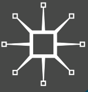

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Power of Articulation

Imagery of Social Structure and Social Change

Matti Kortesoja

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To Leena, after 20 years,
and to two-year-old Mauno

Preface

This book offers the first comprehensive discussion of the concept of articulation, providing a critical reading of its uses and what has occurred on its 'travels' from one realm of theory to another. Almost all the debates it addresses align with at least some conception(s) of articulation, but their history and application have seldom been documented. Attention to this concept and its travels entails studying the process whereby the concept has become actively adopted, appropriated, and adapted in academic practices. Thus, *Power of Articulation: Imagery of Social Structure and Social Change* contributes to the discussion of conceptual metaphors, their deployment, and the ways in which we build 'imageries' of social structure and social change to analyse concepts' movement—motion that 'is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity', as Edward Said has characterised it.

In the early days of social science, it was Karl Marx who came to terms with the structure of society as analogous to the material structure of a physical organism (or *Gliederung*). Lecturing somewhat 50 years later in an academic milieu, Ferdinand de Saussure contemplated language as a system of differences in 'the domain of articulations'. Almost a half century passed before Louis Althusser adopted the concept of articulation to refer to the structure of society organised as an 'articulated whole' composed of 'the limbs of the social system'. In the wake of Althusser's structuralist reading of Marx, articulation became a core concept for what became known as the articulation school of economic anthropology, then for the Birmingham school of cultural studies, and after that for the Essex school of discourse theory and political analysis. From these discussions,

the concept has spread to numerous contemporary uses, whereby 'articulation' appears as a catchword, with its uses growing increasingly vague.

More than 50 years have now passed since social scientists and cultural analysts were devoted to a structural and Marxist reading oriented toward a relational understanding of social structure and social change. However, imagery of social structure and social change lies at the very heart of the social sciences and humanities. In today's social and cultural theory, scholars have turned their focus increasingly to the action of individuals or non-human actors rather than those foundational images in the social sciences and humanities. As described in Richard Harvey Brown's *A Poetic for Sociology*, the images of social structure and social change have their foundation in the 'root metaphors' of sociological thought, which, at least for classical sociology, may be expressed as 'society being akin to an organism or a machine' and 'social conduct viewed as language, the drama, or a game'. These metaphors transfer abstract ideas and theories from one discipline to another through efforts to render them more concrete.

The six article-length chapters of this book call to pay greater attention to those conceptual metaphors—because they affect our views of how best to study society and social change. *Power of Articulation* examines the so-called discursive turn leading away from the social structure, portrayed as a complex articulated whole of social relations, toward articulation as a discursive practice that could easily bring with it social structure's reduction to language. With this shift from the structured whole of social relations, there seems to be no society to study anymore. To capture this change, the book examines how the metaphorical notion of social structure as an articulated whole, or *Gliederung*, has given way to regarding social action as language under a concept whereby social relations are taken as discursive practices. If the analogy of society operating akin to language boils down to an image wherein society is language, society gets cast as no more than discourse. It is only a short step from a wholly discursive perspective to viewing things and their relations as nothing but discursive—social constructions.

As an alternative perspective, a more nuanced view of social structure and social change may prove illuminating. The New Left paved the way toward a political articulation that is contingent on social action bringing together two things that seem at first to have nothing to do with one another. Here, articulation is not only a discursive practice forging connections among things that lack intrinsic relations such that their identity gets altered but also a conceptual metaphor for social change—one

wherein society manifests itself as a complex and structured whole comprising many contradictions and struggles, alongside those economic, political, and ideological elements constituting and embodying social change. The social scientific lens of the articulated social whole also considers social action. It expresses a commitment to illuminating the ways in which articulation is viewed as language and a play of differences.

The project here is to discuss the structured and differentiated whole of the social formation in a non-reductionist manner with reference to articulation. In other words, *Power of Articulation* delves into the relations between society as an articulated whole metaphor and its critique in which social action is often portrayed as language. Therefore, it highlights social structure and social change from a relational perspective. A conceptual metaphor in which social structure is an articulated whole accounts for the stratified nature of 'the social', taking the social order as a hierarchical structure but, unlike nature, not an independently subsisting whole, rather a product of articulations to change things and their relations.

Tampere, Finland
February 2023

Matti Kortesoja

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Like many first books, this book had its beginnings in the work behind my doctoral dissertation. After years of postdoctoral research into the banal aspects of communications surveillance and on civil and military intelligence laws, I have returned to my dissertation's theoretical insights, extending their reach beyond a few colleagues of mine via an open-access book accessible to wider audiences.

Accordingly, I must acknowledge the sources of help and support that have been most significant for this project and the larger process, especially Sara Farris, Olli Herranen, Pertti Hämäläinen, Juha Koivisto, Risto Kunelius, Mikko Lahtinen, Asko Lehmuskallio, Harri Melin, and Paula Rauhala. I also thank Lauriane Piette at Palgrave Macmillan for an opportunity to get this book published, Esther Rani and her staff at Springer Nature for their contribution to the publishing process, Anna Shefl at ASDF for editing and polishing along the way, and Tampere University for support with open-access publishing.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Power of Articulation

Abstract I begin with a chapter that lays out the main lines of the work by discussing the uses of the concept of articulation and its travels from one realm of academic discussion to another. Previous studies have not considered the concept of articulation for its role as a conceptual metaphor in relation to the discursive turn in the imagery for social structure and social change. However, the concept of articulation holds vast potential for those hoping to make sense of its appropriations and adaptations in connection with relational views of how social structure and social change are portrayed. This chapter also outlines key discussions reflecting upon and applying the idea of articulation via a brief history of the concept that serves as a rough guide for the reader. In addition, it highlights the double meaning of 'articulation' and how an anatomical metaphor of articulation has given way to reference to an expressive act or a discursive practice, a reference that attests to fundamental divergence from the spatially oriented portrayal of social structure as an articulated whole.

Keywords Articulation • Conceptual Metaphors • Intersectionality • Relational Thinking • Travelling Concepts

Background and Objectives

At the core of this work is articulation. This concept, while central to the social sciences, seems largely absent from reference works describing and increasing the value of key concepts (*Grundbegriffe*) that capture the

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imagery of social structure and social change. I have found a few exceptions, however. In the *Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism*, Thomas Weber (1994) discusses Karl Marx's idea of society structured as 'an articulated whole'.[1] The term 'articulation' is clearly cognate to the German notion of *Gliederung*. Marx conceptualised the social structure relationally as an articulated whole, regarding the capitalist relations of production that bind people into a class society that makes them its subjects.

The notion of *Gliederung* was put forth initially as a conceptual metaphor conveying the idea that social structure is an articulated whole. More than a century later, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's discourse theory picked up this conceptualisation, developing and criticising it. The latter work applies the word 'articulation' for a conceptual metaphor under which the social relations seem structured as a language. This theory's foundation is the 'social action is language' metaphor, which has fundamentally reorganised the imagery for social structure and social change. In Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, articulation is a discursive practice consisting of the construction of the so-called nodal points around which the signifying elements are temporarily organised or fixed as 'discursive moments' (1985/2001, 113).

In the post-Marxist approach to relational thinking, the useful conceptual metaphor under which social structure operates akin to language has been condensed to 'social action is language'. That is a radical moment of reduction if the metaphor is adopted literally (see Hall's critique, cited by Grossberg 1986). Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985/2001) describes articulation as a practice that fixes the free-floating signifiers temporarily to form meanings. Any incompleteness of this process is alleged to arise from society's openness, which is a consequence of the fact that the floating of the signifiers has no necessary limits. In this context, articulation is a discursive practice that enables signifying elements to connect to produce new meanings, which are essential to social and political action. It also opens a field of discourse for hegemonic struggles in which identities and meanings are relative, where all formations remain partial and temporary, and where outcomes are not fixed in advance beyond any concrete battle (pertaining to class, gender, ethnicity, and a

[1] His article 'Artikulation, Gliederung' was published in the first volume of this work, also known as *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (HKWM). Thus far, the Berlin Institute of Critical Theory (InkriT) has completed over half of this 15-volume endeavour with Wolfgang Fritz Haug.

host of other 'intersectionalities'). For this reason, several social antagonisms together dictate the discursive limits of social structure through which the signifiers, rather than floating freely, are constrained by a discursive limit restricting their potential meanings.[2]

Articulation is not a ubiquitous idea woven into the fabric of social and political vocabulary in general. Rather, it is integral predominantly to academic discussions, where it has shifted from presenting the social structure of society as a complex whole to referencing a discursive field of language. On the one hand, dictionary definitions of the word are often anatomically or biologically oriented. This casting is typical in classical sociological images wherein society is portrayed as an organism or as a machine. After all, those conceptual metaphors are derived from the natural and physical sciences. On the other hand, many meanings and values of the word are bound up with speech and other means of communication. This is characteristic of the images presented in terms of language: imagery that portrays society as a discursive field of social action as manifested in language-games or a play of differences is typical in post-structuralist critiques drawing metaphors from the arts and humanities.

The analysis of this shift is anchored in images of social structure and social change, and it is decidedly two-pronged: it attends both to the Marxist line of relational thought connected with the 'articulation' concept and to its criticism represented by the discursive turn in the social sciences, also denoted as the linguistic turn in analytical philosophy.[3] This analysis proceeds from Marxist reading that metaphorically depicts social structure as an articulated whole consisting of 'the limbs of the social system' (*Gliederung*). From there, it carries forward an interest in the ways in which articulation is a notion applicable for social structure as if it were

[2] With his political theory, Laclau (1935–2014) attempted to break populism from the nationalist rhetoric of the Right and articulate it to the Left. In 2011, left-wing populist movements such as Spain's *indignados* ('the outraged') began protesting austerity policies, as the people in opposition to the political elite.

[3] According to philosopher Richard Rorty (1967/1992), linguistic philosophy (in the main, the approach of Ludwig Wittgenstein) marked a genuine philosophical revolution. Later, Rorty recognised in his two retrospective essays (from 1977 and 1992) that he had overemphasised the 'linguistic turn'. He made his amendment in light of the assumption in linguistic philosophy that a 'philosophical problem' is a product of 'the vocabulary in which the problem was stated […] before the problem itself was taken seriously' (Rorty 1979, xiii), an assumption stemming from a conviction that all philosophical problems can be resolved only through achieving better description and understanding of language. It was Rorty who popularised the term 'linguistic turn' for considering analytical philosophy.

language, as practical making and breaking of signifying chains by means of language use. It is from this angle—of relational views' shift from social structures toward a discursive field of social change—that the book addresses the discursive turn whereby the organic, mechanical order of things has yielded to the discursive rules and norms of social action conceptualised as a language in 'the domain of articulations'.

Quite a gap has emerged in the social sciences between natural-sciences-derived metaphors and concepts drawn from the arts and humanities. My overview of the changes in the imagery of social structure and social change is then designed to shed light on the following questions:

1. How have the applications, definitions, and points of reference in using the concept of articulation changed, and in what conditions and when have these shifts happened in practice?
2. How are these changes related to the images of social structure and social change that are distinctive of relational thinking?
3. What is at stake in the discussions wherein the concept of articulation has been used, discussed, and changed in both theory and practice?

The book thus tackles yet another gap in the methodology of social science. I regard it as 'travel writing in theory' in an empirical sense—it follows articulation along the lines of various debates to reveal the concept's motions back and forth across academic disciplines. In doing so, this is the first book to address the ways the concept of articulation is used and how its use, definitions, and reference points have changed.

The research contribution is twofold. First, tracking the uses and travels of the concept from one discipline to another sheds light on the shifts in relational thinking. A contextually oriented conceptual-historical method proves ideal for probing the imagery of social structure and social change because the images build on the conceptual metaphors that social scientists and cultural analysts derive from one field and adapt to another. Highlighting the changes in the portrayal of social structure and social change affords tracing the shifts that the work discusses with regard to relational thinking.

Second, this outline of the concept's applications and travels serves as a valuable case in point for those who employ the concept in their studies. Analysing and describing the usage and travels of the concept affords tracing the discursive turn from society to language in depth. These paths

have never been studied to such an extent, let alone for a coherent view of the concept's subsequent applications in structural linguistics, Marxist political philosophy, new economic anthropology, cultural studies, and post-Marxism (Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory in particular).

A Brief Survey of the Concept

To lay the groundwork before scrutinising relational thinking in terms of articulation, I must briefly outline its semantic history.[4] Akin to words such as 'arm' and 'art', 'articulation' is a Latin-based term whose usage in French and many other Romance languages is similar to that in English. The first dictionary of the French language already had two entries for it (Richelet and Widerhold 1680, 44). One is for an anatomical word for a joint of two bones, and the second denotes a distinct pronunciation.[5] In the third edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, from the 1990s onward, the two meanings commonly linked to 'articulation'—the anatomical or biological sense and that related to speech or expression—still prevail, yet the word has many additional definitions attached to it.[6]

[4] Similar approaches have been taken elsewhere (see Zienkowski 2016, 35–37).

[5] The relevant text reads: '*Articulation. Terme d'Anatomie*. Composition naturelle d'os, de laquelle les bouts de deux os s'entre-touchent. [L'articulation des os. *Deg.*]. *Articulation*. Prononciation distincte.'

[6] Under 'Articulation, n.' in the Oxford English Dictionary, 3rd ed. (OED Online), we find the following meanings:

> I. Senses primarily anatomical or biological. […] Connection (of bones or skeletal segments) by a joint; the state of being jointed; a manner of jointing. […] In a man-made structure or mechanism: connection by a joint or joints, especially in such a way as to permit movement; the state, or a manner, of being so jointed. […] A node or joint of a stem; a place at which a leaf or other deciduous part is attached to a plant. […] A conceptual relationship, interaction, or point of juncture, especially *between* two things. […] The contact made between the upper and lower teeth, especially during movements of the jaw.
>
> II. Senses relating to speech or expression. […] The utterance of the distinct elements of speech; […] The separation of successive [musical] notes from one another, individually or in groups, especially regarded as an aspect of a performer's technique or interpretation. […] The quality of being articulate in speech or expression; clarity, distinctness. […] The action of controlling the air flow in the vocal tract by the vocal organs to produce speech or other sounds. […] The faculty or power of speaking, speech; the expression of thoughts by articulate sounds. […] The manifestation, demonstration, or expression of something immaterial or abstract, such as an emotion or idea.

