on the supposed ability of pornography to incite violence finds that it lowers aggression levels rather than increasing them. Research on the relationship between availability of pornography and gender inequality

... indicates that restrictions on erotica are much more common in gender-unequal societies. It is apparent that nonequalitarian countries do not need open erotica to maintain inequality, and gender-equal countries are not moved from their equality by the abundance of erotica (Reiss 1986:187).

In societies where pornography is tolerated and freely available, gender equality and other human rights are also available (cf. Segal 1992:7-8; Reiss 1986:189).

The misrepresentations preclude any alternative ways of considering pornography. Alternative and positive considerations of pornography are available (see review of some alternative views in Sonderling 1989). According to Money (1988:181), the predominance of a bias against pornography precludes any consideration of its positive aspects.

The very idea that pornography might have positive effects is anathema to such an intense degree, in the present era of antisexualism, that applying for a pornography-positive research grant would be as futile as writing a letter to Santa Claus (Money 1988:181).

The fact that the social sciences have almost exclusively concerned themselves with the question of the negative *effect* of pornography raises serious questions about the nature of scientific knowledge and scholarly research itself. According to Williams (1974:119), such an approach quite simply reflects an ideology. However, it is not surprising because scientific approaches cannot be considered apart from the prevailing political and ideological currents of the societies from which they emanate. Human science, "unlike the sciences of nature, is always linked, even in its vaguest form, to ethics or politics" (Foucault 1989a:328).

Gusfield (1976:16-17) suggests that the rigid traditional distinction between science and literature is false since science is a kind of literature or a modern myth (cf. O'Neill 1981:106)¹. Scientific discourse is "one kind of persuasion that has come to dominate all others" (Harré 1985:126). The specific sciences involved in the study of pornography (e.g. psychology, experimental psychology and social psychology) are essentially engaged in rhetorical recodification of popular superstitions into scientific vocabulary (cf. Harré 1985:141). Edelman (1964:295) points out that the language of the professional social scientist, far from being neutral, is implicitly a political language.

A particular version of empiricism has largely taken over the practice of social and cultural inquiry, and within the terms of its distortion of cultural science claims the abstract authority of 'social science' and 'scientific method' as against all other modes of experience and analysis (Williams 1974:121).

In their study of pornography, scientists are committed to their own ideologically motivated approaches and research paradigms rather than to providing new insights (cf. Howitt 1989:66; Christensen 1990a:351-352). Research thus provides social scientists with the means for political legitimation, financial rewards and institutional power (cf. Rowland 1983:294).

¹ See also the studies by Feyerabend (1980), Foucault (1989a) and Kuhn (1970).

In the debate on pornography it is unlikely that social science research will be able to provide conclusive answers (cf. Howitt 1989:77). Policy decisions regarding pornography "are moral issues and ultimately all judgments ... will have to rest on political and philosophical considerations" (Wilson 1971:61).

3.2.3 The discourse of the humanities on pornography

While the social sciences cannot provide clear answers to the philosophical and political questions about pornography, no clear answer is provided by philosophical enquiry either. Philosophical debates on pornography centre on issues of morality and are based on a consensus that pornography is somehow, by its very nature, immoral. However, such moral justifications have proved to be irrational, fallacies of logic, superstitions, and meaningless rhetorical ploys designed to create emotional impact (cf. Christensen 1990a:26-27), and the morally motivated anti-pornography campaigns are themselves *morally evil* (cf. Christensen 1990a:vii).

The fact that pornography (sexual depictions) is sexually arousing to many people is not surprising, nor is it reprehensive to the vast majority of people (cf. Howitt 1989:64). However, apart from knowing that pornography causes fear, anxiety and anger in some people who are ideologically opposed to it, very few bad effects have been demonstrated while, on the other hand, pornography produces certain good effects. Therefore, any moral evaluation of pornography must take into account whether good and bad effects are produced by it (cf. Beis 1987:83). However, there is a systematic disregard of any good effects because they do not conform to the prevailing anti-pornography ideology. As the Williams Committee (cf. Beis 1987:89), established by the British government in 1977 to investigate the problem of pornography, suggests, "it is almost as if people ... agreed that pornography should be suppressed only if it did harm; were quite clear that it should be suppressed; and concluded that somehow it must do harm".

What is characteristic of the debate on pornography is that it is conducted under the *logic* of censorship, proceeding on the condition that pornography itself be reduced to silence. These conditions guarantee that any condemnation of pornography, and any claim concerning its

bad influence is accepted unquestioningly. Under these conditions a controversy over pornography can develop among people who are not themselves consumers or have never seen it and in countries where it is not available, such as in Canada (cf. Jarvie 1987:275) and South Africa (cf. Gilfillan 1989:36; Sonderling 1990:40-41).

In the fields of art and literary study, pornography is excluded from consideration by definition and literary critics see no need to examine individual pornographic works (cf. Sontag 1969:38-39). Under such conditions, for example, it is possible to discuss the literary work of the Marquis de Sade as being synonymous with pornography. Sade is declared to be "the world's foremost pornographer" and his work is condemned (cf. Dworkin 1984:70).

The question posed by the seemingly unapproachable name of Sade may no doubt be summarized thus: why doesn't the Sadean text exist *as text* for our society and culture? For what reason does this society, this culture, insist on seeing in a work of fiction, a series of novels, a written ensemble, something so threatening that only a reality could produce it ... Why, then, is this text, an immense, coherent, and meticulous text paradoxically declared to be monotonous and boring, though in fact one of the most varied and fascinating in our library; ... Why should Sade be both prohibited and accepted, prohibited as fiction (as writing) and accepted as reality; prohibited as a multifaceted experience of reading and accepted as a psychological or physiological reference? (Sollers 1983:45-46).

The refusal to consider the work of Sade as anything other than pornography summarises the antics and circular reasoning by which literary scholars have contorted themselves over the past three decades. A prime example is Steven Marcus's study *The other Victorians*, which attempts to show that pornography is not literature and does not have any literary value (cf. Charney 1981:2-4). A more recent example of such attempt is seen in Steiner's (1989:192) pronouncement that

the cant put forward on this topic [i.e. pornography] is often as nauseating as the thing itself. The plain fact is that pornographic art and writing, notably of the sadistic kind - and there is sadism in *all* pornography precisely to the degree that sexuality is objectified, that the human body or some part thereof is made the object of libidinal waste and servitude.

Such pronouncements are more telling about the literary scholars' self-interest² than about pornography. However, when most claims against pornography are examined against specific pornographic texts, it becomes evident that they never correspond with anything that these pornographic texts themselves may be (cf. Prince 1988).

The consideration of pornography under the limiting combination of vagueness and moral condemnation inhibits serious analysis and discussion of the issue (cf. Ellis 1980:81-82). The situation propagates ignorance with the result that speculations become alarmingly practical (cf. Stewart 1988:162), myths are accepted as real and guide social and political policy decisions (cf. McConahay 1988:63). Dangerous alliances are formed by groups with conflicting interests such as radical feminists, political and religious right-wingers and conservatives who find a common enemy in pornography (cf. Brannigan & Goldenberg 1986:429; Stewart 1988:162). These groups propagate legal violence and are known to have used violence against producers, distributors and consumers of pornography and against intellectuals who support the freedom of pornographic communication (cf. Anderson 1987; Gillmor 1965:363-364; McCormack 1988; McConahay 1988:34). Any serious study of pornography without commitment to the accepted *politically correct* anti-pornographic ideology becomes dangerous. For example, a feminist scholar describes such an experience.

Writing about pornography holds particular hazards for a feminist. This chapter was written for a book, subsequently abandoned, on pornography. The project was an impossible one, for a variety of personal/ political reasons... Feminist (and indeed any other) politics around pornography tend to acquire a degree of emotionalism that can make the enterprise quite explosive. Any feminist who ventures to write about pornography puts herself in an exposed position (Kuhn 1985:20-25).

Scholars who consider pornography to have positive and therapeutic value are portrayed as dangerous radicals who seem to pose "a real threat to civilisation!" (Smit 1989:80). Studies are consequently abandoned out of fear and anxiety (cf. Ellis 1980:82; Kuhn 1985:20-25). In the end, the victims of the *moral panic* are scientific research and academic discourse itself (cf. McCormack 1988:502).

² See a critique of literary approaches in Charney (1981:2-4) and Peckham (1969:28-35).

3.2.4 Conclusion

It becomes increasingly obvious from the foregoing discussion that there is a problem regarding the existing approaches to pornography. Why have we not been able to show progress in our understanding of pornography while discourses on the issue have proliferated? Why does pornography remain a confused site of contradictions (cf. Stewart 1988:162), conflicts (cf. Elmer 1988:45; Gray 1982:387), and struggles (cf. Ellis 1980:81) - a strange contest of fictions and facts and a field of battle? Why, contrary to all evidence, is it claimed that pornography is a danger to society and a cause of oppression of women in particular? More specifically, why is pornography so widely discussed in our society? How can pornography give rise to such contradictory claims as the following.

Listening to men on this topic, one sometimes wonders how pornography survives, since its products are claimed to be so boring and repetitious. Listening to women, one wonders how anything else survives in the face of a pornography that is equated with genocide (Williams 1990:4).

Such a paradox is possible because pornography is an infinitely elastic concept, unstable in substance and variable in designation and without any intrinsic characteristic so it "appears to be a universal category without a universal content" (Randall 1989:63). Pornography is an empty framework without content and therefore serves a function similar to that of a myth that can be filled with any content and used and re-used (cf. Williamson 1983:178). Pornography as a myth and work of fiction, to use Foucault's insight (1981:154), can "function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified" making it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, various elements and "make use of this fictitious unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere".

It is evident that the traditional approaches to pornography, considering the issue in terms of law, harm, corruption, morality, freedom of speech, *et cetera*, prove to be inappropriate and they cannot explain why it has become such an important issue of concern (cf. Jarvie 1987:257). In order to move beyond the impasse and demythologise the controversy over pornography it should be acknowledged that perhaps the wrong questions have been asked about pornography.

It will be recalled from the discussion in Chapter 1, that a useful new approach for the understanding of the problem of pornography is a study of the debate or discourse on pornography. Such a framework is explained in Chapter 2. In the following sections the discursive analysis is applied in a case study to the discourse on pornography in South Africa.

3.3 THE APPLICATION OF DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS: A CASE STUDY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN DISCOURSE ON PORNOGRAPHY FROM THE 1900s TO THE 1990s

3.3.1 Introduction

As is seen from the preceding review of the debate on pornography, the very nature of pornography is constructed in the discourses that talk about it, describe it and analyse it. Through a whole process of social ways of speaking (*discursive practices*) pornography is made into an object for thought, study, discussion, debate and controversy. Thus, an examination of the manner in which pornography is made into a problem may provide more insight into the issue. By describing the discursive practice, it is possible to identify the various groups, institutions, interests and relations of power and knowledge that are involved in constructing pornography as a problem.

The guiding procedures and questions that direct the description and analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa include the following:

- Establishing where the discourse on pornography had its historical beginning and following its development to the present.
- Establishing what knowledge, procedure of discourse and relations of power came into operation so that discourse could take pornography as its object.
- Identifying the places, social groups and social institutions where pornography is made into a problem.

- Describing what is said about pornography according to who speaks about it, the institutional positions and viewpoints from which they speak and the institutions that motivate people to speak.
- Determining what conflicts and counter-discourse arise.
- Uncovering what knowledge and relations of power were produced.

3.3.2 Pornography and the discourse on sexuality

In its most general meaning, pornography is a discourse on sexuality. Therefore, it is necessary to locate it within the wider context of discourses about sexuality in Western culture.

Discussions on pornography usually begin by pointing out the etymology of the concept from which it appears that the word *pornography* is derived from the Greek *pornei* (prostitutes) and *graphos* (writing or descriptions). Based on such etymology, scholars suggest that pornography is as old as Western culture itself, and as a result of the *sexual revolution* and *permissiveness* of the 1960s, it has become more pervasive in Western society (cf. Sokoloff 1972:207). Thus it is easy to present pornography as having been a constant social problem for every age and civilisation (cf. Roth 1982:2), and efforts at its elimination have been universal (cf. Kendrick 1987:33). Based on such an assumption, scholars unquestioningly adopt the prevailing negative evaluation of pornography and project it onto the past and claim, as do some American Christian fundamentalists, for example, that "the Bible clearly condemns pornography" even though there is no trace of the word in any edition (cf. Kantzer 1986:18).

However, as the "average social scientist is thoroughly ignorant of Western social history" (Wrong 1972:229), it is easy to ignore the fact that the word *pornography* is a linguistic and cultural construct of the recent past. The English language did not use the word until about the mid-nineteenth century. The Oxford English Dictionary has no reference to *pornography* before 1867 (cf. Weeks 1982:21). The first instance in English usage is of the word *pornographer*, recorded in 1850 in a translation from the German. The word *pornography* appears in 1857 in a medical dictionary (cf. Wagner 1990:5), and it referred to a description

of prostitutes or prostitution related to matters of public hygiene. In the 1909 edition of the Oxford English Dictionary the medical meaning of the word is given first followed by a more contemporary definition of pornography as meaning "descriptions of the life, manners, etc., of prostitutes and their patrons: hence, the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art" (Kendrick 1987:1-2).

Locating pornography in the nineteenth century is significant because the period of the 1880s and 1890s shows the invention of a hoard of other words to designate sexual traits, such as *homosexuality*, *nymphomania*, *narcissism*, *autoeroticism*, *kleptomania*, *urolagnia* (cf. Weeks 1982:21). The nineteenth century was a period characterised by an explosion of discourse on sexuality.

Human sexuality, like all other human phenomena, has no meaning in itself. Sexuality cannot tell us anything about itself, it points to nothing beyond itself (cf. Foucault 1988a:30). Sexuality and its meaning are not predetermined and fixed but are socially constructed. In itself sexuality is not the most powerful drive that is stubborn and resistant to power and control (cf. Foucault 1981:103). The sex drive is neither powerful nor weak but can be anything that people want to make of it; sexuality does not biologically determine human behaviour but is a social activity (cf. Goode 1978:301-304). Therefore, sexuality is a historical and social construction (cf. Foucault 1981:69).

Sexuality is only decisive for our culture as spoken, and to the degree it is spoken: not that it is our language which has been eroticized for nearly two centuries. Rather, since Sade and the death of God, the universe of language has absorbed our sexuality, denatured it, placed it in a void where it establishes its sovereignty and where it incessantly sets up as the Law the limits it transgresses. In this sense, the appearance of sexuality as a fundamental problem marks the transformation of a philosophy of man as worker to a philosophy based on a being who speaks (Foucault 1988a:50).

According to Foucault (1981:23), for the past three centuries Western man has been drawn to the task of telling everything concerning sex. One of the characteristics of Western culture is the *talking sex*, "the only civilization in which officials are paid to listen to all and sundry impart the secrets of their sex" (Foucault 1981:7).

The procedures for talking about sex, of transforming sex into discourse have been part of the monastic tradition. In the Christian tradition of "fallen bodies and sin", sexuality enjoyed a natural understanding and found its "greatest felicity of expression" (cf. Foucault 1988a:29). During the seventeenth century the Christian confession was expanded and prescribed as a fundamental duty for every Catholic to talk and confess endlessly about sex. There is a direct line of descent from the Catholic confessional to what has developed as "scandalous" literature in later centuries. Sade "in words that seem to have been transcribed from the treatises of spiritual direction" takes the injunction of the Church fathers to tell everything related to sexuality in detail (cf. Foucault 1981:21). At the end of the nineteenth century a similar desire to transform everything about sex into words motivates the narrations of the anonymous author of *My Secret Life* (cf. Foucault 1981:21-22).

The techniques for transforming sex into discourse have not been limited to Christian spirituality and erotic literature. From the eighteenth century secular social powers have also become concerned with sex. Talking about sex has become a political, economic and technical imperative. Sex entered the public arena as an issue for administration, investigation and policing (cf. Foucault 1981:23-25; Sheridan 1986:171-172). From the nineteenth century onward the discourse on sex gathered momentum and expanded, educators, administrators, judges, medical doctors and psychoanalysts produced discourse. Sex has become the object of the discourse of power and knowledge, and a whole *scientia sexualis* has developed and functions as a disguise for an *ars erotica*. The scientific and technical demands for producing a true discourse regarding sex have become a particular form of sexual pleasure - the pleasure derived for the analysis of sexual pleasure (cf. Foucault 1981:70-71). Since the 1950s sex has become a central political issue.

3.3.3 South African sexual discourse and the beginning of the debate on "pornography"

Since the nineteenth century, discourse on sex and sexual representation in South Africa has centred almost entirely on the sexuality of the indigenous natives and on the relationship between sex and race. Indeed, the sexual habits of the natives have always been a perennial fascination for white men and women in South Africa. This discourse conceived the natives'

sexuality as being free from restraint. The native men were considered more virile and native women more voluptuous than their European counterparts (cf. MacCrone 1937:300). However, while the sexuality of the natives attracted white South Africans' imagination, it was also considered repulsive. The paradox at the heart of the South African discourse, which is also characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon colonial discourse, is the result of the co-existence of two contradictory philosophies within it. The discourse is a blend of a humanitarian sensitivity tempered with a highly developed sense of racial superiority (cf. Mazrui in Dirven 1987:4). In South Africa, racial superiority was expressed in a naked and shameless discourse of racism, which articulated and justified colonial domination as the existing *natural order of things*.

There is sufficient evidence to indicate that white South African men and women found gratification in sexual intercourse with those of an inferior and despised class. However, together with such sexual attraction, whites also expressed fear about the numerically superior natives and articulated such fear in a discourse on rape and miscegenation (cf. MacCrone 1937:300-301). According to Sachs (1937:71), in the South Africa of the 1920s all white women were brought up in fear of being raped by a native.

The *rape phobia* should not be considered as residing exclusively in the domain of popular mythology. It was found in the various specialised discourses of scholars and scientists of the early twentieth century. For example, the zoologist and mathematician Lancelot Hogben describes a typical South African academic discussion during the late 1920s as follows.

Almost any South African Graduate: If you have lived in this country as long as I have, you would know that a native can't be taught to read or write.

Myself: Have you ever visited Fort Hare Missionary College?

Almost any S.A.G.: Don't talk to me about missionaries.

Myself: Well, I have seen a class of pure blood Bantu students ... working out different equations.

Almost any S.A.G.: What would you do if a black man raped your sister?
(Hogben in Dubow 1987:90).

The fear of rape, commonly known as the *Black-Peril* gave rise to the first attempts by government at criminalisation of sexual relations between natives and whites.

The forms of sexual relations which however do most urgently require to be forbidden by law are concubinage and indiscriminate intercourse, especially between whites and blacks. No nation can tolerate members of an alien race tampering with their women ... The evidence teams with reference to this unpalatable subject, the cumulative effect of which cannot be disavowed or ignored ... We are distinctly losing in moral reputation and at the same time producing a harvest of legal, social and political problems by an increasing number of bastards (Natal Native Commission of 1906-1907, quoted in Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:8).

During 1913, the fear of sexual assaults on *white* women was the main issue of social and political debate. An imagined increase of sexual assaults and rape of white women by native men led to a public debate and the appointment of a commission of inquiry (cf. Hugo 1990:9-11; Gutsche 1972:217-218). According to the *Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women* (1913:13), while "the passions in men of all races are the same", they were, nevertheless, governed by different social conventions. While the European race adopted standards of civilization, those "of the raw, uncivilized native races" were still seen to be in a state of barbarism and entirely saturated with sexuality³.

It is stated by witnesses that the raw native is born and brought up in an atmosphere of immorality and lust, his thoughts and speech are lewd; the topics of his ordinary conversation from an early age are sexual matters; even in the presence of the other sex his talk in this respect is unrestrained; his jokes with his female friends and acquaintances have reference to these matters (Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:13-14).

Discourse on native sexuality permeates the entire report of the Commission. Numerous aspects of sexuality regarding natives is discussed in terms of its threat to white racial purity and social domination. These include: wide-spread mixed race cohabitation; sexual relations between white prostitutes who allow and invite intercourse between themselves and natives; the fact that *house-boys* are given opportunities to have intercourse with willing white women; the fact that European women-servants allow natives to have intercourse with

³ Not only were the African natives thought to have been saturated with sexuality, but so were all other non-European groups, for example, the Cape Malay were described as possessing a culture and language that was saturated with *pornographic* elements (cf. Du Plessis 1939:33).

themselves, and the sexual threat encouraged by the familiarity from shared living areas (cf. Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:21, 23, 25).

The *rape phobia* motivated by the assumed superior power of native sexuality led to public concern about the possible influence of sexual representation. The first recorded judicial decision on *obscene literature* in South Africa dates back to 1905. In that year the editor, printer and publisher of *The Prince*, a newspaper in Natal was convicted for publishing an "indecent, lewd scandalous and offensive article" entitled *The Black Peril*. The article described in a manner considered to be much too favourable, the "acts of immorality between native men and European girls" in terms of what the presiding judge concluded "would do honour to a Parisian brothel" (Kahn 1966:279).

The Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women (1913) made brief reference to "indecent pictures and photographs" and "bioscopes". This early concern with sexual representation in South Africa centres entirely on visual representation such as pictures, photographs and the cinema. The emphasis on the visual representation rather than literary representation was motivated by the assumption that the natives were almost entirely in their primitive or *natural* state and illiterate⁴.

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, there was concern about *indecent pictures* being available to the black native population, because it was stated that "what is comparatively harmless to a white person is baneful to a native" (Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:22). According to the Commission, it was through the "baneful traffic in indecent picture and prints" that "the native comes into undesirable contact with the seamy side of civilisation" (Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:22). Pictures of white women in fashion journals and on cinema posters were considered as one of the causes for the natives "loosing respect for the white race" and fostering, in the black mind, the idea of having sexual relations with white women (cf. Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:16).

⁴ Indeed, according to a Government report published in 1957, it is claimed that while illiteracy among the white population has never been a problem, "it is only in fairly recent years, however, that the eleven million non-Europeans in the Union have begun to become literate in considerable numbers" (Cronjé Commission 1957:261).

