MAURICE GODELIER AND THE STUDY OF IDEOLOGY

In recent years we have seen a gradual coming together of two trends in social anthropology which were earlier often thought of as opposite poles, namely the structuralist and the marxist. This development has been most marked within French anthropology. Where Lévi-Strauss in 1962 was content to leave to other disciplines the study of infrastructures proper (1966:131) he now admits a determining role (though not the sole determining role) to the relationship between man and his techno-economic environment (1974). And where marxist anthropologists never thought of questioning the axiom that it is the economic infrastructure which 'in the last analysis' determines the form and evolution of social formations, and frustrated the rest of us by always beginning with that 'last analysis' and never getting around to any of the previous ones, today ideology appears among the most frequent topics for marxist analysis. Among those explicitly concerned with the combination of structuralist and marxist approaches is Maurice Godelier. In this paper I wish to take up some points relating to Godelier's work on religion, ideology and the like.

Religion

We may well take as a point of departure a brief paper by Godelier entitled 'Toward a Marxist Anthropology of Religion', in which he gives 'an example of how Marxist anthropologists can proceed to analyze religion in the pre-capitalist societies which are their concern' (1975c:81). Not only is that paper addressed to the specific topic of religion, but it might also, in Godelier's own terms, constitute a starting point for the further analysis, which he has already outlined in the book Horizon....:

> If we define ideology as the domain of illusory representations of the real, and as we consider religion to have been, in the course of the development of humanity, the dominant form of ideology in classless societies and in the first forms of class societies, our results permit us to take a step towards a general theory of ideology (1973:337).

Already after these general statements a couple of questions arise. In the first place, Godelier speaks about marxist anthropologists analyzing religion 'in the pre-capitalist societies which are their concern'. Assuming that this is not just a slip of the pen, a marxist variant of the traditional but erroneous opinion that anthropology is the study of primitive societies, why is it that (marxist) anthropologists should restrict themselves to the study of pre-capitalist societies? It is true, of course, that anthropologists are better equipped than others for studying primitive (or pre-capitalist) societies, but this academic contingency should not be taken as a theoretical principle, especially not by marxist scholarship with its striving for theoretical rigour. It may, however, reflect a practical division of labour for the time being, in that Godelier envisages a stage where 'it will no longer be possible to go on counterposing anthropology to history or to sociology as three fetishized separate domains' and where anthropology and history 'appear as two fragments of historical materialism' (1972:xlii;247), thereby apparently subscribing to Terray's (1969) view that 'the aim is to replace social anthropology by a particular section of historical materialism consecrated to socio-economic formations where the capitalist mode of production is absent' (1972:184).

However, anthropology is still alive and likely to be kicking for some time yet, and from an anthropological point of view the overall division of the field into capitalist and pre-capitalist societies may have some undesired consequences. I am not contesting that the field may be thus divided; marxism possesses a fairly sophisticated body of theoretical constructs for the analysis of capitalist societies, but precisely because capitalist societies thus form a central category of marxist scholarship, pre-capitalist societies come to constitute a residual category. This is not 'bad' or 'wrong' in itself as long as we bear in mind that the two categories belong to different logical levels. The first contains a well defined type of society while the second consists of a mixed group of societies which do not necessarily have anything in common apart from the fact that they do not belong in the first category; the human penchant for thinking in binary oppositions may, regrettably, obscure this state of affairs. Just as it is legitimate for a theologian, but hardly for an historian of religions, a priori to divide humanity into Christians and non-Christians, it is likewise legitimate for an economist, but hardly for an anthropologist, to make the first, overall division into capitalist and pre-capitalist societies.