Many other languages feature a similarity in the overall double meaning of 'articulation'; however, the German use of 'Gliederung' for a structure or organisation seems to have been quite distinct from that set until the 1980s, when it became translated more specifically from English as 'Artikulation' (see Weber 1994, 613). In the most encountered dictionary entries for the noun, earlier definitions for 'articulation' refer first to a joint or connection that attaches body parts to a skeleton in a manner allowing their movement. Regarding this, articulation is a form or a way in which things join. In addition, it is a point of juncture at which elements are connected, or an abstract state of this interrelation. In the specialist field of phonetics, articulation is the production of speech; in the pronunciation of consonants, air moves freely through the 'vocal tract' until it is obstructed by the vocal organs that produce the sound. The latter still counts among the anatomical meanings of the word. In everyday speech-related language, however, the word is employed in adjectival form—an articulate speaker is someone who can 'put things into words' in a clear and expressive manner. This sense of the word is linked also to artistic skills: the word 'art', which is derived from the Latin 'ars' ('artis' in the genitive), meaning 'a skill in joining or fitting'.[7]

According to these definitions, articulation is a joint, connection, or link and an act of fixing and coupling to put things in relation by giving expression to them. An articulation consists of different elements that connect through a specific type of linkage. It is a unit formed of distinctive parts. Again, if the elements are not articulated, they are separate and do not exist in the same field. 'Articulation' has a double meaning by its very definition, as a structure or linkage and as an act of rendering eloquent verbal expression. In structural linguistics, the word denotes a practice that makes it possible to enunciate utterances from a limited set of sounds with potentially unlimited meanings. In political rhetoric, articulation is a practice that allows distinct interests to connect into a group for political objectives. Hence, it seems clear that articulation refers to many distinct 'things': what might appear to be a single, monolithic word has various connotations and meanings, which vary with context. Unsurprisingly,

[7] In the art portfolio entitled 'Formulation: Articulation' (1972, see Stavrinaki 2007), by Josef Albers, who was one of the key members of the Bauhaus movement, the term 'articulation' refers not to 'expression' of ideas and feelings but to the structural constellation of visual elements and the overall composition of an artwork.

then, the concept of articulation is composed of a constellation of various elements around a set of diverse ideas and practices.

Clearly, the concept has several meanings, uses, and values attached to it in academic discussions. The double meaning was evident already in *Course in General Linguistics*, from 1916, for which Ferdinand de Saussure defined language by means of a Latin word for a joint, 'articulus'. This anatomical, biological term was applied in relation to spoken language. After that, Saussure gave it a semiotic meaning as 'a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas' (p. 10) by way of the German expression 'gegliederte Sprache', which one can gloss as 'articulated speech' and was translated for Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* (1967/1997, 66) as 'articulated language' by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Employing the second definition in connection with language, Saussure opined that 'what is natural to mankind is not oral speech but the faculty of constructing a language' (1916/1959, 10). In the relevant passage, he claims that while articulated speech is characteristic of humans, the ability to create a language that consists of distinct signs in relation to distinct ideas is what distinguishes human culture from nature (i.e., nothing is signified as such in nature). For Saussure, language is not only speech but 'a self-contained whole and a principle of classification' (p. 9), where language is taken to be a system of differences distinct from what exists in nature. For Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1781/1966, also cited by Derrida 1967/1997), articulated speech was 'the first social institution'—one must learn it before one can speak and can interact with others by means of using words.

The notion of 'power of articulation' comes from Derrida, who wrote that 'Saussure, in contradiction to his phonologist thesis, recognised, we recall, that the power of articulation alone—and not spoken language—was "natural to man"' (1967/1997, 228–229). For example, a plant develops from a seed in accordance with the laws of nature, situated as it is in an evolutionary process in producing life. For Saussure, a plant 'does not stand for something; it is not the bearer of meaning' in the manner of a sign—a sign has a differential function in articulated language, which is a synchronic system (per Culler 1976, 82). Hence, a sign of a plant stands for something in a symbolic order such as language, which, in turn, is a system of differences that gets used in a 'domain of articulations', where a distinct sign articulates a distinctive idea. In this context, 'power of articulation' is not a phonic substance. Instead, it is grasped relationally in

like-a-language terms. Here, it means a capacity to speak and act—that is, to serve in forming, organising, and expressing thoughts and feelings with other people, and the ability to make and break the connections by articulated language.

With regard to the method of analysis, Saussure's predecessors studied the historical evolution of linguistic forms, such as words that have an arbitrary relationship to their meaning, in a diachronic manner. In French epistemology, or the study of knowledge, concepts were set in relation to the synchronic order. Epistemologists also considered themselves to offer a critique of the history of ideas. In 'The Death of the Author' (Barthes 1967/1977), authorial intention is criticised as an unfaithful guide to textual analysis, misplaced from where the reader is situated. From this perspective, literary texts are produced under certain conditions that are not entirely congruent with the conditions that their authors have in mind. Meanings, rather than being products of conscious authorial deliberation, are hidden and get uttered discursively (see Macherey 1966/2006). Likewise, 'What Is an Author?' (Foucault 1969/1979) expresses suspicion of authorial intentions as a means of closure to the discursive space of texts' potential meanings.

Michel Foucault's *The Order of Things* (1966/1970) expands these reflections: episteme forms at the junction of many fields—among them linguistics, biology, and economics—where a specific discursive formation determines the scope and limits of knowledge. For Foucault, episteme is productive and 'a condition of possibility' for all knowledge. It is along these lines that Foucault's dissertation (*Folie et déraison*, published in English as *Madness and Civilization*) depicts madness as not a mere social or discursive construction; it operates within a specific formation of knowledge with its inception in a Modern Enlightenment-era France.

Epistemology offered a starting point for many interdisciplinary research programmes that would leave a mark on the thinking of Foucault and other influential philosophers:

> To work on a concept is to vary its extension and comprehension, to generalise it through the incorporation of exceptional traits, to export it beyond its region of origin, to take it as a model or inversely, to search for a model for it.[8]

[8] This telling extract from Georges Canguilhem's 1963 essay 'Dialectique et philosophie du non chez Gaston Bachelard' (on p. 452) is reproduced on the inside leaf of every volume in the *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* series.

While his 'What Is an Author?' does not address works of individual authors, Foucault did consider the discursive formations structured in a certain time and place. *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969/1972) employs the notion of archive in relation to language instead of episteme in reference to knowledge. Foucault spoke of 'discursive formations' as a replacement for 'scientific discipline' in the sociology of knowledge (Sawyer 2002, 437). According to him, Marx and Sigmund Freud deserved credit as 'founders of discursivity' who set in place rules from which later work could proceed and established a horizon of possibility for other texts (Foucault 1969/1979). Hence, their works remain open for discussion. In this space, their followers, not to mention their adversaries, have manifested an 'intention' to get the last word in their theory and, thereby, crush opposing arguments, which makes their project ideological.

Without contested concepts and disagreement as to concepts' usage, there is no new knowledge or discourse on science. Any epistemology is formed on a set of ever-shifting concepts, methods, and ideas, which exist as both a culturally shared background for its dedicated supporters and something that their opponents call into question. In a similar manner, philosophers take account of the philosophical thought stretching into their past as they strive to explicate and criticise the systems of thought prevailing in their time, as Marx did from his critique of idealism through to the critique of classical political economics. Here, one could cite Antonio Gramsci's approach to the history of modern political thought as a challenge to the false assumption that intellectual life is simply 'superstructural':

> The starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory. The first thing to do is to make such an inventory. (Gramsci 1971/1999, 628)

To study ideas that have affected one's own thinking, one must engage in self-reflection.[9] Applying the term 'a common sense' (*senso comune*) for

[9] I should stress that I strive to avoid the 'Munchausen effect'. That is, I aim to steer clear of offering a legendary tale in the manner of the famous baron who claimed to have pulled himself out of a swamp 'into the air by pulling on his own hair' (Pêcheux 1982, 108).

the popular ways of seeing things and of acting in line with these views that are not articulated into coherent, systematic conceptions of the world, Gramsci has charged philosophers with no more and no less than 'the criticism of all previous philosophy' (p. 628), insofar as what came before has come to be incorporated into their collective contemporary thinking. From this standpoint, philosophy is a material force that demands study of the historical processes that, rather than vanishing into thin air, have left material traces in all of us, in some cases even 'collective trauma', which can lead to 'theoretical amnesia' (see Žižek 1989/2008, xxiv).[10]

A Rough Guide for the Reader

Per Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1991/1994), the task of a philosopher is to create concepts. Concepts are stacked in the main building blocks to academic discussion that surrounds theories such as those organising our notions of social realities. As Edward Said (1983, 157) aptly stated, 'the movement of ideas and theories from one place to another is both a fact of life and a usefully enabling condition of intellectual activity'. In this sense, theories are more than logical propositions or empirically grounded ideas, on account of concepts crossing boundaries between academic fields in the search for new ideas and practices. According to Said, there comes a point in a concept's travels where it is articulated for the first time. After crossing this 'threshold of articulation'—that is, once the idea has been put into words and entered academic discussion—it can travel in time and space to traverse various disciplines. Then, when its users contest it in academic debate, it can become a concept able to influence its theoretical and practical contexts. Finally, the concept is adapted to academic

[10] In a *dénégation* of the Marxist theory of ideology (addressed in Chap. 4) we find a telling example of this type of traumatic kernel, where one signifier is substituted for another (e.g., 'we are interested not in lies but in the truth'):

> Despite its many and varied forms, and whatever its level of sophistication, Marxist notions of ideology designated a domain of false ideas that served the social function of masking and legitimating the dominance of a ruling class […]. Its deployment of the notion of ideology already assumed that the objects of study were falsehoods that had a function, whereas we rapidly become more interested in the question of truth, along with the means of production of truth, and the consequences of the production of truth effects in specific domains. (Miller and Rose 2008, 3)

practice, and its users may transform it such that its background from the original discipline disappears.

The timeline depicted in Diagram 1.1 outlines the discussions that have applied, examined, and changed the lens of articulation as a conceptual metaphor. Studying the concept's motions from one theory-anchored discussion to another helps reveal what continues happening to it as its contexts shift and how these moves bring forth changes in both theory and practice.[11] While the timeline refers to the output of individual authors, our focus here is not on them but on the concept and how it has gained interdisciplinary traction from the academic dialogue that followed.

The analysis begins with the theoretical and intellectual contexts encountered along the concept's travels in time and space and in its traversing of various disciplines, from Marxist political philosophy to economic anthropology and cultural studies through structural linguistics and its critique. The concept of articulation has diffused around the world and

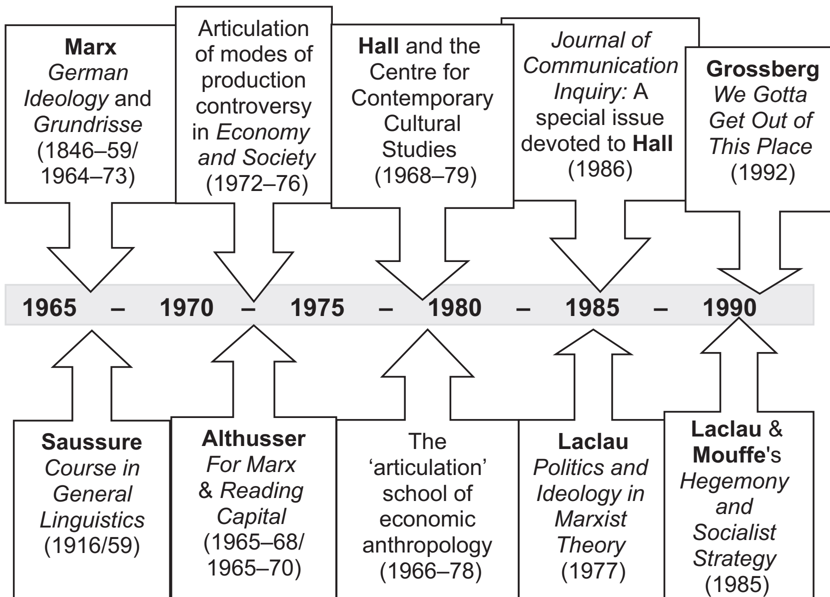

Diagram 1.1 Usage and travels of the concept of articulation

[11] The discussion here uses the English translations, for consistency's sake.

spread in empirical studies by political and cultural analysts. This leads us to a question about the ways in which concepts travel back and forth between fields and how scholars adopt and appropriate them in their academic practices. Interdisciplinary scholarship based on the travels of concepts is a promising tool introduced, for instance, in a book by cultural analyst and artist Mieke Bal. For her, the humanities and the social sciences are founded on concepts rather than methods (Bal 2002, 5).

The concept at issue has seen its greatest development at a specific politico-historical conjuncture: a 'return to Marx', which came a hundred years after the first publication of *Capital* (1867/1909), with the new social movements and countercultural revolution of the 1960s. While such key contributions as *The German Ideology* and *Grundrisse* were not fully available in English before the 1960s–70s, Marx used the notion of *Gliederung* as a vital underpinning for presenting the structure of bourgeois society already in the nineteenth century. This term is derived from the German word for a limb, 'Glied'. The English-language edition of *Grundrisse*, produced in 1973 from the 1939–41 German version of Marx's 1857–58 work, translates it as organisation, structure, or order, not as articulation or an articulated whole.

It was Louis Althusser who transposed the latter concept to Marxist vocabulary and changed its range of reference by giving the term a new use. Althusser applied it for the organisation of the various instances of the social formation as 'the articulation of the limbs of the social system' (1965/1970, 98) with regard to the structuralist paradigm. In *For Marx* (Althusser 1965/1969) and *Reading Capital* (Althusser and Balibar 1965/1970), he discusses such fundaments of Marxist vocabulary as 'mode of production' and 'the relations of production' alongside the contradictions, dislocations, and transitions in relation to the 'social structure is an articulated whole' conceptual metaphor. For Althusser, social structure emerges as a complex of numerous determinations and contradictions alongside the economic instance. In his view, the economic determines only which of the other instances, such as ideological or political instance, is dominant at any given time. In this context, articulation is 'the site of a significant theoretical rupture (*coupure*) and intervention' (Hall 1980, 37).

In the debates following this description, articulation became a core concept in the field of new economic anthropology. What became known as the modes-of-production controversy drew lines between those who emphasised the idea of a single capitalist system and those who rejected this sociological theory for neglecting ideological and political struggles

and their complex articulations in pre-capitalist social formations (e.g., Berman 1984; Foster-Carter 1978; Raatgever 1985; Wolpe 1980). According to the 'articulation school' within new economic anthropology, social formations in the developing world (various parts of Africa, for instance) consist of the articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production under the dominance of the capitalist mode of production. In new economic anthropology, exemplified by the work of Maurice Godelier, Claude Meillassoux, Emmanuel Terray, and Pierre-Philippe Rey, the concept of articulation encapsulates the relationships among the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production with respect to various contradictions and ongoing social struggles. Behind their expression 'articulation of modes of production' lay the conclusion that some subordinate mode(s) of production such as domestic self-subsistence economies can co-exist with capitalism over long spans of time.