According to the testimony of a gentleman of great authority and experience: When first it becomes possible even in thought for a native to have connection with a white woman, that was the first beginning of the evil (Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:21).

According to the *authoritative* opinion, these pictures were frequently found affixed to the walls on native huts, "who no doubt look upon them as indecent and suggestive" and led to rape because they degraded the status of white women in the eyes of the natives (cf. Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women 1913:22).

The *Black Peril* and the published report of the 1913 Commission justified further concern with the developing cinema industry in South Africa. Demands for censorship were made by various English-speaking philanthropic and religious associations. The Social Reform Association, under the direction of an Irish immigrant, Mr R. G. Ross, "originally occupied with the abolishing of street soliciting, brothels, white slavery traffickers ... later devoted itself to less urgent social problems such as housing, drunkenness, native welfare and the 'bioscope'" (Gutsche 1972:283).

The South African concern with the *less urgent* social problem of the cinema, influenced by similar concerns in puritan England and the United States, originally focused on the conditions in the theatre rather than on the contents of the films themselves. However, with improvements in the conditions of cinematic exhibition, social reformers shifted their attention to the *indecent* films. From *indecent* in the cinema, the Social Reform Association and Chairman Ross⁵ extended their interest to literature (cf. Gutsche 1972:284). During 1910 an unsuccessful prosecution against the publisher and distributor of an *indecent* book was brought before the court in Cape Town and Ross appeared as the only prosecution witness to testify about the objectionable nature of the book. Giving evidence, Ross claimed that the book "was a revolting work". However, in evaluating the evidence the presiding judge dismissed Ross's claim and concluded that Ross could not point to any particular objectionable passages in the book and it was clear that from his calling "was very likely to take a biased view" (cf. Kahn 1966:284).

⁵ Mr Ross was considered as the Cape counterpart of Anthony Comstock (cf. Kahn 1966:284).

Indeed, denouncing of literature and film without actually reading or seeing them has become both a private practice and an official mode of operation. For example, local government authorities have been known to ban films arbitrarily without even viewing them (cf. Gutsche 1972:289). By the 1920s more fears of the *Black Peril* resulted in increasing concern about the popularity of the cinema and the *sex appeal* films which were shown to mixed audiences (cf. Gutsche 1972:217).

During the 1920s and 1930s an extensive discourse, by medical experts and professional health workers, emerged on matters of sexual hygiene, venereal disease and prostitution. The need for public information on the "physiological, psychological and spiritual aspects of the sexual life" was a concern for the health authorities. It was claimed that the majority of men who contracted venereal diseases from sexual intercourse with prostitutes were ignorant of the basic principles of sexual hygiene. The need for sex education was acknowledged officially. Since 1922 in Johannesburg, for example, various health authorities suggested that health education of the public was of sufficient importance to warrant "a liberal expenditure of public money on health propaganda" (Freed 1949:327). Beginning in 1922, the health department of the Johannesburg City Council conducted "health propaganda" campaigns, making use of cinema and printed material. During 1922 a film entitled *Whatsoever a Man Soweth*, dealing with problems of prostitution and venereal disease⁶, was shown to large audiences in Johannesburg and as far afield as Bloemfontein. It reached an estimated 40 000 to 50 000 people. In addition, leaflets, posters and booklets were distributed widely, including to children in school (cf. Freed 1949:330; Gutsche 1972:372-373). Discourses regarding sex education, venereal disease and birth control measures were also conducted by various health councils and scientific and professional organisations (cf. Freed 1949:327-337). This emphasis on sexual education was required "to serve a larger social purpose" (cf. Freed 1949:336).

⁶ The *health propaganda film* came into being between 1917 and 1919 as the result of the coming together of social purity movements and the developing cinema. These films produced in the United States and Britain were feature films designed to be shown commercially but also were claimed to be educational. The topics of these highly moralising films included illegitimacy, prostitution, and white slavery but the most pervasive among these was venereal disease (cf. Kuhn 1989:49-50).

3.3.4 Langenhoven and the debate on pornography in 1930

According to Steyn (1990:22), the earliest recorded debate on *pornography* is found in the pages of the Cape Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, at the beginning of 1930.

All Afrikaans newspapers, and *Die Burger* in particular, had an important position within Afrikaner culture and politics. Unlike the English language newspapers in South Africa, which were fundamentally commercial enterprises, Afrikaans newspapers were founded and functioned as media for the propagation of the emerging Afrikaner culture and nationalism.

The founding of *Die Burger* in 1915 was considered at the time to be nothing short of a revolution for the emerging Afrikaner language and culture. Under the editorship of Dr D. F. Malan, a Dutch Reformed minister who combined his editorship with political activity, *Die Burger* intensified its production of Afrikaner nationalist propaganda (cf. Hachten & Giffard 1984:44). As a leading Afrikaner cultural and political forum, the newspaper devoted a considerable amount of space to news items on art and literature and the celebrated Afrikaner author, C. J. Langenhoven, had a weekly column during the 1920s and 1930s (cf. Steyn 1990:2).

The decades of the 1920s and 1930s are of great significance in South African history and for Afrikaner politics in particular. These were the years in which Afrikaner nationalism emerged into prominence and for the first time gained political dominance. In 1924 Afrikaner nationalism had its first political victory with the ascension to power of a coalition headed by the National Party under General J. M. B. Hertzog. A year later, in 1925, Afrikaans was made an official language of the Union of South Africa alongside English. After 1925 there followed a period of expansion of Afrikaner nationalism and the production of cultural and literary works (cf. Steyn 1987:86).

An important characteristic of the Afrikaner's cultural and political development was the constant preoccupation with the question of race. The rising Afrikaner nationalism was characterised by a discourse on sexual racism in which concern with sexual contact between the black and white races was very high on the cultural and political agendas (cf. Hugo

1990:7). The concerns with racial purity were expressed in a ferment of racially discriminatory legislation enacted between 1924 - 1933 and further extended after 1948 when the National Party gained political power (cf. De Klerk 1983:200-201).

The 1930s were also significant years of transition for the emerging Afrikaner literature. This period was one of growth of the Afrikaner culture and the standardisation, refinement and expansion of the Afrikaans language (cf. Steyn 1990:1). It was a period of transition in literary style characterised by a change from the didactic prose of the older generation of Afrikaner *volksletterkunde* to a new generation of indigenous Afrikaner writers and academics (cf. Gerwel 1988:21).

On 27 January 1930, C. J. Langenhoven, the celebrated popular Afrikaans writer, in his personal weekly column, *Aan stille waters*, which appeared regularly on the editorial page of *Die Burger*, attacked a book review that had appeared in an Afrikaans magazine a few days earlier (cf. Steyn 1990:22).

Langenhoven reacted to an article, a scholarly literary review by Dr F. C. L. Bosman (cf. Bosman 1930a) of a new Afrikaans novel *Skakels in die ketting*, that had appeared in *Die Huisgenoot* on 24 January 1930. The novel tells the story of the life of a young Afrikaner farm-boy. The boy leaves his idyllic life on the farm to gain university education in Johannesburg. In the city he enters into a relationship with a prostitute who gives birth to his child. He eventually flees to do missionary work in Africa. With the death of his mother he returns, marries his childhood sweetheart and together they dedicate their life to the moral upliftment of the demoralised white Afrikaners during the gold-gold rush.

According to Bosman (1930a:51), the new book was a significant literary work and needed to be welcomed into the young Afrikaans literature. In his article, Bosman (1930a:51) suggested that the significance of the new book was to be found in the fact that a writer could seriously commit himself to *naturalism*, and that such a writer could find a publisher in South Africa. Such significance was derived from the fact that the literary criteria of most publishers in South Africa were determined by the mass market of school-children and the popular literary taste of false romanticism. According to Bosman (1930a:51), the writer of

the new novel and its publisher realised that there was also another reading public that would prefer to read about the truths of life rather than romantic falsifications. Bosman suggested that the writer of the new book had the courage and talent to show how society suffers from prudery and false shame regarding anything to do with sexual life. In the rest of the review Bosman discussed the development of the plot and the use of language and imagery in the book (cf. Bosman 1930a:51-52).

Langenhoven (1930a:5) attacked the review article and the reviewer but not the book itself because he had not read it and therefore had nothing to say for or against it.

Waar ek wel mee te doen het, is die oogpunt waaruit Dr. Bosman so 'n soort boek soos hy sê hierdie een is, beskou. En hierdie oogpunt is nie Dr. Bosman se persoonlike nie; hy is tipies van 'n hele skool wat met hierdie soort maatstaf uit die vreemde teruggekome het en dit in Suid-Afrika, waar dit nog altyd onbekend was, wil inburger (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

Langenhoven then quoted the entire introduction of Dr Bosman's article and concluded that the discussion or reference to sex is not part of the old Afrikaner tradition; "Nee; dis 'n on-Afrikaanse, anti-Afrikaanse, nuwerwetse leer waar hulle nooit van geweet het nie" (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

Langenhoven took exception to the fact that such a book review appeared in a respectable magazine such as *Die Huisgenoot*, in which Langenhoven's own articles were also published.

Nou hier het ons nie te doen met 'n saak van seks nie maar met 'n saak van blote fatsoenlikheid. Bedoelde tydskrif word in die huiskring hardop voorgelees, tussen ouers en kinders, tussen jongetjies en meisies. Die ouers en die jongmense, as ek my nasie ken, sal van sulke dinge met sulke woorde nie onder mekaar gesels nie (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

According to Langenhoven, the Afrikaans tradition showed that parents and grandparents did not discuss the secrets of sex with their small children.

Eerder tog wys ons eie ou Afrikaanse gebruik op 'n standpunt teenoor die geslagslewe wat dit beskou het as verbooie terrein - so verbooie dat nie jy in

jou boeke daarvan gelees het nie; dat jy nie met jong mense daarvoor as 'n gewone saak gesels het nie; dat self volwasse mense nie (sonder noodsaaklikheid) onder mekaar oor sulke dinge gepraat het nie - sekerlik nie in gemengde geselskappe van mans en vrouens nie - omdat so 'n vorm van gesprek nog altyd beskou geword het as onfatsoenlik. En daardie algemene opvatting en die algemene inagneming daarvan was nie die grondslag van die instandhouding van seksuele omgang op twee maniere. Vereers was die hele gewig van die openbare mening aan die kant van seksuele reinheid - 'n gewig wat sterker is as alle gesag of dwang. Ten tweede is daar van jonges af in elke jongetjie en meisie ingeplant en ingewortel, 'n gevoel van skaamte. (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

Therefore, for Langenhoven the new novel and the critic who propagated it have been corrupted by the foreign influence of European decadence. Thus Langenhoven established a simple moral distinction between absolute good as against the bad and dirty. It is against such persons and influences that the Afrikaans culture must be protected. Against such sordid (*smerige*) cultural influences Langenhoven proposed the *correct* and institutionalised Afrikaner point of view of what the aim of art in society should be.

Uit hierdie oogpunt nie van seks nie maar van skoonheid en fatsoenlikheid, vra ek nou om vir die honderdste maal te herhaal wat my beskouing omtrent die roeping van die kuns is. En daardie is weer nie my beskouing persoonlik nie maar die Afrikaanse beskouing (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

According to Langenhoven, the role of art is to idealise life.

Dis is nie die besigheid van die kuns om weg te laat wat lelik is nie, maar om die lelike te gebruik nie uit voorliefde daarvoor nie, maar om deur toestelling die skoonheid van wat mooi is te meer te laat uitkom. (Langenhoven 1930a:5).

Langenhoven's point of view on art and literature, as expressed in this article, and elsewhere, is that "the service of art lies in the glorification and ennobling of life" (Verhage 1972:542). Such glorification expresses the artist's talent, while the realist artist's ability to describe sex and *dirt* is no talent. In concluding his article, Langenhoven remarked that if it were claimed that the realist artist had talent, then a criminal also has talent, but rather than being praised he was punished (cf. Langenhoven 1930a:5).

Langenhoven's article, while giving the impression of moral discourse was concerned with position of power. Langenhoven did not concern himself with the book under review itself - he did not read the book - but he reacted against a critical discourse about the book. Langenhoven entered the discourse in reaction to a *statement* made by an authoritative book reviewer (i.e. Dr Bosman, a doctor of literature) about literature. Therefore, Langenhoven's statement was made against a reviewer who claimed the right to express an opinion on culture, literature and the reading public's taste.

The issue revolved on the perceived threat to Langenhoven's established position of power, in the economic and cultural fields of literary and cultural production. Langenhoven, a *volkswriter* (cf. Gerwel 1988:21), was already established as an authority and his views were the dominant literary *orthodoxy*. The field of Afrikaans literary production and publishing had, by the 1930s, become a lucrative business (cf. Hofmeyr 1987:112), and Langenhoven was a prolific and popular writer who produced more than 50 books (cf. Verhage 1972:541).

Langenhoven's reaction is also typical of his own established discursive practice: he made it a practice to react with venom against criticism of his own work and against literary criticism in general (cf. Verhage 1972:541). According to Langenhoven, his *literary pearls* were not made for such critical *swines* - he wrote only for the *volk*, "net van die volk was hy 'U dienswillige dienaar'" (cf. Steenkamp 1965:136).

However, Langenhoven also took the position of a cultural representative, the guardian of established values, claiming to have the power to speak on behalf of such *old* Afrikaner traditions. However, if Langenhoven were only a popular writer, such claim could be hard to sustain. However, he was not simply a popular writer, he was also a lawyer, a leading politician, leader of the National Party in the Cape, and member of the Senate (cf. Verhage 1972:543). Thus Langenhoven was a writer and a politician or, conversely, politician and writer. Such a position gave him authority to speak about, and at the same time, to constitute the tradition for which he claimed to be the *spokesman*. Langenhoven suggested that one may not contradict that which comes from tradition, from wise and authoritative men of knowledge and from current opinion.

On 28 January 1930 an article appeared in the women's interest section of *Die Burger* under the heading *Geslagsopvoeding vir die kind. Waarna moet die moeder van ons tyd streef?*. It is clear that the unnamed editorial staff-writer of the article had not read the original book but referred to Langenhoven's article of the previous day. According to the writer, while she was reflecting about sex education she read Langenhoven's debate with Dr Bosman. Firstly, the writer of the article contradicts Langenhoven's statement about the state of sexual knowledge among the Afrikaner volk, and among women in particular.

Oor die algemeen kan ons Suid-Afrikaanse moeders, veral dié van die jonge geslag, nie van valse skaamte beskuldig word nie: ons het in ander omstandighede grootgeword as ons moeders en ons het geleer dat dit ons plig is om die lewenswaarhede, geslagprobleme of hoe ons dit ook al wil noem, nie meer vir ons kinders te verbloem agter 'n dekmantel van kwasievroomheid nie (*Geslagsopvoeding vir die kind* 1930:11).

Beyond this statement, the rest was rather a confused restatement of Langenhoven's argument and supported his position. According to the author of the article, the problem with the new book was that it provided information through the wrong method. The writer then reflected on the possible influence this book would have on young boys and girls. However, the writer hoped that what had been written about the book and what, surely, would still be written, would stimulate mothers to deeper thought and help them to distinguish between good and bad ways of teaching their children.

On 31 January 1930, Dr Bosman was allowed a two-column reply to Langenhoven's article. Bosman's (1930b) article, under the heading *Verdoesling of waarheid?*, appeared in the readers' letters column of *Die Burger*.

Bosman began by clarifying some issues raised in his original review, negating the impression that he was a promoter of smut. According to Bosman (1930b), the difference of opinion,

gelukkig het dit geen polemieek te word nie. Sen. Langenhoven en ek verskil nie soseer in wat ons beide beoog vir maatskappy en kuns nie as in ons metodes om dit te bereik en in ons opvattinge van wat kuns en skoonheid is.

Ek wil my dus eerder bepaal tot 'n verdere uiteensetting van my standpunt as tot enige teenargumenter met Sen. Langenhoven.

Having acknowledged Langenhoven's position of power, Bosman also acknowledged that Senator Langenhoven was an older man than himself and that perhaps he had an older generation's sex education. However, like Langenhoven, Bosman had also grown up in a typically Afrikaans environment. What the latter would like to see in the community was that good sex education and truth about sex be provided.

Thus while Langenhoven, in his first article, posited himself as the spokesmen for the Afrikaner culture and nation and placed Bosman as a typical outsider, Bosman corrected this by placing himself within the same tradition. From the same tradition, Bosman began a counter-attack on Langenhoven's old fashioned views.

Sen. Langenhoven en andere sien vir suiwer Afrikaans aan wat slegs die gees van 'n bepaalde tydperk was. Die gees wat nog hier heers is die gees van die tweede helfte van die 19e eeu van geheel Europa, maar veral van die Victoriaanse tydperk in Angel-Saksies lande (Bosman 1930b).

Bosman claimed that knowledge is needed and should be provided to children in a proper manner in order for them to gain the truth about their own body. Concerning art, Bosman differed from Langenhoven. According to Bosman (1930b), Langenhoven would have liked to keep the ugly out of art, "art is to amuse and to please". However, according to Bosman, Langenhoven confused realistic art and obscene literature because he could not distinguish between a nude sculpture and a suggestive picture of a half-naked actress. Bosman concluded his letter with despairing comment on the fact that Langenhoven and his supporters could not tolerate any artist who differed from their own views (cf. Bosman 1930b).

Langenhoven's reply to Bosman's letter appeared in *Die Burger* on 3 February 1930. Addressing his words to the reader, Langenhoven feigned ignorance and wondered about the word "verdoeseling", which he could not find in his dictionary (cf. Langenhoven 1930b).

According to Langenhoven (1930b), Bosman insulted those who shared his point of view by claiming that they were dishonest by falsifying the truths of life.

Langenhoven did not think that there was any distinction between art and smut, because such distinction and talk were the "taal van geleerde frasery" in which "dirty stories" were described as "realistic art". For Langenhoven there was no distinction between language used in literature and everyday use of language, because "fatsoenlikheid in die daelikse omgang en fatsoenlikheid in die boek" were of the same kind (Langenhoven 1930b).

Langenhoven claimed that Bosman's whole discussion was self-serving, it was the discourse of the "tegniesegesproke geleerde heers" and of no importance because "want ek is verder seker daarvan dat sy hele polemie, hoe eerlik ook vir sy eie bewustheid, 'n saak van aangeleerde geleerde teorie is" (Langenhoven 1930b).

Langenhoven was not impressed by the position of authority that intellectuals such as Dr Bosman claimed to possess. However, according to him, the public should worry because these intellectuals, who were in a position of authority, exerted their bad influence in schools, among teachers, lecturers, and editors of magazines and newspapers. From their position of power, these intellectuals produced a false philosophy of life and it was against such bad influence that the public should demand legislative intervention.

It is obvious that Langenhoven, as a politician rather than a writer, claimed to represent the view of the *people* regarding sexual discourse. However, such a position was contradicted by the woman's page article in *Die Burger* on 28 January 1930 (cf. *Geslagsopvoeding vir die kind die kind* 1930:11) and it was contradicted once again by a reader's letter that appeared on the women's page in *Die Burger* on 8 February 1930 (cf. Anthea 1930). The editorial text introducing the letter pointed out that the appearance of the book by Pienaar (the book over which the debate between Langenhoven and Dr Bosman had taken place), like all other works of its kind⁷, had opened up once again discussions on sex education. According to Hofmeyr

⁷ This would imply that such books had been published before.

(1987:114), a review of the leading Afrikaans magazine of the 1930s indicates that issues of sex, marital problems and sex education were widely and openly discussed.

In a rejoinder to the Langenhoven and Bosman debate, a female reader of *Die Burger* wrote about the usual responses regarding sex education one encountered in the community. People claimed that the reading public should not allow such books to be published because the discussions that they stimulated made children curious and resulted in such books being read by children. However, the writer of the letter said that should children read such books, then parents need not worry about sex education (cf. Anthea 1930).

The same 8 February 1930 issue of *Die Burger* also published Bosman's second reply to Langenhoven. In his reply under the heading *Bang vir die waarheid?* (cf. Bosman 1930c), Bosman goes straight to the point.

Ek vrees sen. Langenhoven se opgewonde artikel met die kennelike oordrywing daarin van die blinde weiering om enigiets goede te sien in 'n standpunt wat van sy eie verskil, veroordeel homself. So swak trouens, voel sen. Langenhoven die krag van sy waarheid dat hy op die end nie beter kan doen as met wetgewende geweld te dreig om die monde van ons andersdenkendes te snoer nie ... hy wil sy krag in onkunde en nie in kennis soek nie. Hy wil die muilbandtaktiek invoer omdat hy sy standpunt onder hom voel wankel (Bosman 1930c).

According to Bosman (1930c), there was no possibility for any serious discussion because Senator Langenhoven refused to see any difference between realistic art and lewd literature, between naturalism and *pornography*, or between the art of contemporary Afrikaans writers such as Jochen van Bruggen and pornographic books and "penny horrible" novels. Bosman described Langenhoven's attitude as childish and naïve and accused him of being a stumbling block for serious art. For Bosman, Langenhoven "word hier die kampvegter vir verderflike verdoeseling en seksuele volstruispolitiek, word hier die stryder teen waarheid en eerlikheid in die kuns". According to Bosman (1930c), Langenhoven considered himself as the great master who expected that his views would be accepted unquestionably as the official truth. Therefore, Bosman acknowledged the futility of debating with Langenhoven and rested his case (cf. Bosman 1930c).

Langenhoven's reply⁸ appeared on 10 February 1930 under the heading "Sal die staat ingryp?" (cf. Langenhoven 1930c). According to Langenhoven, many readers offered him their support in his attempt to defend the old traditional Afrikaner point of view. Here Langenhoven turned the discussion into a moral and political crusade. He claimed to be a representative of the people and of the young generation on whose behalf he was protesting against "leraars wat vir hulle dwing om pornografiese boeke te bestudeer". Langenhoven appropriated the concept *pornography* used by Bosman (1930c) and used it to define the books and literature that Bosman would have liked to promote as pornography.