Godelier became an anthropologist, he tells us, because he 'was drawn towards a scientific activity that requires of the researcher from the outset a degree of detachment from the facts, history and ideology of his own society much greater than that required of the historian or economist studying Western societies' (1972:x-xi). It is a corollary that the anthropologist must, to the greatest possible degree, avoid employing concepts derived from the analysis of his own society in the analysis of other societies, and he must in any case make sure that the concepts he employs do not entail a misrepresentation of phenomena in the other society. Leach told the British functionalists in 1961: 'Don't start off your argument with a lot of value loaded concepts which prejudge the whole issue!' (1961:17). I quote it here as a preface to the second question in connection with Godelier's general statements cited above. The question is, what does he mean by religion? Judging from the 1975-paper, as well as from Horizon...., he seems to think that religion is a universal phenomenon, that one may everywhere go and look for an isolable domain of rituals and beliefs which may be presented as the 'religion' of the society in question. And this is precisely why the repetition of 'Leach's rule' is warranted here. The degree of detachment from the facts of his own society which is required of the anthropologist is such that he should be very wary indeed in granting concepts like religion the status of a universal category. As Crick has reminded us, 'some of the terms we have used to frame our analytical discussions have been highly culture-bound. "Religion" itself must certainly be included among these. Other cultures (even Hindu and Islamic) do not have concepts at all equivalent to our term "religion"' (1976:159). Whether Godelier's belief in the universality of the concept of religion stems from his reliance on Marx' and Engels' writings on religion is a matter for conjecture. In any case he summarizes their views as a preface to outlining his general theory, which, roughly, runs as follows: In primitive society, because of the feeble development of the productive forces, man has a very low degree of control over nature; consequently nature appears in the human consciousness objectively as a realm of superhuman powers. And because the savage mind operates principally by analogy, those powers are represented as personified, superhuman beings who exist in a society analogous to human society. They are thus related to each other by bonds of kinship, as we well know from numerous myths, and the reason for the close association between kinship relations of social life and the sociological schemes of many myths is to be found

in the fact that in most primitive societies kinship is objectively the dominant structure. The sociological 'rock bottom' of myths, then, 'cannot be deduced from nature nor from formal principles of thought', it is the effect of social relations in the specific historical society (1973:337-39).

To readers unfamiliar with the writings of, for example, Durkheim & Mauss and Lévi-Strauss this may be novel, but it has been part of the 'theoretical capital' of anthropology for some time that 'the first logical categories were social categories': 'It was because men were grouped, and thought of themselves in the form of groups, that in their ideas they grouped other things' (Durkheim & Mauss 1903:82). This is not meant as a criticism of Godelier; on the contrary, I take it as a healthy sign that whether one is an avowed materialist or not, ther seems to be a general theoretical agreement as to the nature of those symbolic representations which we, if we like, may refer to as religious.

This fact is in a way also borne out by Godelier himself where he states the premiss for the marxist theory about mythico-religious consciousness. The premiss is that that consciousness is conditioned by two factors, namely on the one hand an effect in the consciousness of specific social relations and relations between man and nature, and on the other, an effect of the consciousness on itself, i.e. the formal principles of thought (such as the principle of analogy) (1973:339-40). I can think of no better formulation of the general premiss for the study of 'superstructures' - but why restrict ourselves to a 'mythico-religious' part of the consciousness, the definition of which can only bring confusion anyway? I think that the general insight is so sound that the principle merits a wider application. Thus, the following quotation from Levi-Strauss is both a corroboration of Godelier's principles and an extension of their field of application:

> Therefore, two kinds of determinism are simultaneously at work in social life and it is no wonder that they may appear arbitrary to each other. Behind every ideological construct, previous constructs stand out, and they echo each other back in time, not indefinitely but at least back to the fictive stage when, hundreds of thousands of years ago and maybe more, an incipient mankind thought out and expressed its first ideology. But it is equally true that at each stage of this complex process, each ideological construct becomes inflected by techno-economic conditions and is so to speak, first attracted and then warped by them. Even if a common mechanism should exist underlying the various ways according to which the human mind operates, in each particular society and at each stage of its historical development, those mental cogwheels must lend themselves to being put in gear with other mechanisms. Observation never reveals the isolated performance of one type of wheel-work or of the other: we can only witness the results of their mutual adjustment (Lévi-Strauss 1974:11).

We may thus note the general agreement between the marxist and the structuralist view of 'superstructures' as being doubly determined, namely by the combination of material conditions and the way in which the mind processes experience, and then return to Godelier on religion. The first step 'toward the marxist anthropology of religion' is the following quotation from Marx: 'It is easier to demonstrate the earthly content of these ethereal conceptions of religion than to go the other way and show how the real conditions gradually become clothed in these clouds' (Godelier 1975c:82). A scientific, materialist

analysis should go from the 'below' to the 'above' rather than from the 'above' to the 'below'. I suspect that for all practical purposes the analysis has to go both ways simultaneously, but no matter what direction happens to be the predominant in the specific analysis, it is a fact that by moulding one's analysis too rigidly on the principles contained in the above quotation, one makes it very difficult to accommodate the second of the two components which according to Godelier himself is a premiss for the marxist theory of mythico-religious consciousness, namely the effect of the consciousness on itself. It seems to me that Godelier's marxist anthropology is here caught in the dilemma between a literal adherence to Marx' writings and the heeding of general anthropological insights.