For example, Rey's presentation of 'the stages of the articulation of modes of production' in 'Class Alliances' (1973/1982) specifies division into three eras. The first involves interaction between modes of production within a given social formation; then, one mode becomes subordinated such that transition to another mode can take place; and, finally, the subordinate mode is defeated. In Rey's work, each of these stages of articulation has a corresponding set of class alliances. His central point is that the transition from one mode of production to another is not set in advance. It is a result of class struggle that extends beyond the economic to the social formations manifested in the ideological and political instances, struggle that exerts influence on social change.

The concept of articulation diffused into the vocabulary of cultural theorists and only later to that of discourse theorists, who accentuated social relations produced via language. In cultural studies, this concept afforded a framework for analysis covering historically specific social forms such as ethnicity and gender issues, which became dominant principles alongside class struggle in articulating social orders. For example, Stuart Hall's theory of articulation stresses the relative autonomy of ideological and political struggles (Hall 1985, 92). This view accentuates that there is no guarantee of their outcome outside any concrete battle related to gender, ethnicity, class, or other issues. In fact, it became apparent later that, in principle, anything can articulate with anything else; this gives the concept of articulation a potentially limitless range of reference (see Grossberg 1992). For connections to be made in practice, however, some links have to be broken for new ones to be created.

In the cultural theory of Lawrence Grossberg (2010, 52), cultural studies does not have a method 'unless one thinks of articulation—the reconstruction of relations and contexts—as a method'. As theory and method both (see Slack 1996), 'articulation' entails contextualising the research subject to obtain a better understanding of contexts. The articulation in this process involves a commitment to contingency and anti-reductionist thinking, in addition to considering the problem of hegemony in such a manner that the structures of domination and subordination become evident in terms of consent achieved in ideological and political struggles. 'Articulation' can offer strategic means for intellectuals to intervene in social and political contexts, thereby enabling class, ethnicity, and gender issues and the social formations overdetermined by those relations to be contested and changed.

The last step on the journey thus far has been made by the Essex school of discourse theory and political analysis. Laclau, in particular, argued that 'ideological elements have no necessary "class-belonging"' and that class interests are articulations that furnish the popular democratic struggles in the ideological and political instance with meaning (1977, 159–161). Later, Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001) argued that one prerequisite for a 'radical democratic' hegemonic struggle is the expansion of a political space filled with signifiers that 'float' and have not yet fully formed the differences. Where the differences remain only partly fixed, a discursive space opens for hegemonic struggle over elements that are not essential but mutually overdetermined by means of political articulation.

As the concept of articulation has diffused and spread through empirical work by cultural theorists and political analysts all over the world, its uses have grown vague. Moreover, their ambiguity has reciprocally affected the change in use: because 'articulation' is sometimes used as a buzzword, its application as a catch-all phrase may escape notice, obscuring the fact that the idea behind it, and what it represents, is losing clarity. In the view of some scholars (e.g., Davis 2008), it is concepts' very ambiguity, in the sense of vagueness and open-endedness, that makes them popular. One example is the concept of intersectionality, which publications in gender studies often employ in place of articulation. Only on rare occasions do the two appear near each other (e.g., Verloo 2006).

Work on intersectionality focuses mainly on structural inequality that is directly related to human experiences and political action with respect to

social change. To advance sexual, racial, and gender equality, Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced this lens in the late 1980s. From the standpoint of intersectionality, white middle-class women's pursuit of sexual equality had turned into a struggle against men for equal rights, and black men had found that racial equality had become a struggle against police violence. In that climate, work on intersectionality challenged the politics of the feminist and general civil rights movements, which were blind to aspects of privileged identities, identities that did not consider such experiences as domestic violence perpetrated against non-white women, who were excluded from both struggles. Challenging the notion of political action as an instrumental endeavour that requires given universal subjects such as women or workingclass people at the outset, the technique of working on intersectionality became a method wherein ethnicity, class, and gender articulated with one another by all being woven into the same discussion of subordination of black/working-class/female/homosexual people under the prevailing norms of whites/the middle class/heterosexuals/men. One problem in articulating these identities with the experiences of class-, gender-, and ethnicity-based oppression, however, is that it coheres around deconstructing the categories instead of assessing the implications of the actual policies that lead to inequalities in practice.

Empirical studies have shown that the above-mentioned intersectional differences are much more complex and meaningful than some theories have suggested (e.g., studies by Farris and de Jong 2014; Verloo 2006). In, for example, policy documents on EU anti-discrimination laws, gender is a naturalised binary category based on sex, while sexual orientation has a broader spectrum (e.g., LGBT). Race is also a discursively constructed notion like ethnicity is, while class is a dichotomous social divide that cannot be deconstructed via discursive means. Moreover, these social categorisations in policy documents are products of political articulation performed by social movements and political struggle (De Leon et al. 2009, 199; Verloo 2006, 219). Class as a social category results from the struggles by workers' movements that have brought it to the heart of the political party system, while race and ethnicity are only just reaching the political agenda, as fruit of social and discursive categorisations. In contrast, some institutionalised distinctions based on sexual orientation have been rescinded via recognition of same sex marriage. For discussion of gender as a socially constructed category, we can point to Judith Butler, whose *Gender Trouble* is among the most cited pieces of feminist

literature, one that has informed feminism in both theory and practice.[12] Although approaching ethnicity as a class-based and gendered category, or the question of sex as a racialised and heteronormative issue, is a fitting political strategy for hegemonic struggle, it can lead to a position from which differences become uniform (i.e., all of them are signs of the same oppression).

The Structure of the Book

To begin unfolding the imagery of social structure and social change, the next chapter begins by turning conceptual-historical methodology, especially to the idea of the pen as a 'mighty sword', expressed in relation to Quentin Skinner's analysis of politics. It outlines a method for grasping the 'point' or 'intention' behind the concept's function in discussions that examine and apply it in a manner that allows analysing the usage change in the context of a struggle. However, closure of the contexts and determining the historical meaning of texts constitutes an attempt to wind up the ongoing battles and suture their potential outcomes. While powerful, this approach has its limits. It can capture only the praxis or rhetorical aspect of concepts' use, not the poetics wherein conceptual metaphors become comprehensible. For this reason, my study depends on analytical framing from elsewhere. I have drawn a framework from the 'root metaphors of sociological thought', thereby taking a perspective from which all knowledge is metaphorical. This is because the conceptual metaphors transfer abstract ideas and thoughts from one system of meanings or discourse to

[12] In 1998, *Philosophy and Literature* recognised Butler for the worst academic writing of the year because of the following sentence on the notion of (re)articulation, from her correspondence with Laclau: 'The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure, and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power' (Butler 1997, 13). My own summary would be that there has been a shift away from the Althusserian conception of social structure as an articulated whole and toward political articulation, a shift that takes account of the contingency and temporality of structures that are not givens. While Butler's verbose expression could indeed benefit from some editing, she does pin down the concept of hegemony in connection with political articulation in a comprehensible manner.

another in attempts to render them more concrete. Accordingly, metaphors are applied as a method for seeing things from the standpoint of something else, which is also a condition for new ideas and concepts materialising in practice.

The third chapter addresses the conceptual metaphor wherein social structure is an articulated whole. The discussion proceeds from Marx's notion of *Gliederung*, under which the structure of modern bourgeois society is a complex whole encompassing interaction among varied forces—with the turning points of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption—that arrange the relations of production in a more complex way than before. Marx studied the capitalist mode of production in relation to this complex whole, and Althusser found this social formation to be a complex and articulated whole composed of political and ideological instances built on the economic base. The latter theorist perceived the economic instance as determining the order of the social formation but only in the last instance. In the structural-Marxist thought that follows, society is not a totality that expresses the economic but a structure made up of several relatively independent elements, such as the ideological, political, and economic, that articulate with each other in a manner such that they together form 'unity-in-difference'.

The fourth chapter delves into the works of Althusser, whose ideology-theoretical reading of Marx gained traction on account of his teachings and writings. Althusser's ideas persuaded various members of economic anthropology's articulation school. French new economic anthropology criticised dependency theorists and world-system theorists for their notion of capitalism as a singular system, which became subject to controversy with respect to 'articulation of modes of production', before the discourse theorists arrived on the scene. The catch-all term 'discourse' soon entered the vocabulary of critical social scientists in a manner that disavowed class struggle. Ideology was reduced to a nearly inconsequential factor, and it became predominantly a pejorative term in the social sciences and humanities.

With the fifth chapter, I turn to the conceptual metaphor wherein social action is language and consider associated reviews regarding discourse theory, which build on a play of differences. The linguistic paradigm and its adaptation in structural linguistics spread in the form of a phonological model adopted in social anthropology and psychoanalysis. A new structuralist movement arose accordingly. It helped direct anthropological awareness toward the metaphorical aspects of systems of meanings such as

marriage rules and kinship arrangements. The idea of a law-like structure that underlies all systems of relations and governs all forms of social exchange became paradigmatic for social scientists. One of the most famous passages in this context is psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's description of a 'return to Freud' and his claim that 'the unconscious is structured like a language'. Simultaneously, with that model gaining sway, philosophers criticised Saussure's distinction between language and speech, an idea that had already been established for half a century at that point. Instead of structures resembling language, 'post-structuralists' were interested in discourse theory, wherein the relations between conscious statements and unconscious enunciation are dispersed across a discursive field. This manner of thinking gave birth to the concept of political articulation, in which articulation is a discursive practice in hegemonic struggles.

The argument culminates in the discussion, which sums up but also elaborates upon the imagery applied for social structure and social change as analysed in earlier chapters. On the one hand, relational thinking in terms of articulation is a sign of breaking with a style of 'top-down reductionism' in which society is taken to be a uniform whole expressing hidden structural causes and economic mechanisms. On the other hand, in line with the conceptual metaphors employed, the concept of articulation can contribute to 'reduction upward' when society is seen as operating as language does. For someone who takes this imagery literally, in such a manner that it loses its metaphorical character, society reduces to discussion about society. Therefore, an image in which society operates analogously to language boils down to the iconic conception 'society is language'—viz., when society is seen as nothing but discursive, the conception of social structures is lost, while a discursive space is expanded for social change that is not guaranteed outside any concrete battle.

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CHAPTER 2

Imagery of Social Structure and Social Change

Abstract Given that most social scientists and cultural analysts study society and social change in one way or another, how conscious are we of the conceptual metaphors that inform the foundations of our work? This chapter directs the analytical gaze to the conceptual metaphors that social scientists and cultural analysts apply—in a largely unconscious manner—when discussing social and cultural phenomena in terms of social structure and social change. The methodological exploration begins from a conceptual-historical perspective, with Skinner's work as a historian of political science. He found the meaning of a concept to reside in its usage. I compare the Skinnerian method of contextual analysis, which factors in the history of concepts, with the metaphorical method employed by historians of sociological thought such as Richard Harvey Brown. The discussion below addresses the fundamental shift in the imagery of social structure and social change in analysis that brings out the political aspect of conceptual metaphors with reference to how they form and take shape in academic debate, in both theory and practice. Such contextual understanding furnishes tools for a critical examination of the conceptual metaphors in their intellectual, political, and material contexts.

Keywords Conceptual History • Conceptual Metaphors • Social Action • Social Structure • Sociological Theory

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The Pen as a Mighty Sword

The first research strategy to address is based on Skinner's two-volume *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*. In this work, from 1978, aptly described in the article 'The Pen Is a Mighty Sword' (Tully 1983),[1] Skinner discusses his method for concepts' contextual analysis, with his 'critics' later responding via the 1989 edited volume *Meaning and Context*, in addition to his own revised essays on the method in *Visions of Politics* (2002). For Skinner, the changes in conceptions such as 'state' allow a glimpse of 'the engines of social change' (p. 178). While this description is underpinned by the metaphor of a machine as an instrument of social change, one methodological assumption underlying his historicist approach is that concepts, language, and contexts are all bound together with social action. In that sense, 'words are deeds', as Ludwig Wittgenstein concluded.

In the words of James Tully (1983, 491), step 1 in the technique is 'the collection of texts written or used in the same period, addressed to the same or similar issues and sharing a number of conventions'. In other words, by situating the concept in relation to other materials in which one can find it used, one becomes able to understand the point behind that concept's use in the discussions in question. When one compares texts that put forth analogous ideas with shared vocabulary, it becomes possible to explore how their writer has adopted or adapted the prevailing normative conventions for use of the concept in practice. In other words, the key to studying contextual and historical meaning lies in the usage of the concept in a discourse defined by a set of rules employed by several authors in a given era.

[1] Skinner is a famous historian of political thought whose procedure is composed of five steps connected with answering the following questions, according to James Tully (1983, 490):

> a) What is or was an author doing in writing a text in relation to other available texts which make up the ideological context? b) What is or was an author doing in writing a text in relation to available and problematic political action which makes up the practical context? c) How are ideologies to be identified and their formation, criticism and change surveyed and explained? d) What is the relation between political ideology and political action which best explains the diffusion of certain ideologies and what effect does this have on political behaviour? e) What forms of political thought and action are involved in disseminating and conventionalising ideological change?

The conceptual historian's first task is, in other words, 'to trace the relations between a given utterance and its wider linguistic context' (Skinner 2002, 85), then place this utterance in its practical contexts. The context of an utterance and the functions and goals served by the concept lead the way to what Skinner called the ideological—i.e., to active manipulation of 'the use-conventions governing the prevailing normative vocabulary' (Tully 1983, 496). Keeping this point in mind, he depicted theorists as 'innovative ideologists' who wield concepts as weapons in philosophical debates. For Skinner, 'an ideology is a language of politics' (p. 491), not an epiphenomenal body of thought. Accordingly, the ways in which concepts are used also constitute normative practices, and 'whenever such terms are employed, their application will always reflect a wish to impose a particular moral vision on the workings of the social world' (Skinner 2002, 182). Through this lens, 'society is a text', as Brown (1987) puts it, and theory is considered political 'in politicising theory and theorising politics' (Grossberg 1997).

The point here is that even the most well-regarded philosophical works address problems in terms of their own age. They are firmly embedded in the existing social order in which they were born. Studying what a given concept may or may not have meant in a specific context brings in authorial intentions in relation to meaningful utterances that, while neither 'true' nor 'false', do something for an argument. Hence, not only what is meant but also 'the intended force in which the utterance is issued' matters; grasping this 'historical meaning' requires asking what the writer may 'mean by what he or she says in a given text', per Skinner (2002, 82, 93). When a text is reduced to its grammatical form or logical content, the meaning is no longer accessible. Similarly, emphasising only readers' responses puts excessive weight on interpretation that reproduces the intended meaning. Accordingly, the meaning of a given concept's use in an argument lies not in content or interpretation but in the force of an utterance that the text brings into the discourse. No utterance makes sense unless it is a locutionary act in a performance of saying something. In the vocabulary of J.L. Austin's (1962) speech-act theory, it is not, however, that locutionary act (i.e., the expression) or its effects (the 'perlocutionary act') but the performative aspect (the 'illocutionary act') that makes a difference.