Obviously, Langenhoven was not interested in any intellectual debate and free exchange of ideas but was speaking as a politician attempting to gain a victory over an opponent. Having associated Bosman views with dirt and pornography, Langenhoven claimed that

Ek het gesê, en ek herhaal dit as 'n ernstige waarskuwing, dat ons die gevaar loop dat die publiek so woedend sal word oor hierdie vervuiling van ons leesstof dat hy sy burgerlike mag sal gebruik om 'n ander en meer doeltreffende gesag as die doktrale in werking te laat tree (Langenhoven 1930c).

From the debate and from the various readers' letters discussed thus far, it is clear that Langenhoven's views on sexuality were not representative of the views of the people in the Afrikaner community. As a politician, Langenhoven disregarded such discrepancy and claimed to be the *Vox populi* - speaking in the name of the people - against the reckless apostles of modernity. Presenting himself as the peoples' representative, Langenhoven reproduced a letter in his column to show how much support he had received.

In hierdie verband haal ek een brief aan wat ek ontvang het. Dit doen my leed dat die geagte skrywer my nie die verlof gegee het om sy naam te openbaar nie. Om daardie rede laat ek ook die adres weg en een sinsnede waaruit 'n aanduiding kon afgelei word van wie hy is. Vir die res is die aanhaling woordeliks: "Geagte Senator, Dis my 'n behoefte van die hart om u geluk te wens met u moedige optree in "die Burger" teen die kwasi literêre

⁸ This is in fact not a direct reply to this particular letter by Dr Bosman, because Langenhoven had already written his reply and only read Bosman's letter much later, as he acknowledges in the next article, discussed below.

verheerliking van vuil lektuur... Dis uiters jammer dat ons jong volkie in sy voortvarendheid sy eie voortreflikhede en deugde onder die voet trap en in histeriese aanbidding neerval voor alles wat buitelandse en kontinentaals is" (Langenhoven 1930c).

Langenhoven suggested that censorship was necessary, because the use of language should be controlled in the same manner as society is controlled by a police force. Langenhoven, the legislator, would have liked to legislate how language is to be used in literary discourse. Langenhoven suggested that he, as a lawmaker, was prepared to introduce

'n maatreël wat bepaal dat elke geskrif, wat nie 'n boek vir natuurwetenskaplike studie of beroepgebruik nie, maar bedoel is as leesstof vir die algemene publiek, beskou sal word as 'n onbetaamlike boek as daarin seksuele prosesse beskryf of behandel word, regtreks of deur suggestie, op 'n manier wat berekend is om die geslagsdrif van die leser te prikkel; of as daarin morsigheid (seksueel of nie seksueel nie) voorkom wat in fatsoenlike mondelingse geselskap nie as oorbaar sou beskou word nie ... so 'n boek wat deur 'n onbetaamlik volgens die voorgaande definisie en die hele oplaag daarvan, waar daar ook eksemplare te kry is, in die privaat of in die openbaar vernietig sal word (Langenhoven 1930c).

The idea of introducing censorship was not Langenhoven's own invention but was part of the established Afrikaner political discourse of the day. While in his weekly column Langenhoven had the freedom to discuss any topic, these topics always related to his position in the Afrikaner cultural discourse. More directly, Langenhoven's material for the newspaper column was also the result of directives and suggestions from the National Party (cf. Goldblatt 1965:80). Thus in discussing censorship, Langenhoven gave voice to the discourse of the political party. Langenhoven's call for censorship was a restatement of a position enunciated by Dr D. F. Malan (former editor of *Die Burger* and the Minister of Interior) who had already decided to introduce the Entertainments (Censorship) Bill in 1930. The Censorship Bill was a response to the increasing prominence of British, American and continental films shown in South Africa. These films represented new trends in cinematic production, that placed emphasis on glamour or "sex appeal" and for some critics, these films seemed to wear "a pornographic embroidery" (cf. Gutsche 1972:217). However, the private demands for censorship became useful for a political strategy. Demand for censorship by English speaking *moral reformers* coincided with concerns among Afrikaner intellectuals

over the influence of the English and American films on the young Afrikaans language and culture. For example, the writer Gustav Preller devoted his energies to supplant the *bioskoopbeskawing* by providing locally produced Afrikaans films (cf. Hofmeyr 1987:110).

On 17 February 1930, Langenhoven finally responded to Bosman's letter of 8 February 1930. According to Langenhoven (1930d), he had read the letter only after his own piece (the column of 10 February 1930) had already appeared. From this statement it would be rather difficult to consider the exchange between Langenhoven and Bosman as a *debate* or dialogue. Bosman was correct in claiming that it was impossible to make Langenhoven listen to any point of view that differed from his own. Langenhoven thus showed that he was not debating ideas but was following a pre-defined planned strategy aimed at the elimination of an opponent.

According to Langenhoven (1930d), there was nothing new in Bosman's latest letter that needed to be answered. It seemed to Langenhoven that "dan kan ons dit neem dat sy [i.e. Bosman] uiteensetting uitgeput is". Langenhoven suggested that rather than debating the merits of dirty literature in public, Dr Bosman should read it for his own pleasure or teach such literature to his own students. In conclusion Langenhoven suggested that

aan my kant van die bespreking is dit 'n ongeluk by die geluk dat die gewone leser nie werklik weet watter soort leesstof dit is waarmee ons hier te doen het nie, en dat dit nie moontlik is om hom in die loop van die bespreking op hoogte te bring nie. Om hom self te laat sien wat dit eintlik is waar ons oor stry, moes 'n mens hom voorbeelde kon gegee het. Maar al kon ek my self daartoe bring om tipiese staaltjies van vuiligheid uit die hooggehuldigde realistiese kunswerke hier aan te haal, sou die redaksie my dit nie kon toelaat nie (Langenhoven 1930d).

As most readers of *Die Burger* had also not read the controversial book and had no information on its supposed *obscenity*, Langenhoven seemed to demonstrate his unchallenged position as the protector of racial and literary purity. Sexual purity had already been an important political issue within the Afrikaner nationalist discourse. In the South Africa of the 1920s and 1930s, discussions on sex were not the exclusive reserved domain for men.

Discourse about sex and racial purity was a particular area in which Afrikaner women participated with great interest.

Afrikaner women's organisations campaigned for the criminalisation of sexual intercourse between black women and white men and were largely responsible for the introduction of the *Immorality Act* of 1927 (cf. Joubert 1974:25). According to the Minister of Justice, who introduced the second reading of the bill in the Senate on 30 April 1926,

dit is natuurlik nie 'n kwessie wat alleenlik die manlike bevolking van die land aangaan nie. Uit vele bronne, o.a. van die vroueverenigings van Suid-Afrika, het ons representasies ontvang dat sodanige wetgewing absoluut noodsaaklik is. Ek wens net te noem die Raad van die Vroue Nasionale Party van Natal en die Vroue Suid-Afrikaanse Party van Transvaal, twee liggame is wat baie representasies gemaak het in die laaste tyd (Hansard 1926 col. 369).

The Minister of Justice added that it was common knowledge that sexual intercourse between whites and blacks was considered to be forbidden, and that such matters were clearly explained to white adolescents.

Vir sover elkeen in die land weet, is dit egter 'n verkeerde ding; elke seun in die land word aan huis geleer dat dit 'n afskuwelike oortreding is om iets met 'n naturellemeid te doen te hê. Daar was in die verlede geen kriminele verbod nie, maar daar was die verbod van die openbare mening en die wyse waarop seuns in hulle huise voorgelig is ... elke seun in die land weet dat hy hom aan 'n oortreding skuldig maak as hy iets te doen het met 'n naturellemeid; hy weet dat dit onverdedigbaar is; dit is onverdedigbaar van elke standpunt in hierdie land (Hansard 1926 col. 434).

The extent of the sexual discourse is also evident from the political debates of the period. During the debate on the *Immorality Act* in Senate in 1926, Senator Langenhoven related the fact that he had received a letter from a woman demanding punishment by castration of all those found guilty of having had sexual intercourse with black women.

Nou die dag het ek 'n brief ontvang van 'n dame wat ek besonder hoog ag. Sy het baie vertroulik aan my geskryf en ek veronderstel dat sy dit in opdrag van een van die vroueverenigings in ons land gedoen het... Sy noem as voorbeeld dat die straf kan opgelê word aan 'n jong man wat mislei is, wat

voor 'n plotselinge misleiding beswyk het ... Die dame beskou die saak ook van hoër standpunt van die suiwerheid van die ras. Wanneer 'n mens dit in aanmerking neem, moet ander oorwegings verval. Sy gee aan die hand dat die vereniging waartoe sy behoort, propaganda moet maak vir ontmanning van die mense wat dié soort misdaad pleeg, omdat die neiging tot die misdaad natuurlik erflik is en van vader op seun kan oorgebring word. (Hansard 1926 col. 377).

The views on sexual degeneration expressed by Langenhoven were the widely accepted views within the scientific and popular discourses at the time (cf. Coetzee 1987:26-32). As seen from the above, while sex was openly discussed in the South African society, it was Langenhoven who showed his Victorian prudery.

There is also a similarity between the structure of Langenhoven's speech in Senate where he quoted a nameless letter in support of his views and his use of the letter from the nameless reader in *Die Burger* of 10 February 1930 (cf. Langenhoven 1930c). As Langenhoven did not see a distinction between speech in daily life and literary speech, there is no reason to make a distinction between his speech in the Senate and the article in the newspaper column, both were part of the same discourse. Bringing these two texts together is insightful because it is known that *Die Burger* never published any of Langenhoven's political speeches as Langenhoven had placed a ban on such reporting (cf. Steyn 1990:20; Steenkamp 1965:134-135).

In order to present himself as the spokesman for the institutionalised Afrikaner position, there were certain statements that such a position required Langenhoven to make, for example, a reference to the long and old tradition of purity and prudery. However, such long tradition of refinement is a myth. According to Van Wyk Louw (1947:17), no such tradition existed and the old Boers had no regard for drawing-room refinement and "hulle het elke ding met 'n ruwe eerlikheid op sy naam genoem op 'n wyse wat inderdaad kies en kuis was".

Thus Langenhoven's claim (cf. Langenhoven 1930a) that open discussion on sex was an attack on traditional taboos was clearly hypocritical. The tradition of sexual purity and its taboo were only a few years old, dating back to the introduction of the *Immorality Act* in 1927.

During the Senate debate on the *Immorality Act*, Senator Langenhoven clearly acknowledged that sexual relations were defined socially by legislation. According to Langenhoven (Hansard 1926 col. 376) the *Immorality Act* was aimed at maintaining racial purity by outlawing sexual relations between the different races. However, the proclaimed aim of the legislation was thwarted because it did not outlaw marriage between members of different races. According to Langenhoven,

'n daad van vleeslike gemeenskap voortaan deur die wetgewing as iets afgrysligs sal beskou word, byna gelykstaande met 'n onnatuurlike geslagtelike oortreding, en as sulke strafbaar gestel word, maar dat dit vergeef word as die heilige mantel van die huwelik daarvoor gewerp word ... Daaroor, lyk dit vir my dat die agb. Minister in die wetsontwerp voorsiening moes gemaak het nie alleen vir die bestraffing van ontug van hierdie aard nie, maar ook huwelike tussen blankes en nie-blankes, onverskillig watter van die twee die man of die vroue is, ongeldig te verklaar (Hansard 1926 col. 377)

Langenhoven suggested that there is nothing holy in marriage and it could be conveniently defined differently for political expediency by a group of people who have the power to define and legitimise their desires as morality. Thus, without pretention and in the most frank manner, Langenhoven announced in the Senate debate on 8 March 1927 that

hier nie die plek is om voorsiening te maak vir kerkdoeleindes, of dat ons die mense moreel kan maak, nog minder sonder sonde deur 'n wet van die Parlement nie maar vir die behoud van die ras, en as dit ons bedoeling is dan beskou ons die gemengde huwelikslewe in dieselfde manier as ons 'n onnatuurlike geslagtelike misdaad bekou (Hansard 1927 col. 39).

According to Langenhoven,

Ek het toe geen argument gehoor nie en ek verwag nou ook geen te hoor nie wat die veskil kan regvedig tussen gemeenskap tussen die twee verskillende rasse waaneer hulle getroud is of gemeenskap sonder huwelik (Hansard 1927 col. 39).

Having stated that marriage had no particular value, Langenhoven also claimed that mixed marriages between white and black were "unnatural sexual crimes" and from the position of power, he would have liked to castrate all those who engaged in the *unnatural criminal*

behaviour of sexual intercourse across the colour line (cf. Hansard 1926 col. 377). However, the political definition of social reality needed to be presented to the public as legitimate. Such legitimation was performed by presenting the political definition of reality as belonging to the common social discourse that claimed to represent the *timeless* truth of a divinely given tradition. Having *fictioned* or constructed with his own hand a historical myth of Afrikaner divine descent - the Afrikaner *immaculate conception* - it was now also necessary to conceal the marks of such production by legislation, and by purifying language to create an *immaculate perception*. For Langenhoven there was no distinction between *writing* literature and *writing* the law.

What is significant in the Langenhoven and Bosman debate is the fact that European cultural influences had begun making their mark on the Afrikaner community. Such influences resulted in a battle, but the battle was not so much against all foreign influences (after all Langenhoven himself adopted a Victorian discourse), but rather to determine the correct or *right influence*. By the 1930s nationalist-inclined young Afrikaner intellectuals went to Holland and Germany for their higher education and many returned full of enthusiasm for the aims and methods of the political parties emerging from the European political right, namely fascism. Fascism, as *the correct discourse*, was to gain greater influence on Afrikaner nationalism during the rest of the 1930s and 1940s with the rise to political prominence of German and Dutch-trained young intellectuals such as Prof Geoffrey Cronjé, Dr Nico Diederichs, Piet Meyer and Dr H. F. Verwoerd (cf. Coetzee 1991:31; Hagemann 1992:131).

Langenhoven died in 1932 and there were no further important public discussions on pornography during the decade.

3.3.5 The problematisation of pornography in the 1940s: N. P. Van Wyk Louw's counter-discourse

In October 1947 an article entitled *Sensuur of pornografie?* by the eminent Afrikaner poet and writer, N. P. van Wyk Louw, appeared in the literary magazine *Standpunte*. In the article Van Wyk Louw reacted to a news report published in *Die Burger* on 26 July 1947. The news report, reproduced in its entirety by Van Wyk Louw (1947:10), relates that a

delegation of Afrikaans churches and organisations had met with the Minister of the Interior and demanded the introduction of censorship of books and magazines published in the Union of South Africa. The delegation was led by Dr W. Nicol, Moderator of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in the Transvaal⁹. The delegation also included the following representatives:

ds. A. M. Meiring, voorsitter van die Federale Raad vir die Bestryding van Maatskaplike Euwels; ds. D. F. B. de Beer, scriba van die Federale Raad, en ds. A. C. Stegmann, verteenwoordiger van die Gefedereerde Sondagskoolkommissie (Van Wyk Louw 1947:10).

As evidence to support their demands for censorship, the delegation presented the Minister with examples of what, in their opinion, were immoral publications (cf. Van Wyk Louw 1947:10).

Van Wyk Louw's response to the report and the discourse of the churches was made from the self-proclaimed position of a non-conformist *intellectual*¹⁰ (cf. Van Wyk Louw 1947:11, 14). Van Wyk Louw was enraged by the fact that a radical suggestion such as a call for the implementation of censorship passed without public reaction or comment from the intellectual community. For an intellectual and writer such as Van Wyk Louw, censorship presented a personal danger because it could limit his freedom of expression. Censorship could also endanger the entire Afrikaans literature and language (cf. Van Wyk Louw 1947:19).

According to Van Wyk Louw (1947:11), the silence of the intellectuals on the issue of censorship was a reckless refusal to investigate the principles by which a society lives, even though such principles were opened up for investigation by the dominant *powers* in the community.

⁹ Dr Nicol was also a former chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond and later became the Administrator of the Transvaal (cf. Furlong 1991:226).

¹⁰ N. P. Van Wyk Louw was subsequently, on numerous occasions in conflict with the political authorities of the Afrikaner community and in particular came under attack from Dr H. F. Verwoerd, the South African Prime Minister.

Van Wyk Louw (1947:12) suggested that the principles in need of intellectual examination were the role of art in representing life and the role of the Calvinistic church in enforcing prescriptions on art. However, any serious discussion of these principles was made difficult because the public did not know what kinds of examples of obscene literature were presented to the Minister. Therefore, anyone who protested against the church's demand for censorship could have his position undermined by the accusation that he was defending pornography. Such an accusation would confuse the issue.

Dit sou so maklik wees om aan elke verset teen die voorstel van die kerklike liggame die bysmaak te gee van 'n verdediging van die pornografie en om die saak dus van die staanspoor af te vertroebel - waardeur dan later, as die probleem voor die Volksraad kom, besluite van die verreikendste strekking in 'n atmosfeer van onredelikheid en emosionaliteit geneem kan word (Van Wyk Louw 1947:11).

According to Van Wyk Louw, one needs to examine the relationship of pornography and literature when discussing censorship. Pornography or what is called "vuilskrywery" was a deformation of literature, because it was concerned essentially with the sphere of sexuality and aimed at sexual stimulation. For Van Wyk Louw pornography did not present any problems because it was

gelukkig in mindere mate verderflik as goeie mense soms vrees: elke sielkundige sal dit bevestig dat die pornografie in hoofsaak deur die geperverteerde en impotente as prikkel gebruik word, en dat dit by normale mense, veral gesonde jongmense, byna nie in aanvraag is nie (Van Wyk Louw 1947:15).

The above statement is a necessary re-affirmation of a position enunciated by various intellectuals of the period regarding the effects of pornography. For example, Van Wyk Louw acknowledged the views of Harold D. Lasswell who asserted that even those who find it necessary to suppress pornography, considered censorship undesirable (cf. Van Wyk Louw 1947:20). However, Van Wyk Louw contradicted his own statement that pornography was not in much demand among *normal* people. According to Van Wyk Louw, "ons het in Afrikaans nog feitlik geen pornografie nie - dié is wel klandestien te kry en word deur mense van die hoogste stande geniet" (Van Wyk Louw 1947:19). Thus, the existence of

pornography was not problematic and it was an art-form appreciated by the better educated members of society.

Van Wyk Louw (1947:15) maintained that the main problem with censorship was that no board of official censors would be able to make any logical distinction between art and pornography and thus did great harm to art and intellectual life. Owing to the fact that it was impossible to separate pornography from art, those who claimed to be able to make such a distinction had to possess a judgement that was above time and fashion (cf. Van Wyk Louw 1947:17).

Van Wyk Louw questioned the position and strategy of the church. The church in modern society,

met sy botsende spoelings van magsgroepe en -druk kom 'n geestelike ideaal so maklik in die versoeking om bondgenote in die massakragte te soek. Die godsdienste kan so maklik daartoe kom om die steun wat hy van godsdienstige mense kry, tot 'n politieke "pressie-groep" saam te bal, waardeur hy eise op 'n volkome ongeestelike wyse en in 'n volkome ongeestelike sfeer kan "deurdruk" (Van Wyk Louw 1947:13).

According to Van Wyk Louw (1947:20-21), the church must limit itself to spiritual matters through public criticism and not through the exercise of political power.

While Van Wyk Louw's article elaborates a counter-discourse against the prevailing nationalist position, it also provides an important statement on the social and political strategies during 1947 and particularly of the political discourse of the Afrikaner churches. The issue raised by Van Wyk Louw suggests that if pornography does not exist in Afrikaans literature, then the motives of the church's demands for censorship must be found elsewhere. The fact that the discourse on pornography emerged from the Afrikaner churches and Afrikaner institutions was a significant political strategy in anticipation of the forthcoming elections of 1948 (cf. Wilkins & Strydom 1980:109). The Afrikaner churches and the Broederbond played a key role in fostering Afrikaner unity that led to the eventual political victory of the National Party in the 1948 (cf. Adam & Giliomee 1979:240).

There was no public interest in pornography and no response from leading Afrikaan intellectuals was forthcoming to Van Wyk Louw's challenge, because, since the 1930s, the leading Afrikaner writers and intellectuals were concerned with the formulation of political strategies for Afrikaner cultural, social and political domination.

No further debates on pornography were recorded until the 1950s.

✱ 3.3.6 Official discourse on pornography: the discourse of the Commissions of Inquiry 1957 - 1974

After the National Party's political victory in 1948 it began to extend its political domination and its policy of racial separation or *apartheid*. However, while the policy of apartheid had become the dominant state discourse and largely accepted by the white population, it nevertheless encountered opposition from various English churches and political parties. Increasing opposition and growing political activity and resistance campaigns were also organised by the black population. Against such opposition the government expressed its determination to enforce apartheid in "the peaceful way" but should it encounter opposition from "liberals and communists" it was prepared to enter into battle against all opponents (cf. *The Cape Argus* 1953:1).

In order to manufacture consent for the state's policy, the nationalist government and the Afrikaner churches began to apply strategies aimed at gaining co-operation. Strong resistance to the application of apartheid policy was expressed by the English churches in South Africa. Dr J. B. Webb, chairman of the Methodist Church, speaking during a church conference on racial affairs in Pretoria in November 1953, stated that whenever demands for the extension of fundamental Christian principles to all people in South Africa were made, they were opposed because it was claimed that such a move was not politically expedient, and "as soon as anybody began to talk about the common inheritance of all Christians he was charged with being a 'Kaffirboetie,' an advocate of miscegenation, social equality and all the rest of this parrot-like nonsense" (*One 'shining light' in race relations* 1953:3).

The opposition to extending Christian principles to Non-Europeans came from the Afrikaner churches that claimed that there were too many churches with different doctrines who "caused competition and confusion, [and] lowered the Christian ideal" in South Africa (cf. *One 'shining light' in race relations* 1953:3). According to Dr M. W. Retief of the Dutch Reformed Church, the main stumbling block for the application of Christian principles was the influence of "bad literature" and communism (cf. *Native crimes caused by bad literature* 1953:9).