A similar dilemma was present in the problem of 'religion' as a universal category, and Godelier in that case followed Marx. There is nothing wrong, of course, with describing certain phenomena in exotic societies as 'religious', provided that the western meaning of that label does not influence the analysis. But, as we shall see, 'religion' for Godelier is a rather value loaded concept, and this has some effect on the analysis. The analysis (1975c) is mainly of the Mbuti pygmies as described by Turnbull, while examples of 'religion' in other types of societies are very summarily sketched to indicate an evolutionary sequence. I shall restrict myself to some comments of the Mbuti analysis, but let us first repeat that in primitive societies where man has a very limited control over nature,

> The hidden causes, the invisible forces which regulate the affairs in the world are represented as superhuman creatures, that is to say as beings equipped with consciousness and will, power and authority, thus being analogous to man, but different in that they do what man cannot do, they are superior to man (Godelier 1973:338; emphasis original).

This statement can only be taken as an empirical generalization. The Mbuti are hunters and gatherers and have thus an extremely limited control over nature, so we should expect them to fit the generalization, but as a matter of fact they do not:

> The forest for the Pygmies, therefore, is an omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient divinity. They address it by the kin or kin-based terms that designate father, mother, friend, even lover, but it would be a major error to think that the Mbuti conceive of the forest as a reality entirely distinct from themselves (Godelier 1975c:82; my emphasis).

(It may be of interest to note that Durkheim & Mauss, who like Godelier adopted an evolutionary perspective, had seventy years earlier arrived at a generalization which fits at least the Mbuti case perfectly; to repeat and continue the passage quoted above: 'It was because men were grouped, and thought of themselves in the form of groups, that in their ideas they grouped other things, and in the beginning the two modes of grouping were merged to the point of being indistinct' (1903:82-83)).

The 'religion' of the Mbuti is manifested in the 'forest cult'. Religion for most people in western societies is an institution which involves things like prayer, priests, and a (personified) god. So also for Godelier, apparently, for he manages to impute to the world view of the Mbuti all those elements.

As for prayer:

> Each morning, before leaving for the hunt, the Pygmies light a fire at the base of a tree in honour of the forest. They pass in front of the fire as they leave the camp and they often chant to the forest to ask for game. In the evening, upon their return, the game is divided at the foot of the same tree, and a prayer of thanks is offered to the forest for the game it has yielded (1975c:82).

Compare that passage with Turnbull's description:

> The sacred hunting fire ..... is found throughout the forest. It is thought to secure the blessing of the forest which provides the game, and to bring good luck to the entire camp ... (It) is a simple act, involving the lighting of a fire at the base of a tree a short distance from the camp. In other pygmy groups I have seen a variation where the fire is lit within the camp, with special sticks arount it, pointing in the direction the hunt is going to take. In this case the fire is surrounded by a long and heavy vine laid in a circle on the ground, and when the game is brought home it is placed within this circle before being divided (1961:91).
>
> As soon as the hunters return they deposit the meat on the ground and the camp gathers to make sure the division is fair .... Cooking operations start at once and within an hour everyone is eating. If the hunt has been a good one, and the day is still young, the most energetic men and women dance immediately afterwards, followed by the children. In the course of such a dance they imitate, with suitable exaggeration, the events of the day. Or if the hunt has not been so good or a man is tired and does not feel like dancing, he will sit down and gather his family around him and tell something that has happened to him on the hunt (ibid:123).

So much for the ethnographic evidence of prayer!

Priests are introduced where Godelier describes a major ritual in which everybody participates. He tells us that there 'are no priests among the Mbuti', which is a perfectly valid ethnographic statement, but then he goes on to say, 'Or, rather, everyone is a priest and a believer' (1975c:83), which is patent nonsense unless we wish to consider anyone who takes part in any ritual a priest, and that does seem rather pointless. We can only conclude that Godelier is led astray by his own conception of religion so that he treats Mbuti world view as if he were talking about western religion.

A god is the <u>sine qua non</u> of western religion. Hence in order to make sense for Godelier, there must be a god in Mbuti 'religion':

> For them, the forest is all of existence - it consists of trees, plants, animals, sun, moon, and the Mbuti themselves. When a Mbuti dies, his or her breath leaves and mixes with the wind, which is the breath of the forest. Human beings, therefore, are part of that totality which exists as an omnipotent and omnipresent person; they are, so to speak, part of the body of God (1975c:82).