A speech act is performed in a given context, and to understand its meaning is to describe the uses of the concept. Unpacking the term 'context' too is in order; Skinner means the discursive space wherein the

utterance 'performs', and he uses 'speech act' for the ways in which the performance takes place (2002, 113). The choice of focus between authors with their ideas and a particular concept considered in various discussions is discretionary, but the usual practice in writing about the history of concepts is to embed the concept in its temporal, spatial, and social contexts. Skinner's way of identifying ideological conventions to survey and explain their role in discursive formation and change is possible because of minor and often forgotten or sidelined texts. Stepping away from the masterworks is required because the classics on their own are misleading guides to ideological conventions; after all, each challenges the commonplaces of its era (Tully 1983, 495). Hence, a useful strategy for understanding what is at stake in the discussions can be found in reading the classics in relation to other, 'adjacent' texts. Therefore, one can trace the prevailing conventions that govern the reference and speech-act potential of concepts. It is from here that we reach the crux of where some 'historical meaning' arises.

To make things matter, one has to use language that is limited by normative rules, conventions, and boundaries such that the ideas cohere in meaningful arguments. 'All revolutionaries are to this extent obliged to march backwards into battle', said Skinner (2002, 149–150). Using language to change things and their relations requires one to anchor an argument in a prevailing discursive regime, which is intersubjective and a product of historical conventions, before attempting its transformation. The idea of innovative ideologists who exploit concepts strategically in philosophical debates makes more sense when this point is borne in mind. In manipulating concepts and their meanings, innovative ideologists communicate their ideas in a way that makes sense, but they cannot change the system itself. The elements that can change are the criteria for application of a concept, which shape its sense or definition; the range of reference in which the concept may be deployed; and the limits to its possible appraisal, or its speech-act potential valued within relevant contexts (Hyvärinen 2006, 21). Within these parameters, concepts resist manipulation beyond merely the words that describe them.

One can make this case by citing a concrete example from debate surrounding institutionalisation of cultural studies, which sparked Skinner's critique of 'The Idea of a Cultural Lexicon' (Skinner 1978, 2002; cf. Williams 1976/1983). Characterised in brief, the disagreement involved words versus concepts. This began with the claim that the more complex and nuanced a word is, the more likely it is to be a site of significant historical experience and debate. According to Raymond Williams

(1976/1983, 87), 'culture' is one of the most complex words in English because of its use as a key notion in many disciplines and systems of thought. It developed from the notion of organic growth to denote cultivation and civilisation, then artistic products, collective action, and entire ways of life. Nevertheless, Skinner found that controversies arose 'about the criteria for applying the word [...] or about [for] what range of speech acts the word can be used' (2002, 160), not about its semantics or origins as addressed in dictionaries. Second, if someone uses a term such as 'culture', it does not necessarily follow that the corresponding concept is an object of reflective interpretation. In addition, he argued, understanding the literal meaning of a word is not a sufficient condition for grasping the associated concept. A notion becomes a concept only when there is discussion about its uses. Third, a change in the significance of a word such as 'culture' could trigger a shift throughout the lexicon, which may signify a change in attitudes, perceptions, or beliefs among those who use the language in question (pp. 171–172).

This last step explains how shifts turn into conventions and in what ways they establish a new set of practices. Historians of political thought such as Skinner support revisiting generally accepted ideas about historical events and philosophical systems. From their perspective, all systems of ideas, that of cultural studies included, are intentional products of conscious speakers' strivings to affect historical events. The applicability of Skinner's line of attack to what Williams posited is no coincidence. They operated in similar quarters, both working at the University of Cambridge, although they came from very different backgrounds. In the conceptual-historical approach, all universal claims and perennial questions that transcend linguistic and practical contexts are 'dogmatic' or 'anachronistic'; therefore, all attempts to find answers or solutions for present-day discussions by looking to the past are doomed to failure. Allegedly, such backward-looking practice serves ideological and political interests by not considering the accuracy and authenticity of each utterance that the historians scrutinise carefully. The revisionist method is criticised for reducing the political and means to a game of rhetoric, speech, and language wherein the social and material conditions of social change are beyond the bounds of discussion (see Wood 2011, 7–11; see also Femia 1981; Nederman 1985).

Conceiving of a theoretical debate in this manner puts emphasis on the metaphor of physical conflict. Doing so corresponds with our commonsense experiences from such situations: when arguing, we treat our

counterparts similarly to how we would in more direct conflict with opponents. Verbal battles are fought by means of words acting as intellectual weapons to attack or defend one's position. We prosecute the fight by means such as various tactics and rhetorical strategies (for making statements and rebuffing possible counterclaims), relying on verbal skills and empirical evidence. Consequently, 'argument is war', which implies a lesson that argumentation takes place in reference to a battle rather than a language-game. Rhetoricians study ways of using concepts in argumentation from this standpoint, where metaphors are a specific aspect of language.

According to cognitive linguists such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980/2003), people think and act with concepts that function metaphorically. Cognitive linguists appreciate conceptual metaphors as expressing a relationship between an ordinary notion and a more abstract concept, which constructs, establishes, or demolishes arguments with respect to conceptual metaphors such as 'theories are buildings' (p. 53). Our understanding of social structure and social change, in other words, is based on conceptual metaphors that provide us with ways to make sense of the social world in which we live. In this respect, the root metaphors of sociological thought are not so different from the conceptual metaphors by means of which all of us act in day-to-day life. Instead of employing common-sense conceptions and everyday understandings of the world, we need to extend our exploration of the landscape to 'sociological imagination' (Mills 1959/2000). The following section lays out a discussion of conceptual metaphors that sociological discussions apply for social relations to render social structure and social change more conceivable.

The Root Metaphors of Sociological Thought

Conceptual metaphors transfer abstract ideas and models from one discipline to another through an attempt to make them more concrete. According to Brown, the images painted for social structure and social change are formed from sociological thought's root metaphors, which offer a vantage point from which to conceive of social relations in terms other than direct denotation (1977/1989, 128). In *A Poetic for Sociology*, Brown defines a metaphor as a device that carries a concept from one system of meanings into another (pp. 80–81), and he explains that the root metaphors in classical sociological thought are 'society seen as an organism or as a machine, and social conduct viewed as language, the drama, or

a game' (p. 78). The conceptual metaphors delineating society are adapted from the natural and physical sciences, while those for social conduct are derived more from the arts and humanities. Usually, social scientists accord greater value to metaphors with origins in the former, deeming them more scientific than more humanities-rooted notions.[2]

The combination of concepts—that is, their articulation in a metaphorical relationship with one another—is also a source for new ideas and concepts. New, ground-breaking conceptual metaphors adapted to the social sciences can transpose a system of meanings for a new standpoint or perspective from which to depict social structure and social change. Only by coming to terms with the prevailing system of meanings, however, can an illustrative metaphor become a paradigmatic model. As a point of reference, the root metaphors are like paradigms, according to Brown (p. 125). Paradigms are institutionalised as models composed of theories, methods, and images of the subject matter together structuring (an ideological) worldview of a particular scientific community, that group's identity, or even 'hegemony' within their discipline (see Ritzer 1975).

Until the scientific revolution of the early modern era, it seemed rational to assume that our surroundings consist of heavenly bodies that are eternal, while life on Earth is ephemeral—temporally bounded and of a transitory nature. In other words, the heavens and the earth seemed to be two separate spheres. Aristotle's geocentric cosmology in *Physics* was based on empirical insight that terrestrial objects stay put unless moved by a force, whereas the celestial bodies circle the earth, meaning that it is the centre of the world. In *Metaphysics*, the cause of every change that physicists could not explain was associated with the prime mover. Scientific revolution turned the mediaeval imagery of the world upside-down. According to the Newtonian imagery of the world, the whole universe follows the same laws of mathematics and mechanics, which ultimately replaced speculative reasoning that had no place in science. This knowledge was built on a rigorous scientific method that presumed objectivity, repeatability, falsifiability, and commensurability. Empiricists confined

[2] In the mid-'90 s, at a time when social constructionism was fashionable, physicist Alan Sokal 'trolled' post-modern philosophers with comments on relativism. The 'Sokal hoax' was perpetrated through *Social Text*, where he published an article claiming—in language mimicking post-modern vocabulary of the New Left—that physical reality is a social construction. Sokal attempted to reveal cultural studies and post-structuralist discourse theory to be not scientific but ideological, by means of claims that quantum gravity is a discursive, social construction.

themselves to sensory-perception-based descriptions and explanations of the empirically observable world, applying an approach built on empirical data gathered via systematic observation. In the twentieth century, in turn, Einstein's speculative theory of relativity largely superseded Newton's conceptualisation of mechanics. In Newtonian physics, both time and space are absolute, while Einstein's theory conceives of time as a conventional measure of electromagnetic waves that move in space at the speed of light. Hence, the two notions are relational.

For the social sciences, the classics of sociology were not detached from relational thinking (see Herranen 2022). Talcott Parsons claimed that classical sociologists had ended up relatively independent of one another in a critique of what he deemed a utilitarian conception of rational individuals freed from all restrictive rules and norms of the social system. Parsons advanced the idea of seeing the social system relationally in terms of social functions, with social action taking place for purposes of adapting, reaching goals, cultivating integration, and socialising to latent norms and values of the system. According to Parsons, the appropriate unit of sociological analysis is not the social structure but the actor—that is, the fundamental component of structured social relations. In the conception he put forth with his social theory, a social system consists not of individuals but of actors with certain systematic functions (Parsons 1951/1991).

Parsons may have considered relations in a new way, but he was far from the field's first relational thinker, however. According to Brown, classical sociology presented the social system as a self-contained whole akin to an organism or a machine. These images, which are related to the birth of the modern nation-state, form part of the background for emergence of a 'science of the social' such as sociology, which is generally considered to have been established by Émile Durkheim. His seminal *Suicide* (1897/1951) shows that even the most individualistic act of killing oneself is, in fact, a social act that is structured socially in various ways. Instead of the individual, Durkheim gave ontological priority to the social as a response to the rise of individualism. He did not take society to be a mere aggregate of individuals as might be portrayed via statistics; he found it to consist also of corporeal and prudential human beings and their 'collective consciousness'—the ideas, beliefs, and values that people share in each community.

In his work at the dawn of the twentieth century, Durkheim referred to the structure of the social relations in modern industrial society as an

organic whole in which each part connects with other elements in 'organic solidarity', thus standing in contrast against a mechanical form visible in primitive societies. In penning *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim (1916/1964) was interested in the basic forms of social life (such as religion) and their complex social organisation, in addition to a systemic character that gives weight to social structure. The organisation of social life was relational for him, with the social relations being constituted internally. In his holistic approach, society is a bounded system, like an organic whole that evolves and never ceases to change. It develops as a social order 'of its own kind' organising the social entities in accordance with its own rules and laws. Consequently, every society is one of a kind, while the structure seems universal. The corresponding root metaphor, at the foundations of sociological thought, is the conceptual metaphor 'society is an organism'.

The other metaphor underpinning classical sociological thought is 'society is a machine'. In the mechanistic terms of the natural sciences, society is a machine-like organism. Thermodynamics, for instance, presents energy as being readily transferred as heat, fuelling work in a manner similar to that by which capitalists consume labour power and appropriate surplus value from workers. Among many other influences, Marx took the principles of thermodynamics as inspiration in *Capital* (see Rabinbach 1992). However, imagery of social structure and social change follows neither a mechanistic view nor an evolutionary approach stemming from the natural sciences. Even though the bourgeois social order in Marx's eyes was like an inexhaustible force of nature, it was a result of the historical and material social relations of production that constitute 'the anatomy' of its subjects. This imagery of social change can be viewed in relation to a notion in which the economic system is conceived of in the form of appropriation of surplus value from labour, which becomes an inevitable force of a capitalist law of motion as well as the motor of the class struggle (addressed in the next chapter).

Sociologist Max Weber's study of the social action of individuals forms the other half of the picture. This work, presented in the 1920s in his posthumously edited book *Economy and Society*, is still iconic, not least because of the theoretical reformulations by Parsons. He found social action, not society or the social order, to be the object of sociological interpretation; in this, his work stands out against the other classic writings in the social sciences:

> Sociology (in the sense in which this highly ambiguous word is used here) is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of 'action' insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behavior—be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course. (Weber 1922/1978, 4)

Weber outlined his sociological categories in *Economy and Society* to explain the action of individuals by articulating ideal types of social action. According to Weber, sociological interpretation of action is performed regarding subjective meanings that actors rather unconsciously give to their ways of acting. If the meaning of the action is oriented toward other people, it is social. Weber's theory of action yielded a greater understanding of individuals' social action but not of social structures, as the other classic works of sociology did.[3]

He applied the ideal types as the interpretive means of 'action theory', wherein a social action is classed as 'instrumentally rational', 'value-rational', 'affect-oriented', or 'traditional'. For example, his *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 1905/1930) portrays capitalism as a rational form of social action wherein a puritan work ethic and religious redemption as a reward for hard work jointly articulate with the individualistic logic of accumulating capital. This theory seems to be only 'the tip of the iceberg', in that it considers the social action of individuals to be an effort to grasp the Spirit (*Geist*) and the form of its manifestation in the conscious minds of individuals. Its sense of religiously underpinned ideology operating dialectically in the background became sociology's dominant way of understanding the mechanisms behind all historical and social phenomena.[4]

Via the root metaphors in sociological thought, social action is depicted as drama or a game as well. Common behind the latter conceptual metaphors is explicit interest in social action as a play in which people act under

[3] He said: 'Even a socialistic economy would have to be understood sociologically in exactly the same kind of [individualistic] terms; that is, in terms of the action of individuals' (Weber 1978, 18).

[4] In Alfred Schutz's attempt at a theoretical synthesis of action theory and phenomenology, meanings are objectivised products of the conscious minds of individuals who act upon them in place of social structures (see Heiskala 2003).

the rules pertaining to social interaction in day-to-day life. The drama metaphor, which ties in with the discussion of Shakespeare and theatre, gained traction, especially in social psychology. For instance, Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956/1959) describes day-to-day social interaction as what occurs in a theatre, where people act in keeping with the roles assigned to them. Goffman adopted the poetic metaphor 'social action is a drama' from literary theoretician Kenneth Burke, for whom linguistic action is based on drama, which, in turn, is characteristic of all social relations (not least among them, class struggle). Therefore, social action as drama creates structures that both enable and constrain actors' playing of their roles for social change.