On communism and *bad literature* the Afrikaans churches and the government spoke in unison. The churches had already provided their support for the government policy of apartheid and elaborated a theological justification for such policy. The Afrikaner churches and the government responded to native political resistance by defining such as *native crime* and blamed "bad literature" and "communism" for their cause.

Linking native criminality to sexual assault drew on the existing South African tradition of the *Black Peril*. From this tradition, native crimes were seen as a threat to white domination and in particular a sexual threat to white purity. Indeed, according to Dr M. W. Retief, acting secretary of the Federal Missionary Council of the Dutch Reformed Church, "attacks on White women and other serious crimes could in many instances be traced to the type of literature being spread among the Natives". "Bad literature" was identified as the primary *cause* of criminal acts (cf. Chidester 1992:64; *Native crimes caused by bad literature* 1953:9).

The "bad literature" was of two kinds: sexual and political. According to Dr M. W. Retief, the natives were being subverted by publications containing photographs that had "the effect of destroying the native's respect for White women" and caused harm to "the healthy relationship between the racial groups". In order to prevent *native crimes* and maintain white purity and power it was suggested that censorship should be introduced. Censorship of pornographic literature was demanded not simply because such literature was erotic but because it blurred the distinctions enshrined in the racial classifications of the South African law and the natural order of things. In similar manner, political literature - especially

communist literature - posed the same danger as pornography because it endangered the existing white social order (cf. Chidester 1992:64-65).

Interest in the issue of pornography was promoted by members of the National Party in parliament in 1953 during a debate on the portfolio of the Minister of the Interior, in which the opposition parties were expected to raise questions regarding discriminatory racial legislation. In a strategic move, a National Party member of Parliament, Mr Abraham rose to speak in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Abraham: Mr. Chairman, I rise this afternoon on a very important Vote of the minister in order to bring a most important matter to the notice of the minister. In fact, I considered this matter of such importance that at the commencement of the present session I had a motion placed in the Order Paper to have this matter discussed, but when the time for motions was curtailed I decided to have that motion removed from the Order Paper so that this house might have an opportunity of discussing this matter on the Interior Vote. Seeing that the matter I want to raise has rather wide implications I hope we will be allowed to have a fairly exhaustive debate on it. It concerns the question of objectionable literature, literature of an undermining character, reading matter which is written and published in our country and which undermines the spirit of the people (Hansard 1953 col. 3024).

From his speech it was evident that the matter had been discussed at party and parliamentary level and a strategy had been formulated whereby every speaker would support the plea made by Mr Abraham. In fact, nothing was raised in Parliament by the National Party without prior discussion and members always articulated the official party-line in their speeches (cf. Adam & Giliomee 1979:201). As the debate unfolds, it is clear that there was a prior arrangement regarding who would speak, both within the National Party and within the opposition party (cf. Hansard 1953 col. 3053).

Mr Abraham did not speak in a vacuum, a discourse had already been set in motion, and the issue of pornography was raised by specific political, social and religious bodies. According to Mr Abraham,

I believe this is a problem which has already on various occasions been brought to the notice of the Government by our spiritual leaders, a matter

which is considered to be of the utmost importance by our churches, our cultural organizations and by a large number of other bodies which are interested in the moral standards of our population (Hansard 1953 col. 3024).

It is clear that Mr Abraham was talking about the Afrikaner organisations associated with the National Party. According to Mr Abraham,

I have in front of me a memorandum drafted in regards for submission to the hon. the Minister of the Interior, by representatives of the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church of South Africa, the Dutch Reformed (Hervormde) Church (Hansard 1953 col. 3024).

Mr Abraham added that the objectionable, sensational, and lurid matter was

... calculated to excite man's lowest instincts ... is intended to excite the sexual drive of mankind to such an extent and in such an immoral way that it may lead to fatal consequences for peoples and nations ... Western civilization is suffering from a serious disease ... Publishers and authors ... are contaminating the soul and spirit of our people's youth and are undermining its inherent strength. Usually the attack on the reader is made from behind the scenes, where sex matters of the human beings are represented in such a pornographic way that it must necessarily excite man's lowest urges (Hansard 1953 col. 3025-3026).

He claimed that he had numerous examples of the kind of reading material that he and others objected to,

... but it is of such a nature that I cannot quote from it in this august House. I dare not quote any passage from this literature; it would be so shocking if the newspapers were to spread it through the length and the breadth of South Africa, that people would ask: Why do you make pornographic speeches in Parliament? (Hansard 1953 col. 3026).

Mr Abraham described a scientific article, published in a local magazine as pornography because it dealt with the sexual relations and questioned the social conventions regarding sexual morality (cf. Hansard 1953 col. 3040). According to Mr Abraham, such literature would result in a revolution, "the whole structure of our Western civilization will become undermined and confused" and in South Africa the situation was volatile because,

we have a mixed population in South Africa. We have a Native population and a Coloured population who at this stage are at such a level of civilisation that they are easily influenced by this sort of reading matter. These people receive a certain amount of education; they learn to read and they read that harmful reading matter (Hansard 1953 col. 3041).

Pornography became a general, unspecified and flexible concept. While some material was claimed to be *pornographic*, the exact nature of the material was kept secret. The whole effect of secrecy suggested that the person making such pronouncement had privileged and valuable knowledge.

The parliamentary debate on pornography and morality at that stage in the history of South Africa cannot be seen in isolation from other political developments. Since 1948, the new National Party government embarked on a large scale policy of *social engineering* aimed at establishing complete separation between black and white racial groups. A large number of discriminatory and repressive legislations were enacted and met with increasing mass resistance by the black population (cf. Davenport 1978:257-260). Therefore, to be seen as speaking on issues of morality provided the government with a form of legitimation and at the same time distracted attention from the political nature of the crisis.

Another member of the National Party, Mr Klopper joined in and supported the plea made by Mr Abraham. In support of his colleague he produced a calendar that he claimed was indecent. Mr Klopper's action and statements were met with laughter by members of the opposition (cf. Hansard 1953 col. 3047). According to him,

it is bad enough in a homogeneous community, but in our country we are perhaps the most heterogeneous community in the world; we have all colours and races in our community, and half-naked European girls are displayed where non-European and Coloured and all strata of society have entrance, and there where European girls stand and where European girls have to work in offices and behind counters, and where non-Europeans also enter - that is where these things are always displayed (Hansard 1953 col. 3047-3048).

Other members of the National Party added their support. A Mr Fouché, in his wish to associate himself with the statement of Mr Abraham, added that such publications "in which

naked women are depicted" were designed to ruin the nation (Hansard 1953 col. 3061). According to Mr Fouché,

we in South Africa have learnt to esteem women highly. We have respect and honour for her (*sic*). But when for advertisement purposes her body is exhibited, the time will come when we will not have the necessary respect for her and then the morals of our people will suffer (Hansard 1953 col. 3061).

From the debate it is evident that the National Party spokesmen located the issue of obscenity or pornography in relation to the influence of literature and visual representation on the natives and the threat to white racial purity. The emphasis on the *white* woman was also a significant statement of the Afrikaner nationalist discourse. In the Afrikaner discourse the white Afrikaner woman, the *Afrikanermoeder* is the "protector of the blood-purity of the *Boerenasie*" (Coetzee 1991:6).

A few members of the opposition party made short statements, mainly with reference to the difficulty of determining obscenity and went on to quote classical literature and show their own literary knowledge (cf. Hansard 1953 col. 3051-3055).

In concluding the debate, the Minister of the Interior took note of the "serious" and "very enlightening discussion" regarding censorship and suggested that the morals of the country needed to be protected from "pseudo-artists" who published "pornographic" and bad literature. The minister was considering to appoint "a representative commission" to investigate the whole matter (cf. Hansard 1953 col. 3065-3067).

In November 1954, a commission of inquiry was appointed under the chairmanship of Professor Geoffrey Cronjé, at the time professor of sociology at the University of Pretoria. The report of that Commission was published in 1957 (cf. Kahn 1966:287).

3.3.6.1 *Discourse of a "representative commission": the Commission of Enquiry in regards to Undesirable Publications 1957 (Cronjé Commission)*

A number of commentators dismissed the *Commission of Enquiry in regards to Undesirable Publications* (Cronjé Commission 1957) for a variety of reasons. These rejections were based on statements of subjective dislike of censorship and objections to the Commission's report presumed absurd contradictions and faulty scientific logic (cf. De Vleeschauwer 1959:3-19). According to Kahn (1966:287), the Commission's report

... makes strange reading. Seldom can there have been such an admixture of scientific investigation and uncritical acceptance of unproved contentions. Every few pages a *petitio principii* offends the eye. Hyperbolic condemnation of current social trends and an illiberal attitude to libertarians go hand in hand with an appreciation of literary standards and the desirability and possibility of improving them that, for all an occasional artlessness in expression, would delight many a *littérateur* (Kahn 1966:287-288).

However, such comment assumed rather uncritically that government commissions were appointed and served the proclaimed purpose of impartial fact-finding and advice on matters of policy (cf. Ashforth 1990:1). However, commissions of inquiry have other reasons for their existence.

The reason for the existence of a government commission of inquiry is not to be found in the rules of formal or scientific logic but in its authoritative statements that have official power to *name* a problem and propose *the correct* solution to *the problem*. The significance of commissions of inquiry is derived from their being means of legitimation for the government and aimed at articulating the proper means for attainment of the objectives of state power. A commission of inquiry is a *ritual of power* that constructs a framework of knowledge for those in power (who in the first place authorise the commission) and allows them to distinguish themselves from the society at large and thus to be seen as transcending politics. Such a position allows them to speak on behalf of the *common good* of a society. Thus, commissions of inquiry are used for the purpose of uniting power and knowledge. This unification is a form of persuasion that draws on the authority of scientific, institutional, jurisdictional and epistemological rules of discourse (cf. Ashforth 1990:6-15). The result of

a commission of inquiry - the report produced by a commission - authorises and provides the government with "ways of speaking about social life which makes possible the work of organizing political subjection" (Ashforth 1990:17).

In order to understand the *Commission of Enquiry in regard to Undesirable Publications* (Cronjé Commission 1957), its source of power and knowledge and its discursive strategies need to be identified.

The Commission was authorised by the National Party government, a government with a power base derived exclusively from the white, and mainly Afrikaans, segments of the community. The legitimation for such government was provided by the white electorate whose participation in elections conferred legitimation on such elections. Therefore, the Commission had to speak a common language that was understood to represent those interests.

The authority of a Commission is also derived from the authority of the person or persons who are members of the commission. In this case, such authority was given by the credentials of the Chairman of the Commission, Professor Geoffrey Cronjé, of the University of Pretoria and a respected figure within the established social-science community in South Africa (cf. Coetzee 1991:4). However, this formal position of Professor Cronjé was more complex because he was also a prominent figure within the Afrikaner Broederbond and the National Party and had a past history of political activity and was known to have had pro-Nazi sympathies (cf. Coetzee 1991:4; Furlong 1991). Professor Cronjé was known as the *mind of apartheid*, a nationalist intellectual whose four books on apartheid, characterised by their "blend of academic formality and crudeness", made an important theoretical and practical contribution to the government's racial policy (cf. Coetzee 1991:4-5). Thus it was from this framework and position of power and knowledge that the discourse of the Commission was made and formalised.

The Commission's terms of reference were the following:

To inquire into, report on and make recommendations in regards to -

- (a) The most effective means of combatting, in view of the particular circumstances and composition of the population of the Union of South Africa ... the evil of indecent, offensive or harmful literature, lithographic, photographic or other similar material of whatever nature, printed or manufactured, published and/or distributed in the Union...;
- (b) the desirability of co-ordinating any procedures recommended under (a) with the existing system of controls ...; and
- (c) any other related matter (Cronjé Commission 1957:iii).

The Commission then interpreted its terms of reference stating clearly that,

the enquiry is therefore concerned first and foremost with indecent, offensive and harmful literature. Such literature is characterized as an evil in section (a) of the terms of reference and it is consequently not necessary to determine whether it is an evil or not (Cronjé Commission 1957:1).

The Commission stated unambiguously what line of inquiry it was to follow. It was authorised and given power by the government and its powers were limited to inquiry "into the most effective means of combating the evil". The commission did not question these limits, nor find it necessary to question whether or not anything defined *undesirable* was really an evil - such questions here had no relevance (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:1). The decision to pronounce particular issues as evil by the *vox Dei* of the government was accepted by the Commission to be a self-evident truth because it was made and authorised by the power of the government. Whether or not pornography or another form of literature was evil, was of course a point of debate in many Western countries, in particular in the United States. In South Africa it was in the power of the State to silence such a debate by simply enunciating the framework for a desired *true* discussion.

Having accepted the *truth* of the pronouncement on the *evil*, the Commission also accepted other important *self-evident truths*. These included, the fact that the South African moral order was beyond question and freedom of religion was respected. However, according to the Commission (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:141), "the community of the Union is a Christian community which has a Christian outlook and which tries to do justice to Christian principles in everyday affairs". Therefore,

it is essential that the Europeans in the Union should set the example and take the lead, but this is possible only if they continually guard and uphold the best values which Western civilization and the Western outlook on life with its strong Christian tenor can offer. The European will be able to remain the leaders in this country only if they give guidance in the cultural, moral and religious sphere, i.e. if their cultural, moral and religious standard is high: This must be accepted as an indisputable postulate and an inescapable truth (Cronjé Commission 1957:53).

However, while the particular moral value of the South African Christian outlook was shared by the West, there was an important difference.

The eulogizing of miscegenation, sexual relations, intermarriage and other intimate social intercourse between European and non-European is regarded as undesirable in the Union, and this outlook has become part and parcel of the morals and moral conceptions which are cherished and respected in this country... The Commission considers that, in particular, printed matter and other objects or any part thereof, are undesirable if they depict, represent, describe or portray miscegenation, sexual relations, intermarriage or other intimate social intercourse between Europeans and non-Europeans in a eulogistic manner (Cronjé Commission 1957:142).

This moral order was, in part, the result of Professor Cronjé's and other Afrikaner Nationalists' theory and practice since 1948 (cf. Coetzee 1991). Such a moral order was pronounced true and valid and in need of protection. The protection could be offered by a "system of control" that would eliminate the threat that undesirable literature posed to this order.

While a system of control was by its very nature a political system, this fact could be overlooked because "on closer examination ... [it] is found to be a matter which has become a serious problem affecting the morals and welfare of the community and in respect of which political considerations do not or should not call for discussion" (Cronjé Commission 1957:152).

The evidence convinced the Commission that the community in the Union, apart from or in spite of political, religious, cultural or racial differences, is deeply concerned about the present state of affairs in regards to the problem under discussion and that it desires a system of control which will effectively

safeguard its morals and welfare, this being a matter which has no political complexion whatever (Cronjé Commission 1957:152).

Moreover, undesirable publications not only presented a problem in South Africa but were a world-wide problem making it clear that it was not a political problem but "pre-eminently a moral and cultural problem" (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:89). According to the Cronjé Commission (1957:25), indecent publications were a moral problem of the "first-order" because not only moral values were being threatened but "civilization and culture itself" was "seriously jeopardized".

Having reaffirmed the truth and validity of the moral order, the Commission went in search of effective means for its protection. However, Professor Cronjé, as a social scientist, attempted to preserve his own scientific and professional credibility while at the same time he needed to be seen as conferring a scientific value on the inquiry itself. Therefore, while not inquiring into the question whether or not the "undesirable" literature was evil, a case had to be made and a way found in order for the *evil* to become self-evident. For this purpose the Commission "set itself the task of investigating the nature of the problem created by undesirable literature" before finding *effective* ways for its elimination (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:7).

The most obvious strategy to make the problem be seen as an *evil*, and therefore appear self-evident, was by way of selectively presenting evidence, while simultaneously eliminating contradictory evidence. For this purpose the Commission was eager to ascertain the views held on the problem under consideration in other countries, because the nature of the problem in the Union of South Africa could not be fully understood without its relation to other countries (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:7).

The Cronjé Commission's sources of knowledge regarding the nature of *undesirable* and pornographic material was drawn from American and Canadian government investigations such as the 1952 *Report of the United States Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials* and from the *Proceedings of the Canadian Special Committee on the Sales and Distribution of Salacious and Indecent Literature* of 1952. The Commission accepted the *truth*

of the pronouncements of the various American and Canadian commissions without any reference to the heavy criticism that these evoked (cf. Kahn 1966:288).

The Cronjé Commission presented *evidence* that was supportive of its own position. Prominent position of authoritative knowledge was given to religious spokesmen. For example,

a Canadian ecclesiastic submitted the following opinion in this connection: The open display and sale of such publications to all and sundry, even to children in their teens, can have but one and that a most fatal effect, namely, the corruption of the minds and hearts ... the blighting of young lives, and the destruction of Christian decency and morality ... it has been affirmed by those in a position to judge that ... sex literature is the principal cause of sex crimes that nowadays befoul the face of the country (Cronjé Commission 1957:21).

Having presented its evidence the Cronjé Commission (1957:8) concluded that "more damnatory findings than those encountered in the cited reports ... are hardly imaginable".

The Commission made various references and allusions to concepts such as *indecent*, *pornographic* and *undesirable* which created the impression that its aim was to combat indecent publications as such (cf. De Vleeschauwer 1959:10). For example, reference was made to the word *pornography* in the various statements quoted by the Commission, it was suggested that "pornography has been a 500 - Million Dollars-a-year racket" in the United States (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:15), and that "there are large segments of the population without any real awareness of the nature of pornography" (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:16).

However, according to the Commission,

pornography is an age-old phenomenon and still flourishes today. The occurrence of undesirable printed matter and other material in the form in which it has evolved and is encountered in all civilized countries of the world at the present time, cannot, however, by any means be covered by the word and concept "pornography". This word and concept relate to indecent, immoral, offensive and obscene description, portrayal, representation and depiction of sexual life and everything connected with it. Today the problem has assumed a much greater magnitude and scope than is embraced by the word "pornography". And it is for this reason that the Commission has not

used this word and concept in any other place in this report (Cronjé Commission 1957:24).

In the Commission's report, pornography became "undesirable" and "the problem under discussion" or "the problem under consideration". This clearly transformed it into a technical term that demanded expert scientific knowledge in order to be able to deal *efficiently* with such a *problem*. The introduction of the concept of *efficiency*, derived from a technological discourse, diverted attention from the political nature of the issue.

Turning its attention to South Africa, the Commission asserted that it was "eager to ascertain the views held on the problem under consideration" (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:3). However, the Commission did not merely collect evidence presented before it, but communicated information to its own *ignorant* witnesses.

The Commission wishes to state as its finding that, although great concern is felt in the Union in regards to the problem under consideration, the actual magnitude and gravity of the problem in this country are very often not fully appreciated. Indeed, it was the Commission's experience that, when the facts at its disposal were submitted to witnesses, the latter frequently declared that the matter demanded more drastic action than they had at first thought (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:16).

The Commission concluded that drastic measures were needed because "the preposterous misconception of the freedom to publish ... must be regarded as one of the principal reasons, and perhaps the most important reason of all, for the aggravation of the problem" (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:17). This was a restatement of a position enunciated by Professor Cronjé and other members of the Broederbond in the past, to the effect that "dictatorship is actually the real form of democracy" (Meyer in Furlong 1991:96). *Total* control over the production, distribution and consumption of journalistic, literary and artistic texts was necessary because it would ensure that the *correct* and *desirable* literature would be produced under state control while *undesirable* and *inferior*¹¹ literature would be eliminated. This was the *final*

¹¹ This is a familiar form of racial classification in Cronjé terminology: Blacks and people of *mixed blood* are considered as *low-grade people* or inferior races (cf. Coetzee 1991:12).

solution to end the threat to moral and cultural values. Such a final solution was needed because,

undesirable publications ... drag through the gutter everything that is beautiful and good and noble ... Everything which is clean, or should be so, is defiled and besmirched. And everything which is or ought to be good, is reduced to a common or vulgar level. The Western world is at present in great jeopardy. Its civilization is being menaced from without by forces of evil. That, however, is not the worst. The greatest danger is the corruption and decay from within. If Western civilization can preserve inviolate (*sic.*) its eminent culture and its moral foundations and safeguard them against the subversive influences which are threatening their destruction, it need have no fear for the future. And this is a matter which most assuredly also concerns the Union in the highest degree (Cronjé Commission 1957:25).

The moral norms and values of Western civilization that were jeopardized were racial purity and white domination. Such purity was endangered and subverted by "miscegenation, sexual relations, intermarriage and other intimate social intercourse between European and non-European" and were regarded as undesirable in the Union¹².

The discursive strategy evident in the report of the Cronjé Commission was not new and had been used by Professor Cronjé in his other scientific publications (cf. Coetzee 1991). However, while Cronjé's own writings were circulated mainly among the Afrikaner academic and political communities, the Commission's report presented them to a larger public.

¹² A perceived danger to racial purity and white domination was also experienced in the United States during this period. Thus censorship, communism and pornography were issues of concern both in South Africa and in the United States.

3.3.6.2 *Discursive strategy: a lesson in writing by Professor Geoffrey Cronjé*

The statements used by the Cronjé Commission (1957) in order to justify its opposition to pornography were appropriated from American and Canadian sources. However, more than condemnatory statements regarding pornography were imported and appropriated by the Commission. A particular American style of argumentation and scholarship was also taken over and incorporated into Cronjé's own discourse, characterised as a "blend of academic formality and crudeness" (cf. Coetzee 1991:4). The particular form of discourse was identified by Hofstadter (1972:113) as a distinct strategy of the *paranoid style of scholarship* of the new American political right-wing and their conservative religious organisations. The *paranoid style* was characterised by its moral commitment, careful and obsessive accumulation of *evidence* to justify such a commitment and on the base of such evidence to reach ultimate and fantastic conclusions.