'So to speak', yes, if we wish to insist on there being a god. The forest is the dominant category of Mbuti world view, the dominant symbol, if we like, and the Mbuti themselves, like many aspects of their environment, are 'of

the forest'. But this fact is a fact of 'participation' (Lévy-Bruhl 1949); it does not imply identity, and only an insufficient degree of detachment from the theological tradition of one's own society could lead on to think that this dominant symbol is best labelled 'God'. Speaking of god, a Mbuti put it this way:

> He told me how all the pygmies have different names for their god, but how they all know that it is really the same one. Just what it is, of course, they don't know, and that is why the name really does not matter very much. "How can we know?" he asked. "We can't see him, perhaps only when we die will we know and then we can't tell anyone. So how can we say what he is like or what his name is? But he must be good to give us so many things. He must be of the forest. So when we sing, we sing to the forest" (Turnbull 1961:87-88).

The man is obviously trying to explain a feature of the Mbuti world view in an idiom that the ethnographer may readily grasp, and he makes it quite clear that even if there be a god, the Mbuti are not terribly concerned about him, and it would never occur to them, I believe, to equate the notion of god with the totality of the Mbuti and their environment.

To sum up: the forest is the dominant category in Mbuti society, it is the idiom in which most of their collective representations are expressed. It would, therefore, be reasonable in the (marxist) anthropological analysis of this society to take that category as the point of departure and try to trace the ways in which both material and non-material relations are transformed and expressed in that idiom. Instead Godelier starts from the category 'religion' which as a concept has no place in Mbuti thought; and because of this fact he fills up the category with elements from his own society (prayer, priests, god, - 'a lot of value loaded concepts'), the result being a distortion of the ethnographic picture for the sake of establishing a marxist evolutionary sequence of 'religious' phenomena. And after all, we are told, the exercise was not really worth it:

> By placing in sequence these four examples - the Mbuti, the Eskimo shaman, the Pawnee chief, and the Inca son of the Sun - I have created a theoretical <u>trompe-l'oeil</u>. For the sequence seems to suggest that the later development of the pervasive socioeconomic inequality to which I have referred was nascent even among the Mbuti.... (But) to understand the multiple forms of social evolution and the different functions which religion discharges in each case, we need a theory, specific to each case, of the conditions for the emergence of a given set of social relations and their relation to the base, the mode of production (1975c:85).

(A curiously narrow conception of the nature of theory). If the paper is a step 'toward a marxist anthropology of religion', it would seem, from an anthropological point of view, to have brought us squarely down on our own toes.

Kinship

My comments on the preceding pages should have made it clear that what I regard as the shortcomings of Godelier's approach stem from the fact that he treats 'religion' as a universally existing institution, the characteristics of which he seems to take more or less for granted. I shall argue,

briefly, that similar shortcomings can, for similar reasons, be found in his analyses of 'kinship'.

Godelier has repeatedly stated that in many primitive societies kinship functions simultaneously as infrastructure and superstructure (e.g. Godelier 1972:94-95,248; 1973:170; 1975:10,13), and he infers that kinship is in those societies a multifunctional institution. He then takes a 'majority of anthropologists' to task for reaching the tautological conclusion that kinship (or any other institution, as the case may be) is multifunctional in a given society because it is dominant, and it is dominant because it is multifunctional (1975a:13). The question for Godelier is, how can the fact that some institution (other than the economy) is dominant in a given society be reconciled with Marx' hypothesis 'that it is the economic infrastructure of society which in the last analysis determines the inner logic of its working and of the evolution of the various types of society' (ibid)? The answer he provides is

> ...that it is not enough for an institution such as kinship to assume several functions for it to be dominant within a society and to integrate all levels of social organization.... (it) must also function as the system of relations of production regulating rights of groups and of individuals in respect to the means of production and their access to the products of their labour. It is because the institution functions as the system of relations of production that it regulates the politico-religious activities and serves as the ideological schema for symbolic practice (ibid:14;cf. 1973:43,89,217-18; 1974:626; 1975b:35; 1977:47).

This may be so, but in fact Godelier perpetuates the 'positivist' error of the 'majority of anthropologists' whom he criticizes, because he imputes to the social facts from other societies a totally unwarranted institutionalization. This theoretical error is all the more conspicuous as the ethnographic material on which the statement is based is drawn from Australian societies, notably the Karièra. The linguist von Brandenstein (1970) has analyzed the meaning of the section names of the Karièra four-section system, and on the basis of that analysis Godelier states that

> ...the division into sections provides an organizing scheme for the Australians' symbolic representation of the world and of its immanent order. The same principles and the same divisions order nature and society, dividing human beings and all natural creatures into the same categories; nature appears as an enlarged image of society, as its continuation (Godelier 1975a:11).