The Social Sciences without the Social

Ever since the classics of sociology converged as an apparently coherent constellation, efforts to resolve what lies between structure and agency have driven social theoreticians' ambitions, yet resolution remains absent. Individual-level action offers a model for methodological individualists, who take society to be an aggregate of social actions in a manner that conflates society with individuals. Sociologist Margaret Archer (1995, 33–46) has defined this approach as 'upwards conflation', wherein social structure is epiphenomenal in relation to action by individuals. This type of individualism builds on an individual-oriented hermeneutic understanding related to meaningful social action. The central problem for methodological individualism is a lack of social structure, which renders it unable to account for the various strata of a social formation.[5]

Meanwhile, structuralists portray the structure of society as a whole, whose *sui generis* nature is the main object of study for social scientists. Durkheim's *Suicide*, often cited in this connection, is a classic that employs a holistic approach wherein suicide rates are explained neither by the mental-health problems nor by extreme natural conditions. Rather, suicide is a social act related to social integration and moral regulation in society. If people have no sense of belonging somewhere or lack moral guidelines, they are isolated from the social system and may ultimately end their life. The opposite mode may be obtained with the same result in extreme circumstances of oppression and social coercion. For Archer, this

[5] Although Weber analyses the social structure of traditional and modern societies, it is not a key concept of his sociological categories.

approach entails 'downwards conflation', a term she used for conflating individual-level actions with the social structure in such a manner that one's social theory depicts the structure as dictating the actions of individuals. Because structuralists focus on objectified social relations, they do not address social phenomena in the way they appear to individuals. Their work is allegedly deaf to actors' subjective interpretation of meanings, and the action of individuals is a mere by-product of social structure.

Archer has approached the above-mentioned problem of reductionism in terms of spatially oriented metaphors such as 'up–down' for how corporeal human beings experience and understand the world (Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003). From the philosophical angle of 'critical realism' (see Archer 1995; see also Creaven 2000; Sayer 2010), lower-strata physical phenomena such as infrastructures are relatively independent of higher-strata social phenomena. From this perspective, nature (not society) is a self-subsistent whole and is irreducible to language or culture, which are relatively independent of one another. One of the most prominent attempts to resolve the structure–agency dichotomy connected with these generalisations has been the 'a-reductionist' structuration theory of Anthony Giddens, in which agency and structure are situated in relation to one another because of the 'duality of structure' (Archer 1995, 93–94; Creaven 2000, 113–114).

Structuration theory has its parallels in the sociology of knowledge with phenomenologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966) social constructionism, which focuses on people's day-to-day life and their forms of knowledge. Social scientists taking this stance do not see any important difference between individuals' everyday actions and the social structures that actors reproduce and transform when acting. Their argument is such that '*it is through individual actions that we construct social reality itself*'. In more theoretical terms, the problem with social constructionism, wherein the social structure is inseparable from the individual, is that it does not leave a 'remainder', a leftover or surplus, which deprives the structures and actors of their relative autonomy (Archer 1995, 101). The problem is that their autonomy relative to each other is lost.

In social constructionism, actors apply social rules and norms as they act. Hence, society is structured through social action, which it enables and constrains simultaneously (see Archer 1995, 81–89). In this type of 'sociology of knowledge'—which Hall (1977/2007, 131–136) has criticised for idealism—social action is intersubjective, objectivises, and takes its form in the social structure among individuals who construct social

reality by using language and other means of communication. Structuralism, in turn, holds to a stratified nature of the social, wherein structures such as language are a product of the interaction of historical agents from the past, which today's living and breathing individuals reproduce in contemporary actions. Society depends on the action of individuals for this process to occur, but it pre-exists and confronts them as an order that constrains and enables their actions.

More recently, social scientists have identified an evident shift from 'society' and 'the social structure' toward 'the community' as a site for self-governance. In a replacement for the mechanistic rules and laws of 'the economic' and to afford organic solidarity within a clearly bounded nation-state, one can regard the social structure as relational by considering social conduct in the form of 'governmentality'. In this conduct, described in Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France in the late 1970s, in place of the state exerting power over its subjects in a return to assuring a certain safety net for the citizens, one sees individuals increasingly appropriating the techniques of their own self-governance (Foucault 1977/2004). The idea that taking risks under one's own responsibility and managing life activities in the manner of an entrepreneur is necessary for all who wish to gain access to working life and receive social security through the markets is increasingly becoming 'common sense' in the politics of life (Rose 1996, 328–333, 343). Since the 1970s, social scientists have applied the word 'neoliberal' for the associated changes in state administration and in its managerial functions, thereby referring to privatisation of 'the economic' from 'the social'.

Finally, in science and technology studies, Bruno Latour's manner of thinking, in which the notions of society and the social are misplaced, eventually led to 'sociology without society' (Touraine 1998). The latter substituted for the science of the social (i.e., 'socio-logy') attention to 'actors': its actor-network theory studies entities, human or non-human, performing action that occurs in networks. Networks have no a priori spatial orientation ('up–down', 'inside–outside', 'foreground–background', 'centre–margins', etc.) (see Lakoff and Johnson 1980/2003, 15; see also Latour 1996, 371–372). Instead of being a closed system, the network in this conceptualisation is an open one comprising nodes that connect its various elements in ways that determine their material existence in a similar manner than artificial intelligence.

The idea of nodes or nodal points is common in the imagery of networks that articulate or disarticulate various elements with one another

horizontally and not vertically. The view builds on relational (i.e., flat) ontology that, rather than being limited to fixed meanings found in a closed semiotic system such as language in its structuralist understanding, builds networks in which elements connect with one another both as material and as collective assemblages. Composed of the nodes themselves, networks form in the fashion of a rhizome if we follow the botanical metaphor that post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari offer in their two-volume philosophical work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972/1983; 1980/1987). The rhizome analogy describes thinking in action that is open and whose aim is to spread as widely as possible, where the constituents of a plant-like network sprout from each other.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in addition to Latour, social scientists' thinking can be led astray by transcendental concepts such as society and the social structure—taking these for granted sets their sights on the wrong target. In this line of critique, these concepts describe things and the relations among things rather than being subject to question and explanation as themselves. For discourse theorists, these notions are empty signifiers' (Laclau 1996, 107): as signifiers that lack meaning while standing for totalities, they give names to things instead of having any positive existence of their own. For these scholars, society does not exist in the sense in which the authors of the classic sociological works conceived of them. Therefore, the thinking goes, society and the social structure are not the most useful or meaningful concepts. Unlike the classic authors, who emphasised either structures (as Marx and Durkheim did) or social action (as Weber did), the adversaries of classical sociology build on 'flat ontology'.

In actor-network theory, as expressed in Latour's work (and the writings of Michel Callon and Michel Serres), action is non-social and its 'actants', whether human or non-human actors, operate within spatially oriented networks that are fundamentally non-hierarchical. Again, within the networks, individual entities interconnect or intersect horizontally. With this flat ontology, in which the entities are not organised deductively as a hierarchy, no entity is privileged over the others; hence, things appear as interconnecting in process-like networks through their linkages as in discourse theory, wherein the power disperses across the field of discursivity, where it is wielded only for a moment. While its manner of questioning reveals some patterns that other ontologies may obscure, discourse theorists do display a tendency to consider discursive practices only. Similarly,

'neo-materialists', by building on flat ontology that grants primacy to events, do not accord weight to the stratified nature of the social.

Post-structuralists deconstruct concepts by emphasising the play of differences in the absence of any structuring whole. Neo-materialists, in turn, build on flat ontology aligned with critique of the science of the social and of the idea that society exists as a hierarchical organisation. In striving to imagine actor networks in place of the social units embraced by the classics of sociology, the neo-materialist ontology is that of a process of becoming—immanence informed by the materiality of objects that are thought of in a relational manner. Taking a speculative approach, this philosophical line of thought focuses on temporality and the materiality of flows in a manner that draws a distinction neither between nature and culture nor between any other instances, as would require jumping from one 'level' to another. Thus, the ontology is kept flat. Accordingly, biological conceptual metaphors such as that of the rhizome often hold sway. In this approach, the materiality of things in their mutual relations takes the form of an open network, with neither a beginning nor an end with respect to structure (any system of meanings such as language) vs. human action, which is anthropocentric from a neo-materialist standpoint.

Conclusion

Classical sociology portrayed social structure in the mantle of physics and the natural sciences and then clothed them in reference to language and culture. Today's social scientists and cultural analysts continue to address many themes and issues in parallel with the founders of sociology, using similar conceptual metaphors. On the other hand, many aspects of contemporary images of social structure and social change stem from the conceptual-metaphor-connected shifts occurring more recently—shifts that, through new angles for looking at ourselves, have changed how we see ourselves in relation to others either as a group of people or as individual actors. Sociological classics endure because they address the structures of modern industrial society, social change, and ways of life by scrutinising the social structure and actions of individuals in addition to the theories and concepts applied to address the social concerns and issues historically specific to our age.

In both, the imagery of social structure and social change is based on core conceptual metaphors, and it is via the root metaphors that we derive both abstract theoretical models and practical empirical descriptions of

social relations to take into account human life in all its complexity. These metaphors transfer meanings from one discipline to another through proposals of different theoretical means and discursive strategies for conceptualising social relations in terms of sociological imagination that guides and informs our thinking in various ways. Whereas classical sociology grounded its view of the social order in biological and mechanical conceptual metaphors and then employed root metaphors by which social action is interpreted as language, drama, or a game, a newer contender is the metaphor of a network of actors, some of them human and some not. The idea that social relations are somehow fundamental immutable entities has given way to an emphasis on historicity and contingency, an emphasis that allows room for them to be subject to social change. We can see, thus, that controversies and debates are the true kernel of every concept employed for or in connection with social structure and social change.

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CHAPTER 3

Social Structure as an Articulated Whole

Abstract In reference to the structure of society as understood in classical sociology, structuralism brought into fashion a concept wherein society is an edifice whose upper stories rest on its foundation. Althusser adapted this topographical image of society, moulding it in the structural-Marxist vocabulary of base and superstructure, to portray the organisation of the various levels of that social formation as 'the articulation of the limbs of the social system'. Althusser initiated a discussion of how social relations may be grasped in terms of articulation, wherein a social formation is structured of dominance and subordination. When doing so, he criticised idealist and humanist interpretations of Marx for not taking into account Marx's relational depiction of the social structure as a 'complex articulated whole'. He likewise took economist readings to task for reducing contradictions to the sphere of production. Althusser's intent was to attend to frequently neglected caveats in Marxism and its critique. There is much to tease apart here, so let us begin our consideration with the anatomical metaphors for the structure of society.

Keywords Althusser, Louis • *Gliederung* • Capitalism • Hall, Stuart • Marx, Karl

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Marx's Gliederung

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, as presented in *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, swiftly brought about a scientific revolution. It inspired Marx and his followers as the kernel of a paradigm of systematic change. This dovetails with teleological ideas of continuous social change that can be traced all the way back to classical Greek philosophy—namely, the thinking of Aristotle (see Brown 1977/1989, 130–133; 1989, 85–86). The most typical evolutionary imagery employed for society's functioning depicts an organism that operates in keeping with its nature. It reproduces itself because of action, thus fulfilling the function of the entire system (Brown 1977/1989, 133). By applying models from the natural sciences alongside physics analogues to explain the 'natural laws of capitalist production', Marx sought to explicate 'the economic law of motion of modern society' for the general public, as he stated when writing the preface to the first volume of *Capital* (1867/1909).

With *Capital*, Marx discussed contradictions related to the capitalist mode of production, which generates wealth and prosperity but also inequality and lack of stability in the economic system. According to a well-known and frequently debated passage from the third volume of *Capital*, 'the rate of profit has a tendency to fall', and it follows that exploitation of the labour force is a necessary condition for the economic growth of the capitalist economy. The anatomical metaphors enter play here.[1] If considered literally, the economic appears as an expressive totality articulating hidden structural causes such as the law of capital accumulation taken as a model of hidden dynamics in which the capitalists and the labourers are subject to the capitalist mode of production. At the heart of the capitalist mode of production, however, is an economic system motivated by profit. To gain profits, capitalists exploit workers' labour power as a commodity in production. In bourgeois society, capitalists hold rein over the means of production, while workers must sell their labour power for a livelihood. By analogy, the very foundation of class struggle is the capitalist appropriation of surplus value from labour. This is built on the social

[1] For Marx, innovations and competition lead to a decline in 'living labour' relative to the vampirism of 'dead labour' in the form of capital. The hypothesised law-like tendency of *profit rates to fall* in the course of capitalist accumulation was vital for Marx, who defined it as 'the most important law of political economy' in his *Grundrisse*. For the third volume of *Capital*, Marx elaborated on the hypothesis in terms of a law-like trend, indicating a conjunctural inclination of capitalism to economic crisis (see Thomas and Reuten 2013).

division of labour and its commodity form, which produces surplus value expropriated from the workers by the capitalists; that is, in the course of a work-day, workers produce more than they need for living, and the capitalist pays them less than the real value of their labour.

Marx was always context-bound when writing about the capitalist mode of production and the revolution of the proletariat. When he put pen to paper on the verge of revolution in 1848, it appeared that capitalism would collapse from the force of its contradictions. As uprisings swept the continent, Marx and his colleague Friedrich Engels outlined a political programme for developing the first workers' movement. Behind *The Communist Manifesto* (Marx and Engels 1848/2017) lay an assumption that socialist revolution would seize centres of industrialisation and capitalist development all over Europe, yet the rise of reactionary state powers in response, so aptly described in Marx's (1852/2012) *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon,* repressed the uprisings for decades.

In the wake of failed revolution, Marx reflected social change in the British Museum's Reading Room, poring over the classics addressing the political economy of the eighteenth century (particularly the works of Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and their liberalist followers).[2] One of the things he found in those classic works was a pervasive idea of gradual evolutionary change portrayed in terms of growth, progress, and historical development. A revolution of the proletariat for wresting power from the bourgeoisie in the manner portrayed in *The Communist Manifesto* stood in strong contrast against this. Marx and Engels had already found that the revolution could not be reduced to a functionalist and evolutionary rendering of the organic whole, and they regarded the historical change as a product of collective efforts of workers anticipating a better future for the subordinated.

In early-modern political philosophy that affected Marx's brand of relational thinking, society is portrayed as a body where the limbs of the social system exert effects throughout the body, over all the parts that form its organic whole. Anatomical metaphors emphasise the parts and their effective organisation within the artificial social system structured as an organic

[2] No matter the immensity of Marx's *magnum opus*, many of his texts gained no real fame within his lifetime. For example, sales of the first volume of *Capital* did not reach a thousand copies until five years had passed. Moreover, Engels edited the other two volumes after the 1883 death of their author, on the basis of largely illegible hand-written manuscripts, and Karl Kautsky edited portions of the corpus into the fourth volume, *Theories of Surplus Value*.

whole. The obvious analogy is to living entities as members belonging to a certain body that has specific needs and functions. This is popular among metaphors for social relations, thanks to works such as Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan* (1651/1928), which is one source for the metaphor of the state as a body. There, Hobbes describes the state as an 'artificial man' consisting of several organs and joints connecting its dispersed 'members', with the 'head of the state' being the sovereign. The sovereign is thus cast as a social organism, from the famous opening section of the book onwards (p. 1):

> [L]ife is but a motion of limbs […] and the joints, but so many wheels, giving motion to the whole body, such as was intended by the Artificer [and art] goes yet further, imitating that rational and most excellent work of Nature, man. For by art is created that great LEVIATHAN called a COMMONWEALTH, or STATE (in Latin, CIVITAS), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural.