The typical procedure of the higher paranoid scholarship is to start with such defensible assumptions and with careful accumulation of facts, or at least of what appear to be facts, to marshal these facts toward an overwhelming "proof" of the particular conspiracy that is to be established. It is nothing if not coherent - in fact, the paranoid mentality is far more coherent than the real world, since it leaves no room for mistakes, failures, or ambiguities (Hofstadter 1972:118).

According to Hofstadter (1972:118-119), the *paranoid style* seems "scholarly in technique", each document produced is weighed down by hundreds of pages of bibliographies and innumerable footnotes and "the entire right-wing movement of our time is a parade of experts, study groups, monographs, footnotes and bibliographies".

In its form and pre-stated objectives, the discourse of the Cronjé Commission (1957) bears all the marks of the *paranoid style*. First, it had imported American and Canadian statements produced by such *paranoid* discourse. Second, its own discursive practice reflect that style. For example, in a lesson on good writing, the Cronjé Commission provided a discussion on the different manner of writing strategies found in good literature as against those of *undesirable* and *inferior* works. The Commission asserted that the distinction between good novels as against undesirable novels and stories or any art work was not so much dependent

on the subject matter but rather on the artistic manner of treatment of the subject (cf. Cronjé Commission 1957:30). Describing undesirable or inferior style of writing, the Cronjé Commission observed that

in the undesirable novel there is a lack of unity ... When the unity of any work of art is destroyed, unmotivated data assumes a position of undue prominence, and the critical reader soon notices that certain things are incongruous in the work and that they have been dragged in at all cost and are not convincing. Now, if the unmotivated data happens to belong to the category of facts regarded as "daring", such as, for example, sexuality, illegitimacy, brutality, cruelty, etc., it is obvious that they will immediately draw attention to their daring and hence undesirable nature. The data no longer aim at the realization of a higher unity within the work but merely daring, shocking or undesirable detail *which are presented for their own sake*. As an organization, such a novel destroys its own unity, belies its own truth, and undoes its own reality as created by the author. In short, it transgresses its own laws [T]he inferior work, which also attempts to make use of shocking facts as material, generally introduces such details *for their own sake* with the *deliberate object* of exciting the emotions of the reader ... Works of this nature have a larger public, are more readily accessible to wider circles of readers because they pander to the tastes of the masses, and are consequently all the more dangerous (Cronjé Commission 1957:31).

The above description precisely fits the strategy followed by the Cronjé Commission itself in manufacturing its report.

The recommendations of the Commission to establish a board of censors for all forms of literature and to remove the judiciary from the process of censorship were not implemented immediately. Such is the fate of many reports of commissions of inquiry - they are shelved in libraries and collect dust (cf. Hawkins & Zimring 1988:7). However, traces of the report are evident in the Publications and Entertainment Act promulgated in 1963, which established a state censorship apparatus.

3.3.6.3 *The Commission of Inquiry into the Publications and Entertainments Amendment Bill (Kruger Commission) of 1974*

In 1973 the government appointed a commission of inquiry to investigate and make recommendation regarding the functioning of the Publications Control Board that was set up in 1963 under the Publications and Entertainment Act. The appointment of the Kruger Commission was a result of a series of Supreme Court rulings against the decisions of the Publications Control Board that made for the government's dissatisfaction. In addition, blunders made by the officials responsible for the control of publications led to public protest. Initial response to such protests was met with contempt by the chairman of the Publications Board, Mr J. J. Kruger, who asserted that the majority of the public wanted censorship.

My forecast would be that control is there to stay, and that its critics would be wise to save their breath and heed the clown's advice in *Hamlet*. *Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating* (Kruger in Geldenhuys 1977:76).

Thus the morality that was claimed on behalf of censorship was exposed as political strategy. The censors and censorship legislation became objects of public ridicule and were condemned by writers and the mass media. An anti-censorship petition was signed by 48 000 people and presented to the government. However, the Dutch Reformed Church came to the aid of the censors and demanded that they receive more power and that the government remove the Supreme Court from the censorship process. A pro-censorship petition was drawn up and supported by the moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, Dr J. D. Vorster (brother of the Prime Minister of South Africa, John Vorster), politicians and various Afrikaans professors. In an open letter, this group of churchmen and academics declared that the objections to censorship were inspired by communists whose proclaimed objectives were to undermine the moral standards of the Christian society of South African. A parliamentary select committee was appointed to investigate the censorship legislation and recommended the appointment of a commission of inquiry which was appointed in July 1973 (cf. Geldenhuys 1977:79-82).

In appointing the Commission of Inquiry into the Publications and Entertainments Amendment Bill (Kruger Commission 1974), the government claimed that such commission was needed because "a spirit of permissiveness and degeneracy", which had been prevalent all over the world since the early 1960s, had lately manifested itself in South Africa (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:2).

According to the Kruger Commission (1974:4-5), the "permissiveness and degeneracy" in South Africa and the Western world were the direct result of a conspiracy by "international Communism" that promoted pornography in order to subvert Western moral standards and prepare the way for a new social order. The communist conspiracy was allegedly aimed at encouraging the youth to revolt and encouraged opposition to the government's authority. The Kruger Commission stated that not only was the government's authority undermined but so were other traditional institutions. The traditional institutions were losing their monopoly over sexual discourse because,

... there has been the trend in recent times for the realities of life, particularly sexual matters and problems, to be openly and frankly discussed in private conversation, public discussions and publications, whereas in the past these matters were confined to discussion by church, educational and other bodies which also prescribed the norms that were to be complied with in this regard (Kruger Commission 1974:6).

The Kruger Commission (1974:5) claimed that such freedom was undesirable because most people in South Africa

lack the mental maturity and aesthetic judgment to distinguish and guard against those things that might be harmful to their own and society's morals and customs, which have been handed down to them with care by their religious and conservative parents and other educators.

The people "need to be protected against the wave" of permissiveness. Therefore, the South African government took it upon itself to protect the "good morals and customs" of the community against such *evil*. The government's duty to protect its own authority and the community was sanctioned by God and the principles of Christian Nationalism (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:4).

During the 1970s the concepts *Western civilisation* and *permissiveness* acquired a new position within the South African government's discourse. During the 1950s these concepts were used to identify the values of white racial and political supremacy (see the discussion on the Cronjé Commission in 3.3.6.1 above), but in the 1970s, as a result of the political legitimisation crisis, these concepts were redefined as expressing objective and shared *civilised values* claimed to be upheld by the South African state and other Western societies. (cf. Posel 1987:419). In identifying the threat of *international communism*, the concept *permissiveness* became the official explanation used by the South African government to explain a variety of social and political problems. The use of such flexible concepts by politicians, state officials and academics made it possible to evade serious discussion and confrontation of actual issues in South African society (cf. Van Zyl Smit 1990:7). However, the use of the concepts *permissiveness* and *Western values* in the South African discourse is not an isolated instance but relates to a broad international trend among right-wing Western governments and religious groups and is mostly evident among repressive regimes. For example, South Africa and all the South American military regimes (with which the South African government had close ties during the 1970s) have used the justification that national wars and the repression of human rights were necessary in order to preserve *Western civilisation* (cf. Steytler 1990:119-121).

The discursive strategy utilised by the Kruger Commission was based on the same method as that encountered in the Cronjé Commission - a selective presentation of statements in order to make a case against pornography without recourse to any counter-argument. Such selective presentation and reliance on questionable evidence was challenged by members of the opposition parties serving on the Kruger Commission who submitted their own dissenting *Minority Report* (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:51-53).

The Kruger Commission consisted exclusively of politicians¹³. In a similar manner to the Cronjé Commission it relied on American authors in order to legitimate its statements regarding pornography. The Commission made reference to the authoritative knowledge of

¹³ The Commission was chaired by Mr J. T. Kruger, Deputy Minister of Interior, of Police and of Social Welfare and Pensions, and included the following Members of Parliament: P. L. S. Aucamp, M. C. Botha, F. W. de Klerk, J. H. Hoon, L. A. Pienaar, A. P. Treurnicht, S. J. H. van der Spuy; and V. A. Volker. The Commission also included four Opposition Members who brought out a minority report.

the American author W. Cleon Skousen's book, *The naked communist*, and John A. Stormer's book, *The death of a nation*. These two sources were the only cited references regarding the danger of pornography in the report of the Kruger Commission. According to the Kruger Commission (1974:4), the weakening of morality was a strategic attempt by communism to "subjugate the spirit of the nation". Proof for such a claim by the Kruger Commission is found in the following authoritative sources:

In his book "The Naked Communist: W. Cleon Skousen explains on page 261, "Break down cultural standards of morality by promoting pornography and obscenity in books, magazines, motion pictures, radio and T.V. Present homosexuality, degeneracy and promiscuity as 'normal, natural and healthy'." (Kruger Commission 1974:4-5).

According to the Kruger Commission (1974:5), "there are authoritative warnings" that the youth have become the target of communism.

In this regard, John A. Stormer, on page 67 of his book "The Death of a Nation" quotes the following rule from "Rules for bringing about revolution: Corrupt the young; get them away from religion. Get them interested in sex" (Kruger Commission 1974:5).

Such limited use of sources and evidence on pornography is rather surprising, when considering that pornography has been extensively discussed in the United States since the publication of the report of the Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography in 1969 and other extensive research (see the discussion in 3.2 above). Taking issue with the evidence, the dissenting *Minority Report* (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:53) asserted that the Kruger Commission had accepted "unproven assertions by obscure authors" while rejecting the large body of available evidence.

The reliance on and credibility accorded to the writing of Skousen by the Kruger Commission was a significant statement. Skousen's book was a publication of the well-known American right-wing John Birch Society (cf. Chidester 1992:13). Significantly, the South African National Party government, the Broederbond and the Afrikaner churches were in close contact with right-wing, pro-Nazi and fascist organisations since the 1960s. The South

African Prime Minister, Mr J. B. Vorster, and his brother, Dr J. D. Vorster, Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, had established close contacts with the Union of British Fascists and the American John Birch Society (cf. Furlong 1991:256; Troup 1975:398). Such contacts, in particular between the South African government, the Afrikaner churches and American right-wing political and church organisations, were further expanded during the 1970s and 1980s, and the right-wing American organisations began an international pro-South African propaganda offensive (cf. Gifford 1988:34-42).

Skousen's book, *The naked communist*, became the *gospel* and source of information for all government institutions and the Afrikaans churches on the *communist conspiracy* to destroy the West through the distribution of pornography (cf. Chidester 1991:13). Skousen's book has been used extensively as source material for school textbooks and training programmes compiled by the Department of National Education and various teacher-training programmes at universities (see example in Roos 1979). This book also became the major source text on communism used for the Youth Preparedness Curriculum run by the Department of Education and the South African Defence Force (cf. Gordon 1988:446).

The close co-operation between the American right-wing and elements within the South African government and Afrikaner churches was confirmed by the publication of another anti-communistic and anti-pornography propaganda book, *The politics of pornography*, by American right-wing author, R. J. Rushdoony. Rushdoony's book (cf. Rushdoony 1975) was published in South Africa by Valiant Publishers of Sandton. Valiant Publications was later exposed in the "Muldergate scandal" as a "front" organisation of the South African Department of Information (cf. Rees & Day 1980:208).

The close link between American groups who made pornography a public issue during the 1960 and 1970s and the discourse of the South African on pornography indicates the same strategy. During the 1960s right-wing American politicians, in response to the crisis caused by the Black Americans' demand for racial justice, attempted to evade such an issue by promoting the *real* problems facing America such as "violence, pornography, law breakers, and tolerance for drug users and addicts" (Statement made in 1968 by California's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, quoted in Delany 1972:337). Similar attempts at

diversion were made during the 1970s by Evangelical churches who claimed that in the 1960s, "strangely enough, socially-active churches were so preoccupied with politico-economic issues, and evangelical churches with changing persons, that neither did much to stem the tide of pornography" (Carl F. H. Henry's call to the *International Congress on World Evangelization* at Lusanne in 1974, quoted in Court 1980:11).

After having stated that pornography was the expression of "permissiveness" caused by communist propaganda, and such danger was the reason for the establishment of the Kruger Commission, the Commission also asserted that the reason for its appointment was the "concern ... aroused by the conflicting interpretations of the Publications and Entertainment Act by the Publications Board and the Courts" (Kruger Commission 1974:30).

The Supreme Court and not pornography presented the greater problem to the South African government (cf. Haysom & Marcus 1985:32). The existing South African censorship legislation was described as the most Draconian in the Western world (cf. Van Rensburg 1985:102). Since 1967 the private possession of *pornography* was criminalised and the police acquired immense power and was "in a position to combat the dissemination of photographic pornography with a reasonable degree of success" (Kruger Commission 1974:14). No South African court ever raised the question whether pornography was harmful or not, regardless that doubts were raised concerning such a claim (cf. *Corrupt Whom?* 1969:1178; *Minority Report* in Kruger Commission 1974:51).

While the government amended the Publications Act of 1963 on a number of occasions, the Supreme Court remained a stumbling block. The banning of publications by the Publications Control Board could be challenged in open court and the "instances in which the courts confirmed the banning were far and few between" and on the other hand the courts regularly set aside such banning (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:14). Thus, as dissenting members of the Kruger Commission pointed out, the Commission's main task was essentially to conduct an "onslaught on the right of appeal to the courts", a fact that was acknowledged by the government (cf. *Minority Report* in Kruger Commission 1974:55-56).

Since 1969 various Cabinet ministers have objected to the interference by the Supreme Court in the censorship apparatus. For example, in a parliamentary debate during 1969 the Minister of the Interior stated that the judiciary should be removed from the process of adjudication on issues of censorship. According to him, "there is no one in South Africa, from the Chief Justice down ... who is better able to decide on these matters than the Publication Board itself" (Suzman 1988:197). In 1969 at the Cape Provincial Congress of the National Party the Minister of the Interior announced that the government intended abolishing the right of appeal to the Supreme Court against decisions of the Publications Control Board. Support for the government position was provided by the Afrikaner churches and in 1971 the General Synod of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk passed a resolution calling for the abolition of appeal to the Supreme Court against the decisions of the censorship bodies (cf. Suzman 1988:192). Finally, because of the demands by the Moderator of the Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk, Dr J. D. Vorster, and Professor J. G. Gericke and other leading Afrikaans academics, a commission of inquiry into this matter was appointed (cf. Geldenhuys 1977:81).

In order to justify the elimination of the Supreme Court from the censorship process, the Kruger Commission stated that the right of appeal to the Supreme Court tended to involve the court in controversy because the court's decisions differed from those of the censorship board (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:24-25). The main assault on the Supreme Court by the Kruger Commission (1974:24-25) was based on making a case that the Supreme Court's pronouncements were of no greater value than those of other *authorities* sanctioned by the government. The Kruger Commission suggested that the Supreme Court expressed a subjective *opinion* and could thus be subordinated to the *opinion* of other authorities. According to the Kruger Commission (1974:24), both the Supreme Court and the Publications Control Board differed in their *opinion* because their decisions regarding obscenity or undesirability were based on subjective evaluation criteria. In deciding an appeal against the decision of the Publication Control Board, the court "substitutes its opinion for that of the Publications Board".

According to the Kruger Commission (1974:24), "the Court was just as competent as a board of experts to give an opinion on ethical norms" and, therefore, it was also true "that the

board of experts is just as competent as the Court to give an opinion of ethical norms". The Kruger Commission recommended, as had been already decided by the government and the Afrikaner churches, that the right of appeal to the Supreme Court against the decision of the Publications Board be eliminated and replaced with appeal to "a prestige body" of government appointed experts (cf. Kruger Commission 1974:27).

In making the case against the courts, the Kruger Commission objected that the opinion of the Supreme Court overrode the opinion of Afrikaner church ministers.

To quote an example, there is a case [heard before the Supreme Court] ... where an attempt was made to lodge with the Court affidavits made by Dr J. S. Gericke and Bishop S. C. Bradley ... Dr Gericke is a minister of the Stellenbosch Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Stellenbosch, has been the moderator of the Cape Synod of that Church since 1965 and was Moderator of the General Synod of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika from 1966 to 1970.... Legally speaking, the Court was quite right in refusing to admit these affidavits and it proceeded to give an opinion finding which was opposite to that of the two clergymen. In the Commission's opinion this kind of thing tends to involve our courts in controversy, since in cases such as this the public would attach great value to the opinions of clergymen and would not be able to understand why their opinions should be rejected (Kruger Commission 1974:24-25)¹⁴.

The Kruger Commission's reference to the church is significant and not a mere coincidence because the Afrikaner churches had supported the government's attempts to remove the right of appeal to the Supreme Court against decisions of the Publications Board.

According to Adam and Giliomee (1979:240), there was an intimate relationship between the Afrikaner church and the National Party and it could be concluded that the Church was in fact "the National Party at pray". The fusion of the church and the National Party dates back to 1944 to the *volkskongres* which pronounced apartheid as being based on Christian principles. During 1945 to 1947 and 1950 to 1960 further theological justification for apartheid were elaborated (cf. De Klerk 1983:220-222, 252). According to De Klerk

¹⁴ Like many leading Afrikaners, Dr Gericke is also a member of the Afrikaner Broederbond (cf. Wilkins & Strydom 1980:A89).

(1983:199), while the distinction between the National Party and the Dutch Reformed Church had been eliminated to the point that the Church itself was the National Party, a further development was taking place whereby Afrikaner politics was in the process of being theologised and the National Party itself was becoming a church, or a party imbued with secular religion. Thus when considering that religion is an ideological discursive practice like any other (cf. Corbett 1970:12), the main Afrikaans churches have been the most influential propaganda agency for the South African National Party government (cf. Wilkins & Strydom 1980:278).

The demands to remove the Supreme Court from the censorship process also came from some members of the judiciary. Some judges expressed the view that the appeal to the court against the decision of the Publications Board made the court act as an administrative body, and could draw the judiciary into controversy because art and literature could be highly controversial matters of which the judiciary claimed not to have "sufficient knowledge" (cf. Kahn 1966:328-329). Some judges claimed that censorship decisions were based on subjective judgement, as indeed was shown in the various appeals in 1966 against the banning of the novel *When the lion feeds*. In this case, four judges condemned the novel as undesirable while four cleared it (cf. Kahn 1966:328). However, according to Kahn (1966:333), the desire of the judiciary to relegate matters of censorship to an administrative body was possibly an attempt to evade having to deal with censorship regarding political matters that were bound to come before the courts.

The removal of the judiciary from the censorship process was to give the South African government a free "rule by administrative decree unhindered by legal niceties" (Marcus 1987:238). In fact, the devaluation of the power of the judiciary had already begun from the time the National Party came to power in 1948. Through successive changes in legislation the role of the judiciary was gradually redefined, making the legal process and the judiciary an ideological instrument of the government's racist policy of white domination (cf. Du Plessis 1990:60-61). The use of the law and the courts for domination and repression at times became so obvious that it was questioned whether the South African legal system deserved to be considered a legal system rather than a blatant instrument of state repression (cf. Davis 1985b:39; Dugard 1976:99; Dugard 1980:25). The judiciary on the whole had remained

silent, either by choice or through laws that prevented it from voicing protest. Such a judicial silence was taken as tacit consent to the government's policies while some judges expressed open support for the government (cf. Cameron 1987:340; Du Plessis 1990:216; Marcus 1987:238).

The devaluation of the judiciary also indicates a transformation of the South African legal system from its reliance on the principles of English law to those of Roman-Dutch law. The South African legal order is a legacy of mixed Roman-Dutch and English legislation. Legislation based on the Roman-Dutch system and the British tradition have coexisted and allowed for the application of legal interpretative procedures from both traditions (cf. Steyn 1991:xxii, xxviii). However, Roman-Dutch and English law represent two divergent legal ideological traditions and practices. Roman-Dutch tradition is characterised by its inquisitorial and rationalistic standards and the role of the judge is to determine the truth on behalf of the state and not to ensure impartiality. The English legal system is based on adversarial or agonistic practice of conflict whereby the role of the judge is to establish the truth from the clash of opposites that occurs in the arena of the courtroom (cf. Topf 1992:19; Lloyd 1964:274-275). The judge in the English system enjoys a higher status owing to his position of independence from the political system and his practice of making law through his judgement rather than merely applying it (cf. Lloyd 1964:274-275). The position and authority of the judge within the Roman-Dutch system is not highly regarded and the legal profession looks to academic opinion for learned commentary.

Following from the report of the Kruger Commission, a new censorship legislation was promulgated in 1975. In terms of the new legislation the Supreme Court was replaced with an administrative tribunal, the Publications Appeal Board, as the ultimate body regarding censorship. Following the introduction of the new Publications Act "a time of relative calm followed" (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:14).

However, controversy arose in 1978 about the ruling handed down by the chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, retired Supreme Court judge, Mr J. H. Snyman, and the unlimited powers, secrecy of procedures and identity of the members serving on the various

committees of the Publications Appeal Board. In passing judgement on the procedures of the Publications Appeal Board, the Supreme Court described it as

an extra-judicial body, operating in an administrative capacity, whose members need have no legal training, before whom the appellant has no right of audience, who in their deliberations are not required to have regard to the rules of justice, designed to achieve a fair trial, whose proceedings are not conducted in public and who are not required to afford any reason for their decisions (Van Winsen in Silver 1981:105).

Following the criticism by the courts, the procedures of the Publications Appeal Board were modified to follow recognised legal frameworks and a new chairman, Professor Kobus van Rooyen, an academic lawyer from the University of Pretoria, was appointed in 1980 to give credibility to the censorship apparatus.

3.3.7 Discourse of "a prestige body": the quasi-judicial discourse of the Publications Appeal Board

Professor Kobus Van Rooyen, professor of Criminal Law at the University of Pretoria and Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board produced official and authoritative discourse on pornography. His discourse combines the position of knowledge held by a university professor and the position of power held by the chairman of the Publications Appeal Board. The Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board is appointed by the State President. From the history of appointments to the South African censorship apparatus it is also clear that a person so appointed must be a member of a particular ethnic community: the dominant white Afrikaner community. Further, beyond satisfying the formal qualifications and ethnic membership, the person appointed to the head of the Publications Appeal Board must also have a special interest in the application of censorship and inspire confidence in the system. According to Van Rooyen (1987:43), while a truly representative censorship board would be an ideal, the Publications Appeal Board is similar to a judicial office where "experience is regarded as being of more importance than representativeness" because representativeness is "foreign to the judicial or quasi-judicial process".