I can find no good anthropological reason why such classificatory principles should be treated as an 'institution' called 'kinship'. This point has been repeatedly stressed by Needham; referring precisely to von Brandenstein's analysis of the Karièra four-section system Needham comments:

> ...social life is variously framed and governed by collective categories, and ... in analysing any given society the task is to trace the significance of these categories, throughout their full range of connotations, without making in advance any prejudicial distinction into what is and what is not kinship (1974:33).

Needham is concerned solely with collective categories and is not inquiring into the material functions of such categories. However limited, and

limiting, such a position may seem, this does not invalidate the anthropological soundness of the cited argument.

So, confronted with the general question of why it is that kinship assumes a dominant role in many primitive societies, the general answer might be that it is because anthropologists (including marxist ones) have tended to see all systems of classification which include the classification of people into categories such as lineal relatives/non-lineal relatives, marriageable/unmarriageable, etc., as 'kinship systems'. The societies in which 'kinship' is said to dominate are usually small-scale and rather stationary ones. It follows that many of the members who cooperate in the daily production will actually be related by descent or by marriage. Because of this, genealogical connections present themselves as an obvious parameter for the classification of the social universe. But classification is a socio-cultural procedure which is arbitrary in relation to biology. Kinship is not the social expression, or ideology, of genealogical connections. On the contrary, kinship is in those societies social relations (of production etc.) which are ideologically expressed by means of genealogy. As Sahlins has put it:

> Indeed, the realation between pragmatic cooperation and kinship definition is often reciprocal. If close kinsmen live together, then those who live together are close kin. If kinsmen make gifts of food, then gifts of food make kinsmen - the two are symbolically interconvertible forms of the transfer of substance. For as kinship is a code of conduct and not merely of reference, let along genealogical reference, conduct becomes a code of kinship (Sahlins 1976:57-58).

Once we have come to this understanding of 'kinship' we have in effect done away with the problem, let alone the institution, of kinship. By the same token we have done away with the problem of domination versus determination because it has become clear that <u>every mode of classification is dominant in relation to what is classified by it</u>. What we have left is the problem of the relation between cultural systems of classification and the 'real' facts of social production and reproduction, or, if we like, the relation between superstructures and infrastructure.

Superstructure and infrastructure

In the two previous sections I have tried to show that the shortcomings of Godelier's analytical practice stem from an anthropologically rather unsophisticated treatment of such phenomena as 'religion' and 'kinship'. This is all the more disappointing since he has, in fact, on the theoretical level partly realized the possible pitfalls of his own analytical practice:

> When kinship functions as a production relationship, what is involved is no longer kinship such as it exists in our society; the same is true when religion, the temple and the god constitute the dominant social relationship. Nor is this religion as it exists in our society. In each case, kinship, religion or politics need to be defined anew (1974:626).

But what is the use of such theoretical insight if it is not applied in the concrete analysis?

I shall now turn to Godelier's theoretical practice in considering the concept of ideology and its relation to infrastructure and superstructure. The concept of ideology occurs frequently in Godelier's writings, but I have found it somewhat difficult to form a clear picture of what it means. We have seen it defined as 'the domain of illusory representations of the real' (1973:337), but that only begs the question about what is real and what is not. Only a rather simplistic and ethnocentric materialism can confidently equate the real with the material conditions for social life, and Godelier has, indeed, gone beyond that stage:

> To investigate the ideological, the conditions for its formation and transformation, its effects on the evolving of societies, is for a marxist, it seems to me, to investigate the relationship between infrastructure, superstructures and ideology. Should we designate those realities 'instances' as Althusser has done, should we consider them as 'levels' of social reality, as somehow substantive distinctions of social reality, as institutional chunks of its substance? I think not. In my view a society has neither above nor below, nor has it really levels. That is why the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure is not a distinction between institutions. It is in principle a distinction between functions (1977:42).

We note that it is no longer a question, for a marxist, to construct a 'scientific theory of ideology' by accounting for the process by which the 'real' conditions in each specific case become clothed in the clouds of religious conceptions and then to generalize on the basis of a number of different cases (1975c). Now infrastructure, superstructures and ideology are equally parts of social reality, which is the object of study for the rest of social anthropology as well.