Early modern political philosophy expressed the idea of articulation in poetic terms that link a mechanical model to the organism. As portrayed in *Leviathan*, the state comes into being through a social contract drawn up by men who seek protection from 'the state of nature'—that is, from an order without social rules, laws, or government. Rousseau's view on this consent is visible in a passage from *The Social Contract*, from 1762, according to which 'man is born free, but he is everywhere in chains'. The tie that binds the people is the society that binds them together. It also makes them able to act collectively as rational and moral human beings. Such an idea of humans' binding chains had already been articulated in Ancient Greece. Indeed, it features in the most famous metaphor in Plato's *Republic*, where the Allegory of the Cave depicts a lifelong prisoner finally managing to escape while the others remain in chains near the back of the cave in the belief that the voices outside belong merely to the shadows reflected on the walls inside. In such a setting, the task of an enlightened philosopher is to 'disarticulate' the chain of these sensory perceptions and then 'rearticulate' the links by applying reason and logical argumentation (see Laclau 1977, 7–13). In other words, the philosopher's objective is to emancipate people from false impressions, which requires, above all else, critical self-reflection.

Unchaining people from binding ties such as class is one of the overall themes that run through the collected works of Marx and Engels, and it is

in this connection that the texts of Marx use the conceptual metaphor of *Gliederung* for the structure, or order, of social relations. As noted above, this is derived from the German word for a limb, 'Glied'. The question of the articulation of 'the whole structure of society' (i.e., *Gliederung*) arises if one takes as subjects not the ideas or concepts, as Hegel did, but the 'real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live' (Marx and Engels 1845/1970, 42). In keeping with idealism, Hegel considered the state an ideal organism of a different sort from the affairs of family and civil society. Marx found that, in this respect, Hegel's 'point of departure is the abstract Idea' used as a subject, of whose development the state is a result (1843/1977, 12), Marx then set in opposition to this view 'the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life' (p. 36)—that is, 'the material production of life' (p. 53). Far from symptomatic of some inversion of Hegel's idealism, the latter is a sign of a completely new problematic, contending with the relations of production and productive forces, with reference to the capitalist mode of production.

In accordance with the premises outlined for *Theses on Feuerbach* and on the first pages of *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 1845/1970), Marx and Engels criticise their neo-Hegelian colleagues. In contrast to the idealism of the Young Hegelians, 'observation must [...] bring out empirically, and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production' (p. 46). This threefold order (economic, political, and ideological) is integral to his concept of the mode of production. That is a key to understanding the concrete ways in which people produce and reproduce the material conditions of their life. On the one hand, their active relation to nature determines the form of 'the intercourse [*Verkehr*] of individuals' (p. 42)—i.e., their agency in connection with other people engaged in the material production of life. On the other hand, productive forces consisting of both labour power and the means of labour determine the relations of production, which, in turn, depend on the social division of labour and the distribution of work between labourers and non-labourers (i.e., among capitalists, land-owners, and peasants). Alongside the social relations, Marx turned his attention by means of this lens to legal issues such as the right of possession, private ownership, and the state distributing its members into the relations of production (although that work went unfinished).

For Marx, bourgeois society's various categories are hence products of complex relations of production and offer understanding about their formation over time:

> Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure [*Gliederung*], thereby also allow insights into the structure [*Gliederung*] and the relations of production of all the vanished social formations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up.

In this passage from his introduction to *Grundrisse* (1857/1973, 105), Marx proposes that even though bourgeois society differs from all other social formations, it has risen from the ashes of the social formations preceding it and is built on pre-existing elements. First, that order appears to be evolutionary because of the prevailing and unfolding elements, displayed as parts of the whole. From this standpoint, society resembles an organism that evolves and keeps developing toward its final goal, or *telos*. In this respect, its parts articulate in an entity that seems a necessary product of growth and historical change. At the same time, however, Marx contests this image of evolutionary social change. Not until 'the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production' has arisen can such an understanding of historical social formations coalesce. It becomes possible in these conditions of the capitalist mode of production of bourgeois society because of the categories that 'express its relations, the comprehension of its structure'. From this historical materialist point of view, the categories of bourgeois society have enabled addressing the past social formations 'out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up'.

The social formation exists as a combination in the articulated whole, at least as presented in Marx's first draft of 'Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy' of 1857–58 (i.e., *Grundrisse*). When considering production, Marx regarded bourgeois society as a 'complex whole' following on from what came before it. In this historic organisation, an arrangement far more complex than feudal society, the bourgeois categories of political economy expressing the relations—'capital, wage labour and landed property' but also others—are bound to 'their order [*Gliederung*] within modern bourgeois society' (Marx 1857/1973, 108). Moreover, this order of modern bourgeois society is fundamentally different from the pre-capitalist forms, and that difference demands a new explanation. Therefore,

considerable attention right in the introduction to *Grundrisse* is devoted to seemingly simple categories such as labour. For classical political economy, these categories had remained abstractions. The critique by Marx, by examining them in relation to a complex whole of social structure, gave them new meaning.

In that introduction, Marx outlines his method for analysing the complex whole of bourgeois society relationally through his critique of the classical political economy of the eighteenth century. On the one hand, 'production, distribution, exchange and consumption [...] all form the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity' (p. 99). For Marx, each member of this totality is, therefore, distinct. No member is identical to others, and everyone has its own internal connections and determinations. On the other hand, the unity of totality is overdetermined by production, yet 'production in general' (see p. 85) is an abstract and theoretical category understood only in relation to the concrete determinations connected with its other moments. In a self-subsistence economy, for example, individuals produce commodities to meet their needs. In the capitalist mode of production, commodities are distributed after labour power and the means of labour have been allocated in the markets in accordance with the order of bourgeois society, which is based on private ownership. Hence, production is a result of the preceding distribution of productive forces such as labour, which determine 'the structure [*Gliederung*] of distribution' (p. 95) along with the consumption and exchange in market-based economies.

For Hall (1974/2003), these comments in 'Marx's notes on method' depict the structure (*Gliederung*) as a complex unity wherein the interaction, in his words, 'takes place between the different moments' (Marx 1857/1973, 100). With this conceptualisation, the elements of the totality—production, distribution, exchange, and consumption—are now examined 'as different "moments" of a circuit [of the capitalist mode of production], articulated into "a unity [grasped] in terms of their differences"' (Hall 1977, 23). Enacted in this manner, the specific relationship—i.e., a unit wherein the members of the totality connect with each other in such a way that they appear the same—is articulation (Hall 1974/2003, 127–128). The articulated whole of social structure forms through forms that are subject to social change.

Marx found merit in the concept of *Gliederung* for analysing the social structure and organisation of a modern bourgeois society as a complex and articulated social formation. Even though the word is often translated

into English as 'organisation', 'structure', or 'order',[3] in the vocabulary of Hall, this anatomical notion becomes a concept of articulation:

> Articulation marks the forms of the relationship through which two processes, which remain distinct—obeying their own conditions of existence—are drawn together to form a 'complex unity'. This unity is therefore the result of 'many determinations', where the conditions of existence of the one does not coincide exactly with that of the other (politics to economic, circulation to production) even if the former is the 'determinate effect' of the latter; and that is because the former also have their own internal 'determinations'. (Hall 1977, 48)

It follows that the image of social structure as an organic whole or a body composed of the limbs of the social system translates into an articulation conceived of as a complex unity of many determinations. Therefore, the relations of production between labourers and non-labourers, for instance, do not dissolve into mere abstractions such as 'isolated individuals' living in a 'state of nature' detached from the social structure as in the classical political economy. Marx explicitly cast aside this abstracted order, condemning approaches that operate with abstract concepts reduced to their lowest common denominator. Instead, he recommended concrete analysis of the material forces and social relations of production and their determination at a concrete politico-historical conjuncture.

Notwithstanding this laudable goal, many of his adversaries still find Marx's explanations to be formal ones that make sense only through the abstract economic categories wherein bourgeois society stands for a totality in which the dialectical form and function of theoretical concepts gain power over their empirical content. The abstraction is of a different kind. Simple empiricist assumptions assume correspondence between abstract concepts and concrete reality, and idealism takes perceptions of transcendent Ideas as its subject, yet bourgeois society has no author other than people making their history. Marx stressed, however, that 'they [people]

[3] Aidan Foster-Carter's article 'The Modes of Production Controversy', published in *New Left Review* in 1978, makes brief mention of the English translations of 'Gliederung' as used in Marx's *Grundrisse*, translations that do not account for its metaphorical character. In the article's Note 29 (p. 53), Foster-Carter states: 'David McLellan, Marx's *Grundrisse*, London 1971, translates Gliederung variously as "organization" (p. 39) or "organic connection" (p. 42). Martin Nicolaus, [in the first complete English-language translation of] *Grundrisse*, London 1973, simply gives "structure" (p. 105) and "order" (p. 108).' Marx's intention in using the conceptual metaphor is hence open for debate.

do not make it [history] as they please in circumstances they choose for themselves; rather they make it in present circumstances, given and inherited' (Marx 1852/2012, 32), which is a historical-materialist starting point.

Hence, in *Grundrisse*, Marx (1857/1973, 81) begins his critique of classical political economy with 'individuals producing in society', considered via scrutiny of the capitalist mode of production in relation to its determining moments in a complex unity where plain and simple bourgeois categories are rendered as more concrete concepts. Here, he famously states: 'Society does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand' (p. 265). This view accentuates social relations seen as a historical process unfolding in the course of time, which comes out in the notion of the articulated whole of society circumscribing the material relations of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption. Moreover, Marx found that 'there are no slaves and no citizens' (p. 265) beyond the constitutive social relations of production wherein individuals reproduce themselves and the conditions of their existence as subjects. Marx's aim with *Capital* was to expose the laws and mechanisms of the capitalist mode of production by tracing their appearance with regard to their historical change and development to scrutinise the social relations of dominance and exploitation relationally.[4]

Althusser and the Structure Articulated in Dominance

In Hegel's dialectics as characterised by Althusser (1974/1976, 182), society takes a universalistic and idealistic form as an abstract idea:

> For Hegel, society, like history, is made up of circles within circles, of spheres within spheres. Dominating his whole conception is the idea of the expressive

[4] For Marx work is a condition of human life and a feature common to all forms of society. Marx was interested in human labour in the form of commodity. In the capitalist mode of production, the worker applies labour power to produce commodities. At the same time, labour power is a commodity sold to a capitalist against a wage in production conditions. The amount of labour that is socially necessary to produce commodities (including workers' labour power) determines the value of that labour. Although human labour is increasingly 'immaterial' and 'affective', with the commodities produced being information and services, the exchange of labour power for a wage still (re)produces the relations of production and the contradictions in a complex and articulated whole of bourgeois society.

> totality, in which all the elements are total parts, each expressing the internal unity of the totality […] which realize a simple principle—the beauty of individuality for ancient Greece, the legal spirit for Rome, etc.

These poetic words delineate a totality that forms a closed sphere in time and space with an inside and outside, which is bounded by a curved line with no beginning and no end. The idealistic notion of 'expressive totality' is formed on the assumption that philosophers can realise all elements of this sphere as 'total parts' by reconstructing their meaning around a simple unity. In nineteenth-century idealist philosophy, the structured whole of society stood in for its parts seamlessly enough and furnished them with historical meaning. Regarding this approach, Engels (1886/1976) wrote that their aim behind the manuscript in 1845–46 (i.e., *The German Ideology*) was 'to settle accounts with our erstwhile philosophical conscience' (p. 5)—that is, with the neo-Hegelians. In other words, they applied critical self-reflection with the intent of dispensing with idealist philosophy characterised as 'bourgeois'.

Marx detached himself not only from speculative philosophy but also from the classical political-economy work's empiricism situated in opposition to it. Althusser's essays in *For Marx* (1965/1969) and *Reading Capital* (1965/1970) concentrate on Marx's theoretical interventions in the Hegelian dialectics of 'a simple original unity which develops within itself by virtue of its negativity'—which Althusser called a 'negation of the negation' wherein the differences eventually become 'indifferent' (1965/1969, 197–203). Althusser argued against this totality-oriented idealist view by holding out historical materialism as a model for Marxist science that breaks with all of the preceding ideological (i.e., bourgeois) forms thence denounced as humanist or economist.

The targets of Althusser's disdain are the speculative, abstract ideas from which ideological scientific forms appropriate their objects of knowledge; that is, he strove to scrutinise their concepts in light of Marx's theoretical practice (see pp. 185–186). For knowledge of a given subject to flow forth, the objects are translated in this respect into an 'articulated combination' (*Gliederung*) produced in knowledge for epistemological appropriation of the 'complex structured whole' of bourgeois society. In light of this, Althusser (1965/1970, 64) cites the following passage from *Grundrisse*, adding emphasis to the final words:

> It is not a matter of the connexion established historically between the economic relations in the succession of different forms of society. Still less of their order of succession 'in the Idea' (Proudhon) (a nebulous conception of historical movement). But of their articulated combination (*Gliederung*) within modern bourgeois society.

Althusser argued that knowledge of society is to be produced systematically with respect to scientific practice that displaces ideology as 'the "lived" relation between men and their world' by employing a dialectical method. He found a practical example of this method in V.I. Lenin's theses on the Russian Revolution. In 1917, Russia was the weakest link in Europe's capitalist chain, manifesting massive contradiction between a developed mode of production and a feudal state that allowed the proprietors to exploit the serfs. Lenin and radical elements among his followers (Mao Zedong, among others) became engaged in dialectical materialism in its practical form because of the internal contradictions' accumulation and their eventual collapse in a revolutionary rupture. Nevertheless, the contradictions adhere to the laws of the unconscious rather than those of the economic, according to Althusser (1965/1969, 94–95).

When adopting notions such as that of overdetermination of contradictions, Althusser presented a 'symptomatic reading' of Marx's texts (a notion addressed in my next chapter) in light of Lacan's return to Freud's psychoanalysis. In Althusser's 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1971), ideological interpellations articulate people as the subjects of a bourgeois ideology. This process takes place insofar as the ideology-anchored apparatuses are able to recruit its subjects by addressing people in the manner of a voice of authority such as a police officer shouting 'Hey, you there!' in the street. This perlocutionary act by a representative of the law is an ideological call that hails a subject if one stops and turns round upon recognising oneself as the subject of this enunciation. In a sense, subjects of all ideology are constituted in such a manner by hailing or interpellation of them in the ideological apparatuses (see p. 173). In times of crisis, ideological elements can fuse into a 'ruptural unity' by means of condensation that leads to dissolution of the dominant ideological apparatus, which gives way amid the resolution process both personally and collectively. While he dealt with such matters, Althusser did not mobilise his theory for consolidating political ideology in a project to overcome the state apparatus and overturn state capitalist relations. His focus was on

identifying and understanding the contradictions in conditions of their complexity.