According to Van Rooyen (1987:1), the Publications Act is the state's rightful control over the freedom of expression and such a right is an established historical practice, legitimated by the Bible and various legal and philosophical doctrines.

Van Rooyen (1987:20; 1988:132-133) claimed that the South African censorship legislation was primarily concerned with pornography. "The aim of legislation is to keep pornography and blasphemous material out of the country" (Van Rooyen 1987:20). For such purpose the South African censorship legislation is the strictest in the Western world (cf. Van Rooyen 1989b:10). However, while the strict censorship has prevented "pornography and blasphemous material" from entering the country, the legislation also attempts not to impinge on the human rights of the individual (cf. Van Rooyen 1989b:11). In this respect the censorship legislation has been a very "effective" means for "countering pornography" (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:19) and through the application of such censorship "the channels which could lead to pornography or blasphemy have ... been closed effectively" (Van Rooyen 1989b:10).

The effectiveness of South African censorship has been made possible because censorship was placed under administrative law rather than criminal law (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:5), with the result that there has been no need to follow the rigorous rules of evidence required by the criminal law system. The Publications Appeal Board is an administrative tribunal, claiming to be of equal, if not superior position to the Supreme Court, which it has displaced for the control literature and film.

The legal process in its basic form, is pre-eminently a discourse of power (cf. Topf 1992:17). The effectiveness of the legislation is also derived from the fact that the entire South African legal order has been an instrument of repression - institutional terrorisation - used in the interest of a small white minority (cf. Dugard 1976:99; 1980:25). South African administrative law is a particular brand of locally made law, governed by a positivist legal philosophy and has been used by the governing National Party to further the doctrine of separate development or apartheid (cf. Taitz 1987:41). Since the 1980s, the increasing importance of administrative law in South Africa has formed part of a new style of government which has attempted to depoliticise political decision-making by developing a

managerial approach to government and political processes (cf. Giliomee 1982:38). The managerial style means that the government appoints leaders and various experts who subscribe to the government view of efficient administration and perform effectively in implementing such a policy (cf. Giliomee 1982:39).

According to Van Rooyen (1987:13), the task of the adjudicator under the Publications Act is not pedagogical, evangelical or moral but simply to apply the legislation effectively. Van Rooyen (1988:131) added that the issue of obscenity is of a complex legal nature and cannot be resolved by simple questions of morality. Clearly Van Rooyen's emphasis on the purely administrative aspect of censorship is derived from a position of *legal positivism* that is pervasive among the South African judiciary (cf. Dugard 1976:80). The theory of legal positivism is based on the view that the law is simply the command of a political superior to a political inferior (cf. Dugard 1976:81). From the legal positivist perspective, the judiciary is considered to be appointed and paid to apply the letter and spirit of the law and not to indulge in speculation regarding its morality (cf. Lloyd 1968:104). The South African legislation has, since 1961, prevented the judiciary from questioning the legitimacy of the law, thus making the law independent of morality (cf. Dugard 1976:81-82). The emphasis on legal positivism and administrative law makes it possible to evade a number of important and controversial issues regarding pornography, censorship and the moral basis of the South African legal order. For example, by the emphasis on effective administration of the law, the questions regarding the legitimacy and morality of South African legislation - considered by many to be an immoral legal system - has been eliminated (cf. Mureinik 1988:457).

The justification given for the need to keep pornography out of the country is its supposed harmful effect. However, the claim that pornography is harmful has been questioned and no convincing proof has been given that pornography leads to antisocial conduct or criminal behaviour (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:2). While the effects of pornography have been a source of controversy in most democratic societies in the world, in South Africa "the controversy as to whether pornography promotes crime or antisocial conduct is not of great importance in the application of this Act" [i.e. the Publications Act] (Van Rooyen 1987:64). South African censors are not concerned whether a particular publication has been or could be the direct cause of any harm or violence (cf. van Rooyen 1989a:15). The harm caused by

pornography is assumed to be real and such pronouncement is accepted without question. The pronouncements of the Publications Appeal Board on questions of "indecent" or "obscenity" of particular publications or objects cannot be questioned by any court (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:7). Thus having constructed its own procedures, the Publications Appeal Board and the various committees "now function in an atmosphere of relative calm" (Van Rooyen 1987:16).

The reason for not questioning the claim that pornography causes harm is found in the principle that underlies the South African legislation regarding morality. The principle is based on the view that the question regarding the harm caused by pornography is decided by reference to *beliefs* held by authoritative and powerful groups in society. In other words, there is a "common belief" held by particular sections within the community that pornography is harmful, regardless of the fact that such harm cannot be ascertained. These beliefs are defined as "moral feelings" by their propagators and demand legal protection. The existence of such feelings and the ability to legislate them is regarded as a "good principle" justifying the implementation of censorship (cf. Van der Westhuizen 1976:63)¹⁵.

According to Van Rooyen (1987:64), it would be helpful to support the claim that pornography is harmful, but no convincing proof of such harm exists. In search of proof for the harm of pornography, Van Rooyen (1987:2) turned for support to the pronouncements of questionable and largely discredited sources such as *The Longford Report* (1974), *Pornografie* (Van Rensburg 1985), and *Video violence and children* (Barlow & Hill 1985). The Publications Appeal Board also commissioned research by two South African psychologists, Professor J. Jordaan of the University of South Africa and Professor B. du Toit of the University of Pretoria. This research supposedly supports the suggested assumptions about the harm of pornography. More recently Van Rooyen (1987:63, 81-82) also found support in the pronouncements of the controversial report of the Attorney General's Commission on pornography¹⁶.

¹⁵ Morality is not concerned with any social facts (cf. Smit 1989:86), therefore legislation of morality implies that the power of a group to make law is the moral rule of a society (cf. Devlin 1979:17).

¹⁶ For criticism of *The Longford Report*, see Simons (1972). For criticism of *Video violence and children* (Barlow & Hill 1985) see Barker (1984). For criticism of the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (1986) see Hawkins & Zimring (1988), Smith (1987) and Donnerstein *et al.* (1987).

Justification for control of pornography is claimed to reside in its transgression and invasion of the privacy of the sexual act (cf. Swanepoel 1986:5; Van Rooyen 1987:3, 11). According to Van Rooyen, pornography is the "radikale inbreukmaking op die privaetheid van die anatomie van die mens of sy seksuele verhouding bloot ter wille van die inbreukmaking" (Swanepoel 1986:5). As a high premium is placed on the privacy and dignity of the individual¹⁷ that pornography invades, the legislation outlaw the production, distribution and private possession of pornography (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:134-139). Legislation provides extensive power to the police or other authorised agents to enter private homes and search for and confiscate pornographic material (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:142). The criminalisation of private possession of pornography is, however, a serious encroachment upon the citizen's right to privacy, but such encroachment is intended by the Publications Act (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:141). Owing to the fact that pornography is an invasion of privacy, the state claims the right to invade the privacy of individuals in order to search for pornography (because pornography is an invasion of privacy). Ironically, while the sexual act is claimed to be private, South African legislation does not consider it to be so, for example, the Immorality Act (this act was removed from the status book during the 1980s) empowers the police to investigate and acquire evidence that could be used in court, on whether intercourse had taken place between people of different races.

In the application of censorship, the Publications Appeal Board does not need any advice as to moral standards regarding sexual representation (pornography) because the Publications Appeal Board's own knowledge is sufficient (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:47). According to Van Rooyen (1987:47), there is also no need to take account of any public opinion because,

¹⁷ The concept *dignity of the individual* is a political concept and was not part of the official South African vocabulary prior to the 1970s. In South Africa, group affiliation (racial, ethnic, etc.) was the criteria for defining people while apartheid legislation removed many forms of individual dignity. However, during the 1970s, in response to the need to improve the international image of the South African government, developing diplomatic relations with African countries and granting independence to the *homelands*, some forms of *petty apartheid* that were "no longer necessary for the larger political aims" were removed and such changes were explained by the government by reference to individual dignity (cf. Richard 1976:105, see also Mulder 1976:61-62). It may also be possible to show that the concept of *individual dignity* emerged during the 1970s as a result of diverse social changes during the 1970s such as an increase in urbanisation and individual affluence as well as the emergence of large scale use of state patronage for personal enrichment (cf. Adam & Giliomee 1979:73, 128-129, 142).

it appears unlikely that much value could be attached to evidence as to the opinions of laymen regarding the question of obscenity, since the latter is an intricate legal concept. To ask a man to state his opinion on a specific blend of coffee is one thing, to ask him for his opinion on whether something is 'obscene' is a far more complex question, one which requires some understanding of the legal issues involved (Van Rooyen 1987:47).

Van Rooyen's pronouncement regarding public opinion is within the judicial discourse in South Africa, most clearly enunciated by a Supreme Court judge in 1989 who pronounced public opinion as the irrelevant opinion of "a bunch of faceless and uninformed people" (cf. Chidester 1992:26).

The juridical insights and scholarly rigour required for assessing issues of public acceptance of *obscenity* is demonstrated by the Publications Appeal Board's pronouncements. For example, the Publications Appeal Board in 1980

for the first time allowed the word 'fuck' to be used... After the few cases in 1980 in which the word 'fuck' was allowed in films with military theme it was also allowed in films whose settings warrant its use... The main consideration in deciding whether or not to cut these words are their frequency, audibility, the identity of the person uttering them, the identity of the person to whom they are spoken, and the age restriction imposed ... Some expletives, such as 'cunt', 'motherfucker', and 'cocksucker' are decidedly risqué and must in most cases be functional if they are not to be cut. If terms such as 'fuck', 'cunt', 'shit' and 'pussy' are used in their primary sense stricter rules are applied... In general the word 'fuck' is not allowed in films with an age restriction lower than 2-14... Occasionally, though never as a matter of policy, the expletive 'fuck' has been left in films with age restrictions lower than 2-14 ... Such instances were usually, however, barely audible... Words less vulgar than 'fuck' are, however, usually left in films (Van Rooyen 1987:78-79).

With the emphasis on sexuality and pornography as the main targets of censorship it is made possible to evade consideration of the main aims of the South African censorship legislation, namely, political control. The political nature of censorship is seen in the fact that only three per cent of the total publications submitted between 1975 and 1979 were of a pornographic nature, while 49 per cent were of a political nature (cf. Du Toit 1983:81-82).

Van Rooyen's statement regarding pornography seems significant within the South African discourse of 1978 and may seem relevant when considered within the discourse of knowledge regarding pornography in the United States and England. However, such a statement within official South African discourse of censorship is irrelevant, because pornography has never been defined by South African legislation (cf. Swanepoel 1986:5). "Pornografie is egter nog nooit as basis vir sensuur of as wetteregtelike omskrywing van ongewenstheid in Suid-Afrika gebruik nie" (Geldenhuis 1977:7).

During the controversy surrounding the Publications Control Board in 1978, Professor Kobus Van Rooyen, then Deputy-Chairman of the Board, made the appropriate and significant statement, citing the findings of the United States President's Commission of Inquiry into Obscenity and Pornography of 1970, that no link has yet been proved between pornography and anti-social behaviour (Van Rooyen 1978:62). This statement made by Van Rooyen in his capacity as the deputy-chairman of the Publications Appeal Board positioned Van Rooyen as an enlightened and likeable interpreter of the Publications Act. Considered against counter-statements from Van Rooyen's conservative opponents (see e.g. Van Rensburg 1985:108; 1989:22), such a pronouncement, together with his position of theoretical and practical knowledge regarding censorship, provided official justification for his appointment as chairman of the Publications Appeal Board. In his work as chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, Van Rooyen has rescued the censorship apparatus from the controversy created by his predecessors. Van Rooyen's relatively enlightened approach to censorship is also in congruence with and supportive of the position of the government regarding political reform (cf. Slabber 1990:1-2).

Since 1987, Van Rooyen has made a different pronouncement on pornography based on the findings of the United States Attorney General's Commission on Pornography (1986), namely that pornography may have some effect (cf. Van Rooyen 1987:63; 1989a:18). However, as the existing knowledge regarding pornography did not change, the change is only attributed to the prevailing political demands for such a statement to be made. Thus, it is not that knowledge has made any progress, but rather it shows a rearrangement of the dominant political vocabulary.

3.3.8 Discourses of knowledge: the dominant discourse of South African sciences and disciplines

The controversy about the application of censorship and the interest in pornography led to a demand for more research and the South African scientific community was implored to produce research (cf. *Corrupt Whom?* 1969:1178; *Minority Report* in Kruger Commission 1974:52).

Since the 1980s the production of scholarly discourse and research on pornography has been undertaken by a number of literary scholars and social scientists. Pioneering this research is Professor F. I. J. van Rensburg, professor of Afrikaans Literature at the Rand Afrikaans University (see e.g. Van Rensburg 1984; 1985; 1986a; 1986b; 1989; 1990). Other scholars have also made minor contributions. The following, *inter alia*, have written on pornography:

- Dr A. Theron, senior lecturer at the Department of Criminology, University of Pretoria (cf. Theron 1988; 1989; 1992)
- Mr J. P. Hattingh, of the Department of Philosophy, University of Stellenbosch (cf. Hattingh 1987).
- Professor J. H. Smit, professor of Philosophy, University of the Orange Free State (cf. Smit 1989).

Significantly, writings and research on pornography have been produced almost exclusively by academics associated with Afrikaans universities and institutions.

3.3.8.1 *The justification for the production of the dominant South African discourse on pornography*

According to Van Rensburg (1986a:17), while much had been written about pornography, there was still a lack of clarity concerning "the real nature of pornography". He added that the importance of research on pornography in South Africa was seen in the fact that every

community had to periodically take account of the phenomenon of pornography. Research showed that pornography affected each community in a different way and in South Africa the situation regarding pornography had reached a critical point (cf. Van Rensburg 1985:vii).

Dinge staan voelbaar op 'n meskant gebalanseer. Alles kan na die een òf na die ander kant oorhel - òf na die kant van 'n grootskeepse deurbraak, òf na dié van betydse besinning. In omstandighede soos dié kan kennis aangaande die verskynsel, en nie net "'n gevoel" in verband daarmee nie, 'n beslissingsrol speel (Van Rensburg 1985:vii).

Writing in an Afrikaans church magazine, Van Rensburg (1984:19) stated that the Government was in need of support against an organised and orchestrated assault on its control over publications. Defence against such an assault could be provided by acquiring clarity about the problematic concept of pornography, because for as long as there was a deficient grasp of this concept, such uncertainty would provide an opportunity for "jakkalse uit die gate te kom" and for other opponents of the government to exploit the situation. It was this crucial issue of pornography that the South African government had to *attack* and not other trivial matters (cf. Van Rensburg 1984:19).

According to Van Rensburg (1985:vii), a knowledge of the phenomenon of pornography is needed in order to provide information on policy decisions because the development of new forms of communication media, such as video and cable television, means that pornography has received a new breath of life. The central issue concerns the decision of whether control over the distribution of pornography should be in the hands of the white dominated government in charge of overall "General Affairs", or whether it relegated to the various ethnic communities as a matter of their "Own Affairs" (cf. Van Rensburg 1985:vii). According to Van Rensburg (1984:19), control of publication and pornography should be firmly left in the hands of the white government.

Van Rensburg's research is also motivated by his and the Afrikaner churches' opposition to the existing policy of the Publications Appeal Board and its chairman Professor Kobus Van Rooyen. In their view, the Publications Appeal Board lost its value because its decisions were very *liberal*. Van Rensburg took exception to the statement by the Chairman of the

Publications Appeal Board Professor Kobus Van Rooyen that it was not the duty of publications control to further morality (cf. Van Rensburg 1984:18; Van Rensburg 1985:122; Van Rensburg 1989).

Van Rensburg's statement about the central importance of pornography as a social issue places him within the traditional Protestant moral discourse. This discourse was constantly obsessed with the idea of sin as being exclusively derived from human sexuality, and made pornography, which is a marginal issue in society, as the single most important object of attention (cf. Berger 1980:132).

According to Hattingh of the department of Philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, his own research on pornography was concerned with providing a philosophical and ethical justification for the conservative and illiberal South African censorship system. Hattingh (1987:89) asserted that the liberal view regarding pornography was in disfavour throughout the world since the 1970s and, therefore, the conservative South African censorship system, which is not based on liberal principles, could provide an important alternative model for censorship. In formulating such an alternative model, the feminist view "provides an important starting point for the formulation of the concept of pornography which would overcome the shortcoming of the liberal view" (Hattingh 1987:97). The feminist definition of pornography as violence against women provides a justification for the State's encroachment on individual freedom (cf. Hattingh 1987:97).

Smit (1989:68) was keen to provide support for censorship from the Christian National point of view. What was unacceptable to Smit was the fact that morality was not taken into consideration in the debate on censorship. According to Smit (1989:68), censorship was a constructive means to combat the ideologies that threaten the moral fabric of society. He stated that Humanism was a prime example of such an ideology because of its emphasis on freedom and moral pluralism and it did not leave place for "the laws of God". According to Smit (1989:70), "any stress on the freedom of the individual and on moral pluralism, leads to relativism". Smit added that freedom, pornography, humanism, Freudianism, science and the legal system are dangers to Christian puritan moral values. Smit's list of corrupting ideologies is part of other anti-Christian and anti-Afrikaans ideologies found on the official

list of the South African government, the Afrikaner churches and the Department of National Education. The Afrikaner must resist the "ideological terrorism" of Marxism, communism, naturalism, pragmatism, liberalism, existentialism, humanism and others ideologies identified by the authorities (cf. Roos 1981:4).

Theron, a criminologist at the University of Pretoria, suggested that research on pornography is needed because the South African authorities are in need of knowledge and advice. According to Theron (1988:173), South Africa may be following the trend of the Western world where pornography is becoming more freely available. Owing "the fact that very little control can be exercised over what people read and view at home, it has become a matter of urgency that South African researchers" take note of overseas research and undertake research in South Africa. In addition to gaining scientific knowledge on pornography it "will enable researchers to advise the authorities" (cf. Theron 1988:173).

It becomes clear that the main writing and research on pornography produced by Afrikaans scholars operating from the established Afrikaner universities have clearly positioned them as the *vanguard* of the South African government and nation. In South Africa, the social scientists and Afrikaner academics, in particular, operate within the dominant political consensus that is strongly placed within the ideology of the South African state (cf. Davis 1985a:7). However, not only Afrikaner academics follow the accepted, prescribed and proscribed framework (prescribed and proscribed in the sense that it is also limited by legislation, e.g. what topic may be approached and what is forbidden, what literature is available and what is banned). Many South African social scientists follow orthodox and traditional approaches that imply total or virtual support for the political status quo. Critical research¹⁸, largely restricted to English-speaking universities, is isolated and marginalised, both intellectually and financially within the academic field (cf. Slabbert 1985:16).

Traditionally, Afrikaner intellectuals and academics have a tangled heritage of ethnic loyalties and have functioned under the continuing influence of the nationalist ideology. The rise of

¹⁸ South African critical research has also become an orthodoxy as some researchers are turning "robot-like to a prepackaged supply" of structuralism and Marxist concepts and attempt "the sterile 'fitting-in' of the South African example into the broad framework of received Marxist theory" (Bozzoli 1981:53).

academic intellectuals and Afrikaner nationalism follows the same historical development (cf. Du Toit 1981:1; Troup 1975:294-297). The rise of Afrikaner nationalism is the result of the rise of Afrikaner intellectuals. The first significant Afrikaner intellectuals in the 1870s played a crucial role in awakening and fashioning the Afrikaner nationalist consciousness (cf. Du Toit 1981:3). Since then the Afrikaner intellectuals

were in the vanguard of the language and cultural movement in the early decades of the 20th century. From the 1930s a new generation of Afrikaner intellectuals pioneered a more intense and total form of Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation, providing both the organisational substructure in the Broederbond and its associated cultural, parapolitical and economic fronts, as well as articulating the ideological frameworks for such collective action (Du Toit 1981:3).

While the 1940s were characterised by fraternal strife within the Afrikaner intellectual community, the victory of the National Party in the 1948 election served to unify the diverse and competing social élite within a common political framework. Since the 1950s the fortunes of the Afrikaner intellectuals have been tied closely to the cause of Afrikaner nationalism. With an Afrikaner government in power there were ample opportunities for Afrikaner intellectuals to exercise influence on government policy, cultivating and propagating the ideology of apartheid. Afrikanerdom was fast closing rank while eliminating internal dissent. During the premiership of Verwoerd all independence from the National Party was eliminated. Since the 1970s, with the rise of the government of Mr P. W. Botha which was perceived to be moving towards a more enlightened policy, Afrikaner intellectuals could justify their role as "working within the system" (cf. Du Toit 1981:3-4).

In South Africa the social sciences, disciplines and institutions of knowledge and learning have been directly under government control through a series of legislation that not only has determined what will be learnt and accepted as knowledge but also, on racial grounds, has determined who is empowered to teach and who may learn and what may be learnt.

Since the Afrikaner, who is numerically the strongest element in the White community in South Africa, came to power in parliament in 1948, the Afrikaans point of view has dominated the political and educational scene (Rupert 1979:29)

The Afrikaans point of view, which is inscribed in the nationalist education programme, and proclaims to be *Christian National Education*, was constructed by politicians and academics at Potchefstroom University, the headquarters of the Gereformeerde Kerk and the Broederbond. The word *Christian* does not refer to any universal Christian doctrine but is defined as "according to the creed of the three Afrikaner Churches" (cf. Troup 1975:294). The Afrikaans Christian National point of view underlying the national education system is based on the policy of racial exclusivity or apartheid (cf. Ruperti 1979:29, 46)¹⁹.

The school curriculum is the most obvious and direct means in the whole educational organisation for transmitting national or community ideals (cf. Ruperti 1979:113).