Furthermore it appears that the notion of the 'real' is itself subjected to some modifications; among the productive forces there exist, namely, certain 'intellectual' means for appropriating nature:

> We find that at the heart of the most material relations between man and the material nature which surrounds him there exists a complexx set of representations, ideas, schemes, etc., which I shall call 'ideal' realities, the presence and intervention of which is necessary for any material activity to take place. Today [sic] anthropology has embarked on the investigation of those ideal realities which are included in the various material processes of the societies which it analyzes. This is the vast field of ethnoscience.... (1977:43).

The ideal realities, it is admitted, are percieved primarily through the linguistic discourse of the groups in question, and they are thus facts which are indissoluble from language and mind. Consequently, language and mind may function as components of the productive forces, and the distinction between infrastructure and superstructures is thus not one 'between the material and the immaterial, as I cannot see that the mind should be any less material than the rest of social life. Neither is it a distinction between the sensible and the non-sensible. It is a distinction of place inside the activities necessary for the reproduction of social life' (ibid)

It follows from the above quotations, first that it is not really the structural aspects of infrastructure and superstructure which are important;

in fact they are not even to be regarded as structures proper and should perhaps rather be labelled infra- and superstructural functions respectively. Second it follows that infrastructural functions are those activities necessary for the reproduction of social life, but since these activities include mental constructs such as indigenous taxonomies and the like, in short everything that we are accustomed to think of as just social life, one wonders what kind of phenomena may have superstructural functions (cf. Dresch 1976:58). We are of course at liberty to regard the whole of social life as having the purpose of the reproduction of social systems, but rather than being a theoretical advance it seems to me to be a truism resting on the same kind of logic as the one employed by Marvin Harris when he reduces the rationality of social relations to that of adaptive advantages (Godelier 1973:52; 1974: 621; 1975b:52). In case we do not wish to go that far, there remain two possibilities: either it is the anthropologist who is to judge which activities are necessary for the reproduction of social life, or it is the natives themselves. In the first case we are (once again) laid open to charges of ethnocentrism, in the second every marxist anthropologist ought to do nothing but ethnoscience. In any case it seems to me that the net result is to make nonsense out of the notions of infrastructure and superstructure.

We might wonder than why Godelier should bother about the distinction at all. I suspect that, as an avowedly marxist anthropologist, he felt the need to come to the rescue of the hypothesis about the determining role in the last instance of the economic infrastructure. Considerable effort has been devoted to this salvage. We might say that the operation was successful; the patient died. The success lies precisely in the fact that a distinction between infrastructure and superstructure is no longer tenable, and consequently there is no question of the determining role of either.

Conclusion

Did we also do away with the concept of ideology in the process? Not quite; it crops up again where Godelier addresses the problem of how to distinguish between ideological and non-ideological ideas (1977:47-49). But the 'solution' he offers appears to be rather an anti-solution:

> Thus we see that it is impossible to define an idea as ideological by using a single criterion (the criterion of false or true, the criterion of legitimacy or illegitimacy), nor by the addition or juxtaposition f the two because they do not coincide. Each time the reasoning halts. In fact, to escape the dilemma of the formal or functional definitions of the ideological we have to work out a theory of the components of the power of domination a d oppression, a theory of the relation between violence and consensus (1977:49).

So, the way to escape the dilemma is to talk about something else. Before concluding the paper with some eminently sensible thoughts about the relation between violence and consensus, Godelier treats us to some scattered observations which do not in any obvious way tie in with other parts of his argument, but which contain some solid anthropoligical insights. The first point is that 'all social relations exist simultaneously in the mind and outside it'. Thus, and this is the second point, which 'a certain marxism has too often forgotten', the mind not only passively reflects reality, it interprets it actively; it even organizes all the social practices in this reality and thereby contributes to the production of new social realities

(ibid). The realization of these points, we are told, is what makes all the difference between the several ways in which to be 'materialist' in scientific and political praxis.

If points like these, and like the bits about the linguistic cimponents of the productive forces, are accepted by the proponents of the traditional marxist wisdom, we may all take leave of our scepticism and hand it Bloch (1975) that he was ahead of the rest of us in perceiving that theoretical controversies between marxists and non-marxists never reflected a total break. If, on the other hand, the rest of the marxist establishement is unable to go along with Godelier, it remains for him to declare that the business of 'marxist anthropology' was a gigantic hoax, of which he has himself been a victim.

Jan Ovesen.

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