Althusser (1965/1969, 205) suggested that the 'principal contradiction' between the forces and relations of production in the capitalist mode of production articulates with the others, 'secondary contradictions'. This conjunction forms the conditions of an articulated system wherein political and ideological shifts take place. With this framework, Althusser provided new ways to understand the capitalist mode of production present by criticising the vulgar-materialist communists for reductionism in which the entire structure of society turns into a series of ideological beliefs and dogma. Rather than seeing no contradictions (as is the nature of humanism) or finding the same contradiction everywhere (i.e., engaging in economism), he found the contradictions to be uneven and overdetermined with one another. For instance, Althusser stated that the contradiction between capital and labour becomes secondary through its displacement beneath several other contradictions (pp. 211–212). The contradictions thus determine each other, and the first comes into being only through the secondary ones, which can fuse or condense to create crisis and conflict. Importantly, secondary contradictions underdetermine the primary contradiction. Because the latter does not stand out as the one 'spectator a head taller than the others in the grandstand at the stadium' and never manifests itself in a pure form, revolution by the proletariat does not immediately follow from the class struggle (p. 201).

Contradictions gain force through their articulation within their contexts where 'each contradiction reflects […] the complex whole in which it exists' (pp. 207–208). In this way, the contradiction-rife elements of the social system relate to one another through overdetermination and underdetermination, which articulate the social formation as a complex whole filled with contradictions and struggle.[5] It follows that contradictions exist in this complex whole, which has 'the unity of a structure articulated in dominance' (p. 202). Althusser also spoke of uneven relations among the economic, political, and ideological instances as overdetermined in relation to this complex whole (p. 207). Hence, the relations within the social formation seem neither mechanical nor expressive. Instead, the economic determines which of the other instances is dominant. Moreover, the

[5] See Althusser's additional note about social formations in response to Ben Brewster's glossary, in *For Marx*: 'A concept denoting "society" so-called. L.A.' (Althusser 1965/1969, 251).

economic instance never takes an ultimate place as the 'last resort', on account of the political and ideological, which have their own effects and relatively independent conditions of existence, termed by Althusser 'the structural causality' as an effect of this articulated whole (the *Gliederung*) in its parts that are understood in relation to each other.

In the public defence for earning his state doctorate (1974/1976, 177), Althusser specified this point further by elaborating on the structuralist imagery via Marx's metaphor of the base and superstructure, thereby also defending his earlier theoretical writings:

> [T]he determination in the last instance by the economic base can only be grasped within a differentiated, therefore complex and articulated whole (the 'Gliederung'), in which the determination in the last instance fixes the real difference of the other instances, their relative autonomy and their own mode of reacting on the base itself.

In Althusserian reasoning, the social structure is a 'complex and articulated whole' (i.e., *Gliederung*) that consists of the political and ideological instances built on the economic base. The economic determines the order of other instances within the social formation, which compose its relatively autonomous superstructure. Unlike in the vulgar-materialist interpretations of this relationship, the ideological and political do not reduce to the economic, or vice versa; the economic only assigns their position in the social formation. Consequently, bourgeois society is not an expressive totality that realises some fundamental principles of the capitalist mode of production. It is conceived metaphorically as a complex structure 'articulated in dominance' that is made up of the relatively independent instances articulating with one another. This is not an idealistic but a materialist conception of social structure and social change, a conception addressed in the following chapters.

Marxism without Guarantees

From an economist orientation to the social relations between the base and superstructure, everything in the structured whole of the social formation articulates with the economic basis. Hall's alternative to this 'necessary correspondence' is 'no necessary correspondence' among the ideology of a class, its politics, and its socioeconomic position (1985, 94–95). In an interview, Hall elucidated his reasons for using the concept of articulation.

> An articulation is […] the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? (Grossberg 1986, 53)

Not much later in the interview, Hall elaborated on this point by saying that

> it is the articulation, the non-necessary link, between a social force which is making itself, and the ideology or conceptions of the world which makes intelligible the process they are going through, which begins to bring onto the historical stage a new social position and political position, a new set of social and political subjects (p. 55).

Hall's analyses of Thatcherite ideology provide an illustration (developed ever since his 'The Great Moving Right Show', from 1979). They make sense of hegemonic struggles that took place at a specific politico-historical conjuncture. All ideology is realised through practices of discourse that represent the domain of articulations by constraining and excluding other possible views and conceptions that establish 'regimes of truth'. Consequently, ideology is not a matter of false consciousness and of people being cultural dupes but, rather, a way to think about 'how an ideology empowers people, enabling them to begin to make some sense […] of their historical situation' (Hall, cited by Grossberg 1986, 53). This serves as a point of departure for 'Marxism without guarantees'. When using the term 'ideology' in this connection, Hall (1986, 29) referenced 'the mental framework […] which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of […] the way society works'. The imaginary relation to material conditions of existence in which people live out their life is real (per Althusser 1971, with discussion continuing in the next chapter), and it is a source of articulations that retain their own identity while acting together—not as an immediate unit but as connections, or links, which are not necessarily given but do require their own specific terms and conditions of existence.

This notion does not entail inversion of the former position, as in 'necessary non-correspondence' grasped in a discursive field of 'floating signifiers' wherein nothing ever connects with anything else. Hall retained the economic mode of production as a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition when explaining various forms of social relations as discursive

constructions (1980, 43). Rather than, in the manner characteristic of discourse theorists' approach, dealing with the ideological and political separately from the economic, Hall applied his notion of 'no necessary correspondence' among the various instances of social formation with regard to articulations.

Hall made it possible to think about the practices that structure the complex whole of social formation in cultural terms. Furthermore, with reference to articulation, specific linkages give form to various contradictions. His discussion points to the ways in which the specific practices may be related or, just as tellingly, not interface with one another:

> Under the influence of Althusser, Hall [...] argued that the conception of the social formation as a 'structured totality made it possible to understand 'how specific practices (articulated around contradictions which do not arise in the same way, at the same point, in the same moment), can nevertheless be brought together.' (Dworkin 1997, 153)

The notion of the social formation being structured as 'unity-in-difference' is expressed with respect to the relative autonomy of social practices—that is, because of articulation. On the one hand, Hall argued against an economist reading of 'base and superstructure', finding that there is no necessary correspondence between the economic base and political and ideological superstructures (1985, 93–94). From this position, there is no guarantee of, for example, the ideology of the proletariat corresponding with or deviating from the subordinate position of a worker in capitalist relations of production. The social formation is a complex unity articulated out of differences, a unit that does not reduce to the class conflict between capitalists and the proletariat. On the other hand, complexity does not imply endless sliding of the signifier; however, many discourse theorists might tend to emphasise such sliding. With the assertion that 'nothing truly connects with anything else', it may seem that Marxists, for instance, associate everything with 'the economic', not only as a necessary but also as a sufficient condition for explaining all social conflicts with reference to the class struggle.

For the above-mentioned reasons, Althusser contested causal explanations by means of his structural notion of 'difference in complex unity'. This was a new way of thinking about determination with reference to Marx. Laclau dedicated special attention to this notion, arguing that 'ideological elements have no necessary "class belonging"' and that class

interests are contingent articulations showcasing a link 'that is said to have "no necessary correspondence" to "the economic"'. He elaborated thus:

> Let us abandon the reductionist assumption and define classes as the poles of antagonistic production relations which have no *necessary* form of existence at the ideological and political levels. Let us assert, at the same time, the determination in the last instance of historical processes by the relations of production, that is to say, by classes [...]. *It is no longer possible to think of the existence of classes, at the ideological and political levels, by way of a process of reduction*. [...] [Therefore] it is necessary to conclude that *classes exist at the ideological and political level in a process of articulation and not of reduction*. (Laclau 1977, 159–161; emphasis in original)

Making reference to this passage, Hall (as cited by Grossberg 1986, 53) stated that 'articulation, as I use it, has been developed by Laclau'.[6] With *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Laclau put particular emphasis on political and discursive practices such as 'articulation' in relation to the study of populism in Latin America.[7] There, Laclau claimed that political ideologies are not populist in the same sense that they are, for instance, 'conservatist, liberalist or socialist'; in populism, they act as the articulating principles whereby popular-democratic interpellations articulate dominated classes and portions of the dominant class as 'the people' against the power bloc (1977, 176, 173–174). For hegemony to take place, political ideologies require popular-democratic interpellation wherein subjects hail the people in a domain of ideological and political struggle for hegemony. Various political ideologies refer to the people in their pursuit of legitimacy and to appear democratic. This reference makes them not populist

[6] Hall said: 'His argument there is that the political connotation of ideological elements has no necessary belongingness, and thus, we need to think the contingent, the non-necessary, connection between different practices—between ideology and social forces, and between different elements within ideology, and between different social groups composing a social movement, etc. He uses the notion of articulation to break with the necessetarian and reductionist logic which has dogged the classical marxist theory.'

[7] An Argentine-born political theorist, Laclau was a member of the Socialist Party and a political activist at the University of Buenos Aires until moving to England in 1968. Politically and ideologically, Peronism influenced his theory of populism the most. According to him, '[n]o other Latin American populist movement [...] achieved such success in its attempt to transform itself into the common denominator ["the people"]' (Laclau 1977, 176). For an interview with *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*, he recalled that experiences from political struggles in Latin America affected his post-structuralist and post-Marxist theoretical reading, impelling breaking away from Marxism to discourse theory.

but 'a peculiar form of articulation of the popular-democratic interpellations [...] with respect to the dominant ideology' (Laclau 1977, 172–173).

Laclau conceived of populism mainly in relation to the specific contradictions that arise by dint of the capitalist mode of production articulating its subjects with reference to class and identifying them then as the people against the power bloc. Even though classes are constituted at the level of mutually antagonistic production relations, other subject positions are overdetermined by these relations at the level of the social formation, at which the social formation is a domain of popular-democratic interpellations. For Laclau (see pp. 107–108), articulation of the principles for an ideological discourse takes place on the basis of the class contradiction, yet other contradictions cannot be reduced to such principles. Hence, all political ideologies are transformed through ideological and political struggles for hegemony, wherein their elements are articulated or disarticulated by constituting 'the people' with regard to social and political action. It is only when a class subject articulates the ideological elements of this discourse that hegemony emerges.

It follows that nationalism, for example (see p. 160), has no specific class connotation. It is a result of the articulation of a set of social forces, such as liberals, conservatives, or communists. They may or may not be able to articulate ideological elements such as democracy, liberty, and the state effectively in accordance with their own premises that make sense for the subjects at the present historical moment. With all ideological discourse, ideological and political struggles for hegemony take place through the processes of articulation. Accordingly, a class is hegemonic only insofar as it manages to articulate its own worldview or ideology into a dominant ideological discourse since other, antagonistic social relations have faded sufficiently into mere political and ideological disputes. At the same time, the dominated classes—such as the working class and the fragments of dominant classes—attempt to rearticulate these differences to shape them into conflicts by means of populist argumentation.

In short, populism exists in antagonistic relation to a dominant ideological discourse. For Laclau, the ideological discourse has no necessary 'class belonging'. It occurs not because of reduction of its constituent elements to the antagonistic production relations but by way of contingent links that exhibit 'no necessary correspondence' with the economic. Moreover, the ideological elements taken in isolation carry no inherent class connotation, so this connotation results purely from 'the articulation of those elements in a concrete ideological discourse' (Laclau 1977, 99).

In this respect, several contradictory elements articulate discursively, with not all of them having already become inscribed in ideology 'as if they were political number-plates worn by social classes on their backs' (Poulantzas 1968/1975, 202).

Alongside class, ethnicity offers its own cultural scripts in line with which various actors can become involved in battles over their positions in the structure, which are overdetermined by their sociocultural understanding of the prevailing circumstances in which they live. In Hall's analysis of racism (1980, 33), the controversy raging at the time over what was dubbed the articulation of modes of production (addressed further in the next chapter) created an opening for a theoretical framework covering historically specific social formations wherein 'race' became the 'articulating principle' of the entire structure of society as in the cautionary example of apartheid in South Africa. For Hall as a cultural theorist, the forms of racism are always historically specific and manifested in domestic contexts. Although racism operates through racial differentiation that is related to class exploitation, this problem cannot be reduced to class struggle or antagonistic production relations alone. Hall's analysis presents 'race' as a dominant articulating principle of the discursive relations between capital and labour. By approaching articulation as 'unity-in-difference', he emphasised the relative autonomy of these struggles and their overdetermination in time and space (Hall 1985, 68–69).

A discursive space is thus opened for the struggle for hegemony, where the outcomes of that struggle need not entail any certain result for any concrete battle pertaining to social relations (class or ethnicity, for example). This is precisely the 'Marxism without guarantees' referred to above. In this alternative to Marx's stance on ideology as false consciousness (see Larrain 1991), ideology structures fragmentary and contradictory elements into an ideological discourse that exerts an effect on the masses' common-sense conceptions. Ideological discourse operates through articulation of the signifying chains to rearticulate and disarticulate their meanings.

According to Hall, ideology weaves (or 'quilts') the differences into a complex unity with reference to articulation. If there is sliding of the signifier, there are also differences that can be articulated in one way or another to form meanings. In articulation, elements keep their identity while holding together not as essentially the same but as 'distinctions within a unity'.

Hall gave weight to ideology as 'the systems of representation' and to both those systems' relative autonomy from the economic and their over-determination in time and space. This framing creates room for social and political actions through which the outcome of social struggles does not fall into place in isolation from any relevant discursive field. It follows likewise that the practice of articulation has its limits regarding historical specificity. In this respect, the idea that there is no necessary correspondence points to the lack of guarantees that things are going to articulate with each other. Articulatory practices are always discursive, yet this does not mean that they are nothing but language.

Conclusion

Marx's notion of the structure of society as a hierarchical and articulated whole (*Gliederung*) can be summarised via Hall's term 'unity-in-difference': production, consumption, distribution, and circulation form a complex unity, structured in dominance. Moreover, the conception of 'determination in the last instance by the economic' expresses the economic dictating only which of the other instances of the social formation (the political or ideological) is the dominant articulating principle of the moment. This framing created a new problematic for cultural and political analyses, one that drew together the images of social structure and social change with concepts such as ideology and hegemony (see Hall 1988, 53). In Hall's reading of Marx, the articulated, hierarchised, or systematic combination arranges the complex relations among production, circulation, exchange, and consumption—that is, 'the members of a totality, distinctions within a unity', in which production is dominant (Marx 1857/1973, 99). Here, the social structure is not given reductionist leanings whereby the economic gives expression to other instances of the social formation, such as politics and ideology. Very much the opposite occurs.