The school curriculum represents a people's view of all reality in summarised form, a reality which includes the knowledge, faith and ideals which it wishes to pass on to the younger generation. The summary is arrived at mainly by selecting representative and basic knowledge and purifying this knowledge by eliminating the elements deemed undesirable (Ruperti 1979:112).

Power thus determined what knowledge is and such knowledge is inculcated in the individuals who develop the correct dispositions. The dispositions have been inculcated through the family and through the public school system that support each other. Since 1948 the school system has inculcated the dominant Afrikaner culture and symbols that have emphasised Afrikaner exclusivity and the link between religion and ethnically based state politics. Through schooling the future academics acquired the disposition to accept authority unquestioningly, to be loyal to and give unconditional support for the establishment - which was seen as if having been chosen by God himself. At the same time any dissent and analytical thinking was systematically discouraged (cf. Du Preez 1983:72-73). As part of the dominant discourse that follows the ideals of the National Party, the South African discourse of knowledge was unable to produce a critical view of the political realities (cf. Van Zyl Smit 1990:7).

¹⁹ The South African Christian Nationalism is a mix of Nazi ideas, Kuyper's neo-Calvinism and ideas from the old Boere Republics that emphasise the church, family and volk (cf. Furlong 1991:95).

3.3.8.2 *The value of knowledge in the South African scholarly discourse*

In 1969 an editorial in the *South African Medical Journal* argued against the blind acceptance without substantiation of the judicial pronouncements that pornography corrupts and appealed to the South African medical community to provide answers through research (cf. *Corrupt whom?* 1969:1178).

Should not the psychiatrists undertake a large-scale investigation now to find out whether there is in fact any foundation for the generally held belief that books with a permissively sexual flavour are corrupting? For unless we do find out we will never know whether the elaborate mechanism we now have to ensure that no such literature reaches our bookstalls is really needed. And if the finding of the psychiatrists is that a danger does exist, then we must make sure that our regulations are consistent, for that they are not consistent at present is indisputable (*Corrupt whom?* 1969:1178).

Almost twenty years later, in 1988, Theron (1988:173) writes that despite the fact that pornography has long been in existence "very little scientific knowledge exists about it". According to Theron (1988:173), research on pornography is not an easy task.

Definitions of pornography differ, the theoretical models that attempt to explain the effect of pornography on behaviour represent different view points, results obtained under experimental conditions cannot be generalized to real life situations and the methodology used in studies is often questionable. Furthermore research findings have been contradictory (Theron 1988:173).

The above two pronouncements made some twenty years apart seem rather odd. In one aspect, the statement made by the medical journal in 1969 and Theron's statement some twenty years later are repetitions of the accepted formal statements in social discourse; one research always concludes with a call for further research (cf. Jarvie 1987:268). In another aspect, however, while the medical journal's statement in 1969 was made against the general paucity of available scientific information that was only then beginning to be gathered, Theron's repetition of such pronouncements some twenty years later is at odds with the available knowledge in social science. Since the late 1960s, scientific research on pornography has been one of the fastest growth areas in the social sciences and has become a multi-million-dollar industry (cf. Brannigan & Kapardis 1986:260; Jarvie 1987:270; Soble

1986:3, see also the discussion in 3.2.1). For example, Donnerstein, Linz and Pernod (1987) conclude their review of social science literature with a bibliography of 52 pages containing more than 600 items (cf. Donnerstein *et al.* 1987:211-262).

There is no lack of knowledge, but the knowledge sought needs to fit within the accepted South African scientific and intellectual discourse and be useful for the demands of the authorities. For example, when psychologists and psychiatrists took up the call made by the *South African Medical Journal* in 1969 to conduct research (cf. *Corrupt whom?* 1969:1178) and a sex therapy workshop was organised during a medical congress in 1975, two doctors from Pretoria, Dr Exner and Dr Preller condemned it. In letters of protest to the *South African Medical Journal*, Dr Exner complained that the discussions, slides and film on sexual intercourse presented at the workshop were objectionable because they had "pornographic effect" and "cast doubt on the veracity of God's words and falsely present what God said about sex" (Exner 1975:1625). According to Exner (1975:1625), presenting such sex information undermined "Christian marriage and morals" "under the guise of scientific teaching". In his letter of protest, Dr Preller asserted that God's laws forbid the misuse of sex and asserted that such lectures on sex therapy would undermine the image of psychiatry in the medical fraternity (cf. Preller 1975:1626). The opinions of the two doctors received support from a writer of an article in the church magazine *Woord en Daad* who suggested that such decadence be stopped (cf. De Villiers 1976:18).

In their approach to pornography, South African researchers have been more concerned with putting pornography on trial in order to find it guilty. In his approach to pornography, Van Rensburg (1985:126) proclaimed that he stood "on the side of the Philistines", because he attempted to protect the morals and the "colonial mentality" (cf. Van Rensburg 1985:119-120) of the community from the corrupting influence of pornography.

In attempting to define pornography, Van Rensburg (1986a:17) aimed to formulate "a more convincing definition" because there was a lack of clarity concerning the "real nature of pornography". His "own personal definition of pornography" was that it was "the approved portrayal of dehumanized sex" (1986a:17; see also Van Rensburg 1985:23).

According to Theron (1988:169), while it is difficult to define pornography, however, the best definition must be based on the assumption that pornography does not concern love and, therefore, represents violence against and the domination of women.

Smit (1989) does not provide a definition of pornography but describes it negatively, exclaiming that "pornography has nothing to do with art" and that "the vast bulk of pornography has no aesthetic pretensions" (cf. Smit 1989:71, 75). According to Smit (1989:81), pornography is obscene and immoral because it shows sexual activity without love. The best definition for Smit is the South African legal definition designating pornography as *undesirable*. Pornography is undesirable because it is opposed to the desirable and natural demand to "keep sex normal, private and loving" (Smit 1989:78).

All the above attempts to define pornography do not do so, but contrast it as being different to something else and draw a line between the *good* and desirable for the community and the *bad*. Having drawn such a line, what is on the wrong side is by default *pornography*. Thus pornography is anti-Christian, anti-Western culture; it is not art and it is immoral. Having defined pornography as *undesirable* it becomes offensive to the morals of the community and needs to be outlawed and forbidden by the "positive" use of censorship (cf. Smit 1989:68).

The moral values of the community need to be protected by censorship.

In die grond is sensuur 'n middel wat 'n gemeenskap in die lewe roep om sy waardes teen bedreiging te beskerm, veral 'n gemeenskap waarin 'n natuurlike gevoel vir "what's done" en "what's not done", om watter rede ook al, verswak het. Hierdie waardes is die *heersende* waardes op 'n gegewe oomblik wat langs die weg van ervaring (tradisie) tot stand gekom het (Van Rensburg 1990:108).

The community is not the whole South African society, "ek dink nie eers aan die h le gemeenskap nie, net aan die blanke gemeenskap, en dan ook net aan die Afrikaanse" (Van Rensburg 1990:108). Censorship renders the moral standards authoritative while "diverse social structures such as the family, church, police force, army, school and university" encourage and teach such morals (cf. Smit 1989:78-79). The fundamental moral norms of the community are assumed to be unchanged and universal (cf. Van Rensburg 1989:25; Van

Rooyen 1989a:16). According to Van Rensburg (1989:25), "evil remains evil in Brakfontein and Neo-Baal, and good is good at Golgotha or Brussels".

In South Africa the "colonial mentality" is the "natural order of things" (Van Rensburg 1985:119-121), and pornography is a threat to such a natural order which it corrupts resulted in "spiritual confusion leading to political upheaval" (Van Rensburg 1985:116).

The social and moral order in South Africa, as in other colonial countries, are based on brute force; the symbols of white social order are the police and the army (cf. Fanon 1973:41). For the colonised people the moral order is experienced as the violence of the white oppressor. To these suppressed people the agents of government representing the moral order and the *higher* values of Western *civilization* speak the language of pure force. All that the native have seen of this higher moral order is "that they can freely arrest him, beat him, starve him: and no professor of ethics, no priest has ever come to be beaten in his place, nor to share their bread with him" (Fanon 1973:34). The colonial regimes owe their legitimacy to force while this moral order is necessarily justified by invocation of divine will. The justification of white brute force against the black is explained by reference to the blacks presumed animal sexual instinct that personifies pure evil.

The South African research on pornography operates from an acknowledged opposition towards pornography, which is based on moral evaluation. Such a framework, already established by the Cronjé Commission in 1957 (see part 3.3.6.1), is essentially a moral discourse but claims to be a scientific framework and determines the legitimate knowledge that can be accepted and reproduced regarding research and writing on pornography.

Van Rensburg's (1985) main sources of information for his study on pornography are derived from the writings of Christian conservatives, known by their crusade against pornography, *inter alia*, such as Marry Whitehouse, David Hollbrook, Charles Keating, The Longford Report (1972), John Court (1980) and Victor Cline (1974).

American president Richard Nixon's²⁰ rejection of the findings of the *Presidential Commission on Obscenity and Pornography* is presented by Van Rensburg (1985:10; 1986a:50) as an example of correct American morality. However, it is doubted whether President Nixon's condemnation of the report was based on informed opinion. In examining Nixon's statement, Girodias (1971:18) suggests that Nixon's condemnation is based on a dissenting counter-report prepared by Charles B. Keating Jr. Both Nixon and Keating rejected the report as not conforming to their Christian expectations and common sense. Commissioner Keating, founder of *Citizens for Decent Literature*, was appointed by President Nixon to serve on the commission with the intention to discredit its findings (cf. Girodias 1971:17). Keating's information on pornography was supplied, *inter alia*, by Victor Cline and other active campaigners "in the battle against the pornographers" (cf. Keating in Girodias 1971:197).

Pornography is presented in terms of simple cause-and-effect; it presents a "horrible fascination" which puts "into motion all sorts of carnal desires far better left quiescent, and it requires no vivid labor of the imagination to perceive a delayed cause-and-effect relationship between the nudie magazine, the filthy photograph, the hard-core movie, and the act of adultery or rape" (Van Rensburg 1985:125).

Most of the claims to scientific truth about pornography made by those cited by Van Rensburg (1985) have been subjected to rigorous analysis and rejected by the Williams Committee (cf. Williams 1981:61-96). For example, the claims by Marry Whitehouse, who "is well-known for her passionately held views on the erosion of standards" through the corrupting influence of pornography allegedly distributed by communists, are rejected as unsubstantiated anecdotes derived from other anecdotes provided by, *inter alia*, South African sources of knowledge (cf. Williams 1981:94). The claims against pornography made by Dr John Court, an Australian psychologist, who became the chief provider of *scientific* evidence to Van Rensburg and the conservative groups opposing pornography are shown as lacking any empirical foundations. In rejecting the claims made by Dr Court the Williams Committee

²⁰ Richard Nixon left the presidency in disgrace over Watergate and came nearer than any other United States President to being impeached. In fact, Nixon's whole presidency is linked to immorality: his Vice-president Spiro Agnew was forced to resign in sordid circumstances and other of Nixon's close White House assistants served prison sentences (cf. Howitt 1982:109).

(Williams 1981:86) stated: "we are satisfied that Dr Court's publications about pornography are more successful in expressing condemnation of pornography than they are in giving the study of its effects a sound scientific basis".

While discredited scientists' statements have been accepted by South African researchers, Smit (1989:71, 73) rejects any reliance on science in deciding the issue of pornography because scientists cannot tell us anything positive about norms for sexual behaviour. Scientists and the men "in the ivory tower" who advocate the use of pornography for therapeutic purposes are a "real threat to civilisation!" (cf. Smit 1989:80). According to Smit (1989:73), "common sense tells us that bad things have a bad influence" and science "should never flout common sense" (Smit 1989:74).

The reliance on a limited and officially approved knowledge on pornography shared by the South African academic community is both consciously and unconsciously accepted as valid. On such a foundation Theron's (1988:173) pronouncement that, despite the fact that pornography has been known for a long time, "very little scientific knowledge exists about it" can be understood. Within such a restricted scientific framework, for example, a student (cf. Van Deventer 1989), in attempted to provide a model derived from functionalist theories for the objective evaluation of subjective experience of pornography. In similar manner, Bruwer (1985), a journalist and art critic, was concerned with establishing the distinction between "erotic art" and "pornography".

3.3.8.3 *South African counter-discourses on pornography*

There are two distinct counter-discourses in the South African discourse on pornography. A distinction could be made between a counter-discourse internal to the dominant discourse of the Afrikaans community and an external discourse of *outsiders*.

The internal counter-discourse within the main discourse on pornography is evident in the 1930 debate between Langenhoven and Bosman (discussed in 3.3.4), in Van Wyk Louw's 1947 counter-discourse (see 3.3.5) and in Van Rensburg's attack on the *liberal* decisions of the Publications Appeal Board (see 3.3.7.1).

The internal counter-discourse represents a conflict over the authorised position regarding pornography. The debate between Langenhoven and Bosman (see 3.3.4) concerns a conflict over whom is the more representative of the Afrikaner tradition. Van Wyk Louw's attack on the discourse of the establishment was aimed at establishing a position of authority from which he could define the nature of Afrikaans literature without the intrusion of other cultural institutions (see 3.3.5). Van Rensburg's attack on the censorship apparatus was a conflict about defining the acceptable and unacceptable within the established tradition.

The *outsider* counter-discourse on pornography in South African is marginal and only emerged towards the end of the 1980s.

Gilfillan (1989:36), of the department of English at the University of Pretoria²¹, suggested that, for most South Africans, pornography was a non-issue on the public agenda because of the effective functioning of the official state censorship. However, regardless that pornography was non-existent, according to Gilfillan (1989:46), what was necessary "is a radical interrogation of the South African discourse of pornography".

Gilfillan (1989:39) transfers the dominant American feminist discourse, decrying the power of the patriarchal society, and claiming that women are the main objects of pornographic representations. Pornography is the cause for women's lack of social power²². Gilfillan (1989:45) repeats the usual feminist claim that pornography and racial oppression are causes of pain to the individual. However, according to Gilfillan (1989:45), pornography is important because it shows how women are oppressed. Censorship has eliminated pornography from the South African market and has also eliminated the possibility of understanding the relations of power between men and women. The availability of

²¹ Dr Gilfillan served on the Publications Appeal Board for 1985 and resigned in 1989 after returning from a meeting with representatives of the African National Congress in Zimbabwe. In a newspaper interview, Dr Gilfillan explained that her resignation was motivated by the realisation that it was impossible to make a constructive contribution within the apartheid structure. According to Dr Gilfillan, her membership on the Publications Appeal Board had served to legitimate and provide credibility to a system that did not deserve it (cf. Steenkamp 1989:7).

²² The feminist discourse has claimed to provide women with ways of seeing pornography because without such framework, it is claimed, they could not see pornography through their own eyes (cf. Griffin 1988:vii). A characteristic of the feminist writing on pornography has been to equate pornography to racial oppression (see for example Brownmiller 1986; Dworkin 1984; Kappeler 1986).

pornography in South Africa would make women aware by showing them their subjugated position, and therefore, "in present-day South Africa the demagogic moral outrage of the antipornographer should be discouraged" (Gilfillan 1989:46).

As part of the literature review for the present study (see 3.2 of this chapter) and graduate research (cf. Sonderling 1989; 1990), it became apparent that the facts presented on pornography in South Africa have been very restricted and predominated by conservative approaches. There is a need to question the accepted knowledge and myths on pornography and introduce the wider and alternative range of research on pornography that has become available. Pornography is an important cultural product and form of communication (see 3.2 and Sonderling 1989).

In 1993 an article appeared in a South African women's journal, that for the first time, presented a positive view of pornography expressed by a self-confessed Canadian feminist. Adlys (1993:56-57) acknowledges that, for the first time, a group of feminists has unashamedly acknowledged their appreciation for and love of pornography. Many women have lost interest in the women's movement because of its condemnation of pornography and emphasis on the negative aspects of sexual experience (cf. Adlys 1993:58). For women, pornography is becoming acceptable and enjoyable and provides visualisation of some of the most intimate and socially sanctioned sexual desires, thereby offering a form of sexual liberation for women (cf. Adlys 1993:59-61).

During 1993, interest was aroused in pornography with the publication of the South African editions of *Penthouse*, *Hustler* and *Playboy* magazines. A handful of members of the African National Congress Women's League staged a demonstration against the publication of *Playboy* in South Africa denouncing it as the preserve of white interests.

According to the African National Congress Women's League (cf. Modise 1993:53), their objection to *Playboy* is not based on moral ground, nor have they "defined *Playboy* as pornography" which is a crude form of erotica, however, they object because,

we dislike *Playboy* because it represents apartheid erotica. Through its editorial and photographic content, *Playboy* is perpetuating the sexist and racist images we wish to sweep away forever (Modise 1993:53).

The ANC Women's League "coined the phrase *apartheid eroticism*" because "*Playboy* is a magazine written by rich white men for other rich white men" or more specifically, it is written by "English-speaking rich white men for other English-speaking rich white men" (Modise 1993:53). The Women's League claims to be "insulted and bored by page after page of pretty white (and pale black) women" that are reproduced in the magazine.

The aim of the ANC and its Women's League is to establish "a new society and a new democratic order" and in such a society the dictate of the majority would ensure that "other aspirations than those of the pale-male culture" are expressed (cf. Modise 1993:53).

A limited debate between the *Playboy* editor and a journalist of an English-language newspaper and a contribution by Professor Kobus Van Rooyen (former Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, and now Chairman of the Press Council of South Africa) appeared in the first issue of the South African edition of *Playboy* magazine and on the letter-page of a few South African newspapers (cf. *Playboy* 1993:32-36).

In a letter to a newspaper, a reader professing white Christian concerns about the newly gained moral freedom in South Africa, complained:

Yesterday I was seated near a group of young black men and women. They had a pile of magazines which they were thoroughly enjoying, giggling and laughing as they looked at the naked bodies of young white women. I felt violated (*The Pretoria News* 1993:12).

Thus, in 1993 pornography has become a useful concept in a new struggle over social domination.

3.3.9 A conclusion and interpretation of the South African discourse on pornography

The foregoing description has "mapped" the historical trajectory of the South African discourse on pornography and identified its various elements. The aim of this section is to synthesise and draw conclusions regarding the characteristics of the debate, its structure and function. The discussion that follows is informed by the framework of questions (see 3.3.2) that can now be answered more clearly.

In order for an object such as *pornography* to emerge as an object of thought, study, debate and controversy, there must exist some established body of knowledge, recognised procedures for producing discourse and relations of power. As the discussion of the discourses on sexuality in Western culture shows (see 3.3.2), at the beginning of the twentieth century discourse on sexuality was well established in the puritan tradition. The attention given to sexuality suggests that puritanism is a form of *obscenity* or *pornography* (cf. Haselden 1968:112; Montgomery Hyde 1964:12). The description of the South African discourse during the early twentieth century (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.3) shows that sexuality was widely discussed, in particular with reference to issues of racial purity and white domination.

From the 1900s to the 1940s concern with *pornographic* art and literature, known as *indecent*, *lewd* and *scandalous* material, was of marginal importance to those holding political power and authority. Interest was shown only to the extent that these related to questions of racial domination. For example, while discourse on the sexuality of the natives was common, the actual description of sexual intercourse between native men and European women was considered to be *indecent*, *lewd* and *scandalous*. Visual representations of the *white* female body in magazines and posters advertising the cinema were of marginal concern for a 1913 government commission that considered *indecent pictures* to be harmless to a white person (see 3.3.3). It was not the availability of such photographs to the European (white or Caucasian) population that was made problematic but their availability to native men in particular. In 1930, Langenhoven suggested that pornography should be enjoyed in private or discussed among interested students of literature (see 3.3.4). As late as 1947, Van Wyk Louw stated that pornography was enjoyed by members of the white upper class in South Africa (see 3.3.5).

Pornography began to gain significance among marginal groups in South Africa, for example, small groups of English philanthropists began to problematise literature and the newly emerging cinema as a particular area of interest because of its being *indecent* and *pornographic* (see part 3.3.3). From its marginal existence, the discourse on pornography expanded and was taken over by various social institutions. Since the 1930s the discourse on pornography in South Africa has also been infused with knowledge and procedures for discursive production from other Western societies.

A characteristic of pornography is the fact that it is an object of the discourse of social groups that have a relative position of power in society. That is, the early discourse on pornography was conducted by white members of the South African society who considered pornography as a problem facing the socially and politically powerless black population, the white lower class or the "people" in general.

During the early years of this century, pornography was a concern for private groups of English speaking social reformers, professional health workers and the government. Beginning in the 1930s, spokesmen representing various Afrikaans institutions, appropriated the vocabulary of Victorian propriety and articulated a discourse on pornography. References to sexuality in literature and art were problematised by Langenhoven, a leading writer and politician in an Afrikaans newspaper in 1930 (see 3.3.4). In 1947 discourse on pornography developed in the Afrikaans churches, pedagogic and cultural organisations and in a literary magazine (see 3.3.5). From the 1950s, discourse on pornography was further produced by the Afrikaans churches, cultural organisations, politicians in parliament and the National Party Government (see 3.3.6). In 1957, pornography was the object for the discourse of a social scientist (see 3.3.6.1), and in 1975 of a government commission headed by a Cabinet Minister (see 3.3.6.3). From the 1970s, pornography also became an object for the discourses of knowledge. Discourse that claims to be both practical and theoretical was produced by the courts, legal experts and the government censorship institution (see 3.3.7). Discourse was also articulated at Afrikaans universities by academics such as a professor of Afrikaans literature, teachers of philosophy and a number of social scientists (see 3.3.8).

The institutionalised discourse on pornography since the 1930s has a number of characteristics. These are discussed below.

First, it appears in a variety of different and distinct institutions each with its own characteristic style of discursive practice. For example, a newspaper, a political party, a church, the judiciary, jurisprudence, the humanities and social sciences have different formal rules for producing discourse (see the discussion on discourse in Chapter 2).

Second, while the discourse on pornography appears in diverse institutions, all are associated with the Afrikaner ethnic group. The discourse has an underlying framework and unity of concepts, a body of shared knowledge, assumptions and discursive procedure that transcend the particular institutions and the formal divisions of academic disciplines.

Third, the institutional character of the South African discourse on pornography since the 1930s shows that it is not open to any one. Only individuals who can claim an institutionally recognised position can speak with authority and legitimate their discourse. In other words, there are no individuals or independent speakers on pornography. For example, newspaper reports reproduce the discourses of authorised and socially recognised speakers rather than those of individuals without institutional affiliation. The speakers on pornography also legitimate their positions as representing a *higher cause*, for example, Langenhoven claims to represent the old Afrikaner tradition, the nation and national literature. Van Wyk Louw claims to represent Afrikaner literature. The Cronjé and Kruger reports, speak on behalf of Western civilisation and Christianity. Smit and Hattingh claim to represent the Calvinist ideology. Thus while the South African discourse concerns itself with pornography and its relationship to local issues the discourse is also interlinked with other discourses on pornography in the Western world.

Fourth, the South African discourse on pornography is characterised by a particular type of knowledge that is accepted as true, utilised, reproduced and reformulated. As the description in this Chapter illustrates, beginning in 1913 with the discourse of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Assaults on Women (1913), the Cronjé Commission (see 3.3.6.1) and extending to the discourses of the South African social sciences and academic disciplines (see

3.3.8 and 3.3.8.2), statements are accepted as containing knowledge not on the basis of their being true within the scientific discourses, but rather statements are accepted and rejected on the basis of the position and institutions from which they are produced. In other words, only statements of persons representing officially recognised institutions and ideologies (for example, statements of those professing to be self-confessed Christians, politically on the right, conservatives, professing an anti-pornography ideology, etc.) are accepted and given value. The existence of such legitimated knowledge has prevented other counter-discourses from arising. Counter-discourses are either silenced by direct censorship²³, ignored by the mainstream discourses or disarmed and incorporated into the mainstream discourse. For example, the radical feminist view on pornography is taken over by the illiberal conservative.

Fifth, the discourse has an evasive character. Pornography is always presented as a secret, for example, Langenhoven claims that examples cannot be provided to illustrate his argument (see 3.3.4), and in a parliamentary debate a speaker claims it would be too shocking to explain what pornography really is (see 3.3.6). Pornography is defined by default, or it is defined as not being something else rather than what it is. For example, pornography is defined as not depicting love, it is not art, it is anti-Christian and so on.

Sixth, counter-discourses are mainly limited to internal conflicts within the official discourse and reflect a battle to determine a position of orthodoxy within the dominant power group (see 3.3.4, 3.3.5 and 3.3.8.1). A counter-discourse outside of the consensus framework of the academic community is marginal.

Seventh, the discourse on pornography in South Africa has been aimed at creating technologies of control that can operate in the field of social power relations and are not limited to the control of sexuality. For example, Langenhoven suggests that censorship and control over sexual speech must be introduced (see 3.3.4). Censorship and co-ordination of production of cultural goods are recommended by the Cronjé Commission (see 3.3.6.1). For the Kruger Commission, pornography provides the justification for devaluating the power of

²³ Scientific publications are known to have been banned in South African, for example, *A history of pornography* by Montgomery Hyde (1964) was banned in 1964 (cf. Kahn 1966).

the judiciary (see 3.3.6.3). For the social sciences research on pornography is aimed at providing knowledge and a position of power in relation to the government (see 3.3.8).

In conclusion, the characteristics of the South African discourse on pornography exhibit its direct relation to power. As the description of the discourse in this Chapter illustrates (see 3.3), the framework for what is accepted as the socially recognised system of knowledge is directly determined by the existing social relations of power. Such a framework of knowledge, relations of power and rules for the operation of the various discursive practices of the society are the *cultural unconscious* of the society. In South Africa, power has determined the systems of knowledge. Power began to determine knowledge in a direct way from the 1939s and such direct articulation of power on knowledge became more openly visible since the 1950s. The discourses of knowledge and truth have taken their position within such a framework and produced knowledge that is directly relevant to and necessary for the operation of the ethnically based Government and administration of the State and its ability to maintain social, political and cultural domination. The power of the State and its central institutions are in turn dependent on the local centres of power which sustain them and are sustained by the central position of power.

The intimate link between the Afrikaner church, culture and politics within the broad discourse of Afrikaner nationalism began to emerge in the 1920s. During the 1930s it was strengthened by theoretical elaboration in Afrikaner intellectual discourse. The Afrikaner nationalist discourse that emerged is totalitarian and combines religious, cultural and political aspects. The Afrikaner nation is claimed to be the most inclusive human community, a Divine construction and the true fulfilment of individual life.

To work for the realization of the national calling is to work for the realization of God's plan. Service to the nation is therefore part of my service to God (Diederichs in Furlong 1991:92).

The nationalist discourse is commonly considered as grounded in the Calvinist tradition. However, while the Calvinist tradition propagates respect for traditional institutions and acknowledges a clear distinction between the sphere of the family, church and state, the idea of total unity between these institutions is an infusion of national socialist discourse and neo-

Calvinist dogma (cf. Furlong 1991:92). The Afrikaner nationalist discourse is more totalitarian and has claimed that "dictatorship is actually the real form of democracy" and makes God, the state and the Afrikaner nation one entity (cf. Diederichs in Furlong 1991:96). In 1940, the Broederbond enunciated the unity of Afrikaner nationalism:

The legend of strict division between culture, economics and politics has fallen away. We will no longer be blinded by it, the *volk* is the organic whole. Its different parts are closely connected with each other and cannot be separated (Diederichs in Furlong 1991:110).

The fusion of the church and the National Party dates back to 1944 to the *volkskongress* which decided on the Christian principles of Apartheid, while during 1945-1947 the links were given formal approval and theological justification (cf. De Klerk 1983:220-222), and further extended by the Afrikaans churches between 1950 to 1960 (cf. De Klerk 1983:252).

During the 1940s, under the direction of the Broederbond, a web of interrelated Afrikaner organisations was created, serving as a powerful tool in uniting Afrikaner factions and structuring Afrikaner politics (cf. Furlong 1991:223). Much of this political activity was accompanied by a political discourse that took on a religious vocabulary and portrayed itself as fighting for *Christian National* principles and for *white civilisation* (cf. Adam & Giliomee 1979:149-160; De Klerk 1983:196-207). Dr H. F. Verwoerd formulated a strategy, which was co-ordination by the Broederbond, urging its members not only to work on the major national issues but also to make social issue of "the little things ... to gain control of as many key points as they could" (cf. Furlong 1991:222). Thus the inter-connected web of various Afrikaner social, economic, political, cultural and religious associations embarked on consciousness-raising campaigns with their eyes set on the forthcoming elections of 1948.

According to Adam and Giliomee (1979:240), from the intimate relationship between the church and party, it may be concluded that it was "the National Party at pray". According to De Klerk (1983:199), while the division between the National Party and the Dutch Reformed Church was being eliminated to the point that the church itself was the party, a further development was taking place whereby Afrikaner politics was in the process of being theologised and the National Party itself was becoming a church (cf. De Klerk 1983:214).

Reaffirming the integration of all aspects of life, the Broederbond in 1972 claimed that,

our members are, and indeed should be, simultaneously active members of their own Afrikaans churches and of their own national-political party and must continue to receive leadership from our organisation - that also does for our churches and party in regard to our cultural field. It is so, and should always remain so, that cultural leaders are at the same time church leaders; that political leaders are simultaneously cultural and church leaders; and that church leaders are likewise cultural and political leaders (Wilkins & Strydom 1980:15-16).

In 1976 in the wake of the black uprising in Soweto, the Broederbond drafted a secret document, *Masterplan for a White Country: The Strategy*, that demanded the co-ordination of the various spheres of life and large scale social and cultural action (cf. Wilkins & Strydom 1980:280-83). The position of unified and totalitarian discourse of church and state was given expression again in the 1980s in the form of the policy of *total strategy*. Thus, while political realities may have changed, the policy of the Afrikaner ruling party remained the same. In a white paper on defence, P. W. Botha in his role as the Minister of Defence wrote:

Total strategy co-ordinates all aspects of national life - the military, economic, political, sociological, technological, ideological, psychological and cultural - in an integrated defence of the nation (Botha in Hansson 1990:30).

The use of Christian vocabulary for the justification of Afrikaner and white political interests went on to become an established national tradition (cf. Adam & Giliomee 1979:240-241; De Klerk 1983:212; Gifford 1988:42) - a tradition that became the "State Theology" and deified the *volk* (cf. Gifford 1988:42). Within the *total strategy* theology, the role of the Christian (National) scientist and the artist were in collusion with the role of priest; they were mobilised to serve and support a particular side in a battle for domination (cf. Van Niekerk 1991:66-67).

Since the 1950s, the official South African state theology (Christian Nationalism), which outright identified apartheid and Christianity, has come under increasing attack by mainstream Christian churches which defined it as "an obscenity" (cf. Gifford 1988:42).

Significantly, since the late 1980s and early 1990s - with increasing challenges to the political power of the dominant political order - a marginal discourse on pornography has made its appearance. Thus, historically, the discourse on pornography was linked to times of political, cultural and social crisis. The discourse on pornography in the 1930s was a response to challenges in the political and cultural fields; in 1947 a part of a political challenge to a government; in 1957 a means for consolidation of power against increasing resistance; in 1975 a way to divert the attention from a crisis in black education, and since the Soweto uprising of June 1976 a response to a number of social and political reforms within the dominant political group and to increasing political and military action by the African National Congress.

The discourse on pornography is only in part about sexuality. It is mainly concerned with power. For such a discourse, pornography can "function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified" making it possible to be used to explain the cause of everything and the meaning of everything - it becomes a secret to be discovered everywhere (cf. Foucault's 1981:154). The explanation for the rise of pornography as a social problem is to be found with reference to the framework of social power relations and systems of knowledge. Thus, social problems, like other cultural myths, do not arise somewhere in the *psyche* or *collective unconscious* or reflect primordial *archetypal symbols* but are rather based on real relations and discursive practices. Myths and social problems are types of speech, and speech is socially controlled and is a real social practice. To gain a better understanding of social problems we should examine who is involved in the discursive practice constructing them. Thus, the production of discourse on pornography can function either to challenge the power of an established political authority or mobilise such an authority. As such the discourse on pornography has all the characteristics of a religious sermon. Pornography is presented as the great evil that threatens civilisation and freedom. It is claimed that we cannot be free for as long as pornography exists. However, in the name of freedom, systems of control have been expanded into every aspect of social and individual life.

The application of the discursive framework for a critical analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa has provided particular insights about the characteristics of the discourse and the relationship between power and knowledge. The application of a discursive

analysis has also provided insight into the utility of the theoretical framework of the *discursive approach* for the study of communication. These insights will be integrated into a conclusion in Chapter 4.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter illustrates the theoretical framework and model of analysis of the *discursive approach* in-use. It further shows how the theoretical framework and model of analysis can be used to describe and analyse a particular body of discursive practices on pornography in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE DISCURSIVE APPROACH FOR THE STUDY OF COMMUNICATION

Indeed, it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together.

Michel Foucault (1981:100)

4.1 SUMMARY

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the post-structuralist *discursive approach* and its utility for a critical analysis of discourse. The dissertation is based on the hypothesis that the post-structuralist *discursive approach* can provide an alternative theoretical framework and a methodology for a critical study of communication and provide insights into the problems of society. The study demanded two areas of investigation. First, the theoretical framework had to be explored and a model for a discursive analysis constructed. Second, in order to illustrate the utility of the theoretical framework it had to be applied to the analysis of discourse. The South African discourse on pornography was selected for a case study.

The theoretical framework of the *discursive approach* is explained and a strategic model for the analysis of discursive practice is suggested in Chapter 2.

Discursive practice is the social use of language as discourse, in historically specific and socially situated practices of communication. As such, discursive practice is a primary social

practice that produces and reproduces society and is interlinked with the entire structure of social relations of power and systems of knowledge. Language-in-use as discourse is not only a tool used by human beings to represent and know their world but, such a use of language also actively constructs human reality. Because human reality is discursively structured, discourse operates under social control in every society. Thus, discursive practices are not merely instruments of communication and knowledge but are also instruments of power and domination.

Chapter 3 shows the utility of the theoretical framework. The application of the theoretical framework to the analysis of discursive practices illuminates the theory itself and provides a diagnostic description of the systems of knowledge and power in society. To illustrate the value of discursive theory, the discourse on pornography in South Africa was selected for a case study. It is argued that pornography has been a problem that has eluded clear understanding and the study of the discourse on pornography could provide insights for a better understanding of the issues involved. Such an approach is based on the assumption that in order to understand a social problem such as pornography, one needs to examine the language, vocabulary and discourses in which it appears, because it is *in* and *through* discourse that a problem arises in the first place.

The purpose of this Chapter is to draw conclusions based on the previous chapters and to consider the implications of the discursive theoretical framework for the study of communication.

4.2 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The conclusions and implications that arise from this study are discussed in three parts, as follows:

- (1) Conclusion and implications from the case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa.
- (2) Conclusions and implications of the discursive analysis as a methodology.

- (3) Implications of the discursive approach for the study of communication.

4.2.1 Conclusion and implications from the case study of the discourse on pornography in South Africa

The discursive analysis and interpretation of the discourse on pornography in South Africa (see Chapter 3) do not provide an ultimate answer to what pornography is - clearly no such answer is possible. Through a description and analysis of the South African discourse on pornography insights are gained on the manner in which particular groups in society are able to make pornography a *social problem*.

Since the 1930s, the discourse on pornography in South Africa has been largely conducted by the cultural, religious, social and political institutions of the Afrikaner segment of the society. The history of the discourse on pornography in South Africa parallels the rise to power of this group and its attempts to gain, defend and maintain its position of power and domination. By presenting pornography as a major problem, the institutions that controlled the discourse were able to conceal its precise character and propagate it as the cause and effect of dissimilar social, cultural and political crises.

A further conclusion is also derived from the analysis of the discourse on pornography. While the analysis demonstrates how the concept pornography was constructed *in* and *through* discourse and utilised by institutions of power, the analysis also exposes the close relationship between the institutions of the dominant Afrikaner power group and the system of knowledge in South Africa. The close interrelationship between power and knowledge in the South African society, whereby a dominant group was able to control and direct the discourse and determine the system of knowledge is evident from the characteristics of the discourse on pornography. For example, the primary characteristics of the discourse on pornography in South Africa are as follows:

- The discourse is institutionalised and limited to socially accredited speakers.
- The range of knowledge that is accepted and propagated regarding pornography is restricted; it is a discourse of evasion.

- Statements on pornography are accorded the value of knowledge not on their content but on the perceived value of their utterer
- Knowledge on pornography is produced to fulfil the demands of the political order.
- The system of knowledge regarding pornography is almost directly proscribed by the dominant social and political power.

The social relations of power and the knowledge available in a society provide the condition for a particular object such as pornography to emerge as an object of discourse. Thus discursive practice both produces its object (pornography) and regulates it.

The case study of the discourse on pornography (see Chapter 3) is limited to South Africa. In order to confirm or to refute the conclusions, two types of studies are necessary:

- (1) A discursive description and analysis of discourses on pornography covering the same period in other countries. Such studies may highlight the rules of operation of discursive practice, the social groups involved and the relations of power and knowledge in making pornography a problem. Such studies may also illustrate the interrelationship between the groups making pornography a social problem in South Africa and other groups outside South Africa. Such studies may show that pornography as a social problem is limited to the puritan tradition shared by South African, English and American societies.
- (2) A discursive description and analysis of other contemporary social problems. Two areas of study are possible in this regard. First, studies of other social problems interrelated to the discourse on sexuality, for example, problems of abortion, child sexual-abuse, rape, homosexuality, artificial insemination, the AIDS epidemic and gender inequality. Such studies may reveal the types of knowledge, and the groups and institutions involved in problematising these areas. Second, studies of social problems not related to the discourse on sexuality, for example, problems related to ecology, pollution, poverty, alcohol abuse, drugs and hooliganism. These studies would serve the purpose of providing insight into the particular problem and in

addition provide information on the larger spectrum of contemporary society and its problems.

The application of the discursive framework for the analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa also highlights the value and problems of the discursive method itself. These are discussed in the following section.

4.2.2 Conclusions and implications of discursive analysis as a methodology

From the application of the theoretical framework for the analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa the following conclusions about the method can be made:

Discursive analysis is not a particular methodology, rather it is a flexible interpretative framework that can be applied strategically to large bodies of discourse.

Discursive analysis is descriptive and not evaluative. The emphasis on manifest and empirically observable social practices implies that discourse is taken at face value, and statements are not interpreted for their concealed meaning.

Discursive analysis brings together discourse, texts and institutions. Text are placed in their social context. As such, discursive analysis provides both a *micro* and *macro* perspective on social practices of communication. A micro analysis is derived from the examination of various texts that are then linked to a broader (macro) social context.

The application of discursive analysis as a method of enquiry also presents some problems.

As a critical approach, discursive analysis is not a rigid formula with clear guidelines for its application. It is a heuristic frame of reference and thus not entirely systematic, as are, for example, positivist research methods.

Discursive analysis is complex because of the large amount of data required for analysis and this is time consuming.

From the exploration of the theoretical framework of the discursive approach (Chapter 2) and its application to an analysis of the discourse on pornography in South Africa (Chapter 3), some implications of the discursive approach for the study of communication may be suggested. These implications are discussed in the next section.

4.2.3 Implications of the discursive approach for the study of communication

As is argued in Chapter 1, an increasing number of communication scholars have suggested that contemporary society has undergone fundamental change during the second half of the twentieth century and has been transformed into a *post-modern* society. New forms of social interaction based on electronic media, such as television and computers, have displaced older forms of social interaction. In the contemporary society the primary social practices have now become communicational. For example, the main forms of economic activities are now engaged in the production, circulation and consumption of communication messages. Knowledge and information have also become major commodities that are exchanged for their value. According to Lyotard (1984:16), as a result of fundamental social changes it is inadequate to consider problems of communication within the two traditional alternatives with their respective emphasis on manipulatory speech and unilateral transmission of messages on the one hand, and free expression and dialogue on the other.

The theories of discourse developed by Foucault and Bourdieu make important contribution towards a better understanding of contemporary society and communication.

The predominately communicational character of contemporary society and human interaction implies that the *discursive character of practice* needs to be recognised. The discursive approaches of post-structuralist theorists such as Foucault and Bourdieu with their emphasis on communication as a *discursive practice*, on the interrelationship between *power and knowledge* and on the *value of statements rather than their meaning*, provide a point of departure for a contemporary theory that is more sensitive to the context of the post-modern society.

Through the re-conceptualisation of communication as *discursive practice*, attention is drawn to the fact that communication, language and other sign systems are social practices. Thus, rather than studying the formal structure of language without its social context or, alternatively, studying human action without considering its linguistic aspect, the discursive approach studies the *discursive character of human practice*.

The linguistic system (*langue*) and other sign systems used for communication are *structured structures* and determine the meaning of their various signs. Such structures are also *structuring structures*, because they are the primary modes for structuring human cognition, perception of the self and society and, therefore, determine human action. However, language is used in particular social and historical contexts as discourse and such use is determined by the unequal social power relations. Discourse as an instrument for the structuring of perception is an instrument of power and domination. From this it follows that the linguistic character of human perception and knowledge is always historically and socially determined and knowledge is always interrelated with relations of power. Knowledge and meaning have a socially determined value that is dependent on the value and power of the persons using discourse.

This means that knowledge and understanding of any event or phenomenon in reality is dependent on the methods for such understanding. It is in language and through language that reality can be apprehended. However, language is *non-referential*, it is not a neutral or *representational* tool to describe an objective reality but rather, it *constitutes* reality.

The implications are that it is not possible to construct a neutral approach and social enquiry is always involved and political. The use of language in description or evaluation is a social act and even "the utterance of the simplest expression is an intervention in the world, more or less effective, more or less endowed with institutional authority" (Thompson 1990:131).

The relationship between power and knowledge implies that the traditional emphasis on the search and interpretation of the meaning of communication messages undertaken by communication science needs to formulate a theory of power. As Foucault suggests,

our society is not one of spectacle, but of surveillance; under the surface of images, one invests bodies in depth; behind the great abstraction of exchange, there continues the meticulous, concrete training of useful forces; the circuits of communication are the supports of an accumulation and centralisation of knowledge; the play of signs defines the anchorages of power; it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies (Foucault 1987:217).

Foucault's philosophical insight into power-knowledge complex and the social aspect of discourse imply that the meaning communicated by language used as discourse is also subjected to determination by power.

While Foucault has provided important insights for research and theoretical elaboration, he does not provide a unified and comprehensive theory of discourse. A more elaborate theoretical framework that is critical of Foucault while sharing some of his main concerns is provided by Bourdieu. However, Bourdieu's work has hardly been explored by communication theorists.

For communication theory the works of Foucault, Bourdieu and other theorists within the discursive approach (see Chapter 2), can provide valuable insights. According to Fraser (1992:67), discursive theories, based on a pragmatic view of language "study the social context and social practice of communication [discourse], and they study the plurality of historically changing discursive sites and practices". As such, the discursive theorists can contribute four important insights to the study of communication (cf. Fraser 1992:51-51):

- How peoples' social identity is discursively constructed and changed in historically and socially specific context.
- How under conditions of inequality social groups are formed by the struggle over social discourse.

- How the cultural hegemony of the dominant groups in society is secured and contested. Such domination is secured, sustained and contested by mobilising meaning for the service of power (cf. Thompson 1990:4).
- How social change and political action may be possible.

In conclusion, the conceptualisation of communication as discursive practice, the inter-relationship between knowledge and power and the social value of discourse provide the possibility for constructing a critical theory of communication that is suitable for the understanding of contemporary society. For such a theory, the works of Foucault and Bourdieu provide the framework.

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