In relational thinking along Marxist lines, theorising about difference through the concept of articulation does not necessitate endless sliding of the signifier under the signified, as in post-Marxist discourse theory. The relational approach emphasises the absence of any inherent need for correspondence among the various instances of social formation. Discourse theorists, in their turn, took things further, approaching social formations

by compassing absolute autonomy and 'necessary non-correspondence'—i.e., through 'a conception of difference without a conception of articulation', in Hall's words (1985, 53). The concept of articulation as 'unity-in-difference' builds instead on the notion of 'no necessary correspondence' among the various instances of the social formation. With reference to their relative autonomy and this lack of a need for correspondence (that is, their articulation), the social formation is not a totality expressing the economic in every instance. Neither does it manifest class contradiction all the time, even if the economic and class conflict are both important aspects of it.

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CHAPTER 4

Structural Marxism and Its Critique

Abstract This chapter contends with the discursive turn in which images of social structure and social change shifted from anatomical conceptual metaphors to relational thinking that captures social structure as a complex articulation of interlinked ideological, political, and economic instances. The examination begins with one of the most influential takes in the so-called return to Marx, addressing the Althusserian theory of ideology, which discourse theorists have accused of 'yoking together' a totality in connection with the larger structure of society in ideological terms. In fact, Althusser and his colleagues studied ideology's practical application as a discursive interpellation of subjects. When discourse theory ultimately prevailed, it had adapted this part of the theory of ideology, while the concept of the capitalist mode of production has been excised from sociological discussions. Informed by awareness of 'the spectre of Marx(ism)', where social sciences are haunted by the ghostly notions of class-struggle and bourgeois ideology, this chapter turns attention to the less famous modes-of-production controversy in French new economic anthropology, which drew ethnographers' gaze to class, ethnicity, and gender issues.

Keywords Althusser, Louis • Hegemonic Struggle • Ideology • New Economic Anthropology • Modes of Production

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Althusser's Theory of Ideology

In the 1950s, Althusser was teaching political philosophy, and he published his first monograph, *Montesquieu: Politics and History*, as the decade neared its end.[1] He held his first seminar on Marx in 1961–62, enfolding his students in his Marxian journey by considering Marx's own path. Althusser had begun his 1960 article 'On the Young Marx' by citing a *The German Ideology* passage in which Marx states that the neo-Hegelians had not abandoned the bourgeois philosophy, meaning that their ideas were still situated in connection with idealism. Althusser claimed that with that manuscript, from 1845, Marx extricated himself from the realm of German ideology. These contributions demonstrate that Althusser was oriented philosophically to 'anti-humanism'. So was the philosopher he had tutored earlier, Foucault, who later speculated that 'man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (1966/2002, 422). Marxist humanists, in turn, countered anti-humanism by claiming that Marxism is the most developed form of humanism in that it reveals the alienated conditions of capitalist relations of production in which men have to live their lives.

For Althusser, Marx broke from idealism not by way of inversion of the Hegelian dialectics but epistemologically, inventing a new problematic (1966/1969). This ushered in an area of study different from what came before Marx. In reference to the work of his former supervisor, Althusser called the rupture marked by Marx's deviation from Hegel an epistemological break. Nevertheless, Althusser did not identify this break, from ideology to science, as sudden. He pinpointed it as starting with *The German Ideology* and reaching completion with *Capital*. For the intervening span of time in which Marx considered the relations of production to be constitutive of the entire structure of society in relation to the class struggle, Althusser used the term 'historical materialism'. Portraying the

[1] Born in 1918 in Algeria, Althusser was a member of the French Communist Party (PCF) who, through his teaching, may have had greater influence on the generation of French intellectuals than any other philosopher did. He taught philosophy for decades at the École normale supérieure (ENS), in Paris, where the studentship he had begun in 1939 was interrupted by the draft. From the French army, he was captured by German troops as a prisoner of war. After World War II, Althusser began his studies (*agrégation*) in philosophy proper, writing his thesis on Hegel, under the supervision of Gaston Bachelard. In 1948, Althusser took up a teaching position at ENS, where he would work for over three decades, and it was in the same year that he joined the PCF, on the recommendation of his colleague Jean-Toussaint Desanti.

passage wherein Marx calls for setting Hegel back on his feet as only a caricature,[2] Althusser opined that 'mature Marx' did not cleave to the Hegelian framework of concepts: rather than simply turn those concepts inside-out, Marx superseded Hegel's approach completely with new concepts given shape in his critique of classical political economy, which followed his criticism of Hegelian philosophy.

In 1964, the discussion in Althusser's seminar series focused on Marx's *Capital*, and the following year saw minor publishing house Maspero print his *Pour Marx* and *Lire le Capital* in its 'Theory' series. These books were intended for a small audience, but their combined sales came to exceed a hundred thousand copies. Althusser and the members of his reading group, including Étienne Balibar, Pierre Macherey, Roger Establet, and Jacques Rancière, all co-authors of *Reading Capital*, became well known virtually overnight. Furthermore, the influence of their analyses extended to internal critique of the PCF and opposition to Marxist humanists in the realm of politics and philosophy. Although Althusser was a member of the communist party, his reading of Marx was a critical one with regard to communist ideology.[3]

In *Reading Capital*, Althusser and his colleagues paid attention to sometimes ambiguous concepts that Marx himself had left undefined. They approached this project by virtue of a 'symptomatic reading', conducted in a manner akin to that of a psychoanalyst examining patients'

[2] Althusser's 'Contradiction and Overdetermination' in *For Marx* (1965/ 1969) begins with the following words pertaining to Hegel, from Marx (alluding to Marx's 1873 'Afterword to the Second German Edition', from *Capital*'s Vol. 1): 'With him [Hegel] it [dialectic] is standing on its head. It must be turned right side up again, if you would discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell'.

[3] In May 1968, revolutionary sentiments broke through in Paris, with 10 million people joining a general strike that left the French government on the brink of collapse. This led to new elections. Althusserian vocabulary influenced many of the student rioters but still had to adapt and adjust to a new politico-historical conjuncture. Simultaneously, reformers tried to establish socialism with a human face in Czechoslovakia, in contrast against the prevailing communist Soviet model, but the result was another forceful defeat by Soviet forces: the Prague Spring fell in the very territory that had birthed its alliance. Later after these events, Euro-communism displaced Soviet-style Marxism-Leninism within the communist parties of France, Italy, and Spain. In addition, the contradictions in advanced capitalism—with antagonism and social inequality evident amid unprecedented social mobility, economic prosperity, and well-being—prompted emancipatory movements and the rise of various countercultures. The PCF was among the leading parties in France at the time, and Althusser struggled against both communist-Soviet-brand Marxism's and bourgeois Marxist humanism's interpretations in theory and practice alike.

speech utterances. In this practice, the analyst pays attention to what is absent from the patient's speech—i.e., what the patient does not say explicitly. Marx analysed the treatises of classical political economy to make it explicit that, with their economic categories, they neglected the appropriation of surplus value of labour. Characteristic of the classical political economists' approach was a failure to address the value of labour in relation to capitalist exploitation, which was explicitly identified but never discussed. It was evident to the classical political economists but not defined as a problem in classical political economy. Althusser found this symptomatic of bourgeois ideology.

In the context of Althusser's 1962–63 lectures in structuralist philosophy, he invited Lacan, whose work had been rejected institutionally, to teach at the École normale supérieure, or ENS. Lacan's seminars would become major events there. Although Althusser never participated in those seminars, psychoanalysis entered Marxist discussion with the printing of Althusser's article 'Freud and Lacan' in a journal of the French Communist Party. Althusser drew a parallel here, stating that Marx had founded a new science of the capitalist mode of production while citing Lacan's characterisation of Freud as the founder of a science of the unconscious (Althusser 1971, 198).[4] Althusser presented the object of psychoanalysis as 'the unconscious', which is formed in the course of 'the humanization of the small biological creature' in a human child (p. 205). From the perspective of a former prisoner of war, Althusser went on to state in the following sentences (pp. 205–206):

> psycho-analysis is concerned with […] a war which is continually declared in each of its sons, who, projected, deformed and rejected, are required, each by himself in solitude and against death, to take the long forced march which makes mammiferous larvae into human children, *masculine* or *feminine subjects.*

[4] Lacan's 'return to Freud' appeared in the 'Rome Discourse' (i.e., 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', from 1953). It influenced psychiatry in both theory and practice. Arguing against the ego-psychological and neurobiological leanings of psychoanalysis, Lacan made explicit Freud's psychoanalytic idea that our innermost being is structured socially by the discourse of the other—that is, the symbolic order wherein the symbolic function of language is seen as constitutive of the 'split subject'. In this connection, the human mind or *psyche* is constituted in relation to language and culture. The International Psychoanalytic Association expelled Lacan for, above all, his theoretical break from Freudian tradition and his unorthodox psychoanalytical practice (Dosse 1991/1997, 95, 104).

This passage creates an evocative image that links becoming a subject with a war that many survive at least superficially while others are wounded deeply such that they never recover from the struggle at all. For him, psychoanalysis does not revolve around a biologically or psychologically fixed essence of gendered human beings or around some culture or society wherein individuals are alienated as its subjects; it has to do with 'the aleatory abyss of the human-sexual itself' (p. 206). He referred to the contingency of subjectivity that will emerge out of the corporeal human beings. While Althusser never denied the importance of the psychoanalytical theory of the transition from the mirror stage to a speaking subject, he disagreed with the psychoanalytical reading of ideology, wherein early childhood determines unconscious processes in the subject's becoming.

As elaborated upon in Althusser's most famous essay in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1971), the titular apparatus (the ISA) operates by ideological means and establishes the subjects of ideology (*Subiectum*, for 'throw under'). This emphasis on ideological mechanisms opened abstract theory to empirical analysis. Schools, churches, families, law, politics, trade unions, media, and culture all reproduce bourgeois ideology that has to penetrate both the workers and the capitalists, along with the civil servants and indeed all the ideologists themselves (Althusser 1971, 133, 143). The state apparatus, in turn, functions primarily through repression. In the end, none of the classes can be hegemonic without obtaining consent through the ISAs. Where Althusser was writing, in France, the capitalist social formation of the day was made up of numerous ISAs, with the education-oriented ISA reproducing class relations wherein most people graduate to farming and other realms of labour while only a small elite continue their studies. In contrast, he found the pre-capitalist social formation to feature only one dominant ISA, the religious state apparatus of the Catholic Church, against which the French Revolution reacted in accordance with the ideas of the Enlightenment, including the iconic liberty, equality, and fraternity as symbols of the democratic and republican state (pp. 142–157).

According to Althusser, each specific ideology has a history of its own. Ideology in general, however, has no history; it is like the unconscious, which is eternal. In other words, 'ideology has no history' (pp. 159–176). Ideology is an 'imaginary relationship of individuals to their real [material] conditions of existence'; i.e., without the social relations of production and class relations, ideology is not expressive. It also has a material existence: the thoughts or expressions from which ideologies seem to be

composed are not transcendental in any spiritual sense. Rather, they all have material substance through the ISAs (see pp. 162–170). Moreover, people are born as subjects of the ideology. After all, they have been expected, and they are called by a certain name from the day of their birth. In a passage I alluded to earlier on, Althusser says, on p. 174, in one of his most cited statements:

> [I]deology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'

At this point, an individual who identifies with the ideological call of an authority is already subject to the ideology wherein he or she is 'hailed'. Althusser articulated the above-mentioned idea that ideology is an 'imaginary relationship' of individuals to 'the real conditions of existence'—that is, to the material relations of production and reproduction (1971, 162). He thus indicated that the social relations are real, not purely imaginary or symbolic, that they exist independently from our thoughts and yet we can conceptualise them only by means of language that materialises in practice (see Marx 1857/1973, 101; see also Hall 1985, 103–105). In this respect, Althusser speaks about the symbolic and overdetermined character of all social relations.

According to colleagues of Althusser, such as Balibar (1965/1970) and Nicos Poulantzas (1968/1975), the Marxist approach can be criticised by pointing to the dominant role of politics and ideology in preceding epochs. After all, people do not live only from the economic basis. In *Capital*, Marx had given the critics a rather terse reply, however, that 'it is the mode [of production] in which they gained a livelihood that explains why here politics, and there Catholicism [as an ideology], played the chief part' (Marx 1867/1909, Note 42). Althusser talks about 'the economic', which determines 'in the last instance' which of the other instances, such as the ideological and political, are dominant at the time in question. For *Reading Capital*, Balibar (1965/1970, 212–213) homed in on the importance of the concept of the mode of production, which is 'doubly articulated' by a combinatory relation 'between the forces and relations of production'. In this respect, a social formation can comprise two or more

modes of production (see also Poulantzas 1968/1975, 14–15). This leads to the question of the articulation of modes of production and the ways in which pre-capitalist modes can combine with the capitalist relations of production.

Interestingly, Althusser's philosophical rigour led to ethnographic field-work being carried out in Africa in times of decolonisation and capitalist neo-colonialism. Among the outputs were the French-language works of Godelier, Meillassoux, Terray, and Rey—or the articulation school of economic anthropology.

Patriarchs, Peasants, and Articulation of Modes of Production

New economic anthropologists criticised American 'dependency theorists' such as Andre Gunder Frank, for whom the underdevelopment in Latin America was due to the uneven flow of commodities from periphery to core. In addition, they criticised modernisation theorists, for whom there was only one global capitalist world-system, a notion prominent in the work of world-systems theorist Immanuel Wallerstein. In contrast to the sociological thinking of modernisation theorists, who considered developing countries to be at a stage of transition to the capitalist mode of production, French new economic anthropologists' empirical fieldwork in postcolonial Africa showed that the Third World was not following the same path at all. Moreover, the debate on modes of production also affected the class struggle through influence on the formation of class alliances and socialist strategies in practice, especially in Latin America.

For his 'Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America', featured as the first paper in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*, Laclau (1977) proceeded from the 'restricted' concept of the mode of production (see Wolpe 1980, 6–15). According to Laclau, the mode of production consists of articulation of the possession of the means of production, which is the pivotal element—a form of appropriation of the surplus—and the development of the division of labour and productive forces. Laclau began his introduction to the concept of articulation by bringing up the discussion of the articulation of modes of production, in which connection he criticised dependency theory and the sociology of development. Laclau also challenged the conception of capitalism as a singular world system. Laclau

posited that the relations of production in Latin America comprised feudal elements just as much.[5]

In France, the new approach to economic anthropology was devoted to describing the pre-capitalist social formations in a conjuncture where the non-capitalist forms articulated with capitalism. From this relational standpoint, the scholars were interested in the articulation of the pre-capitalistic forms of production with the colonial and capitalist forms and in the effects of these on the relevant developing countries. The claim that two or more modes can coincide and articulate with one another at the same time is a departure both from Marx's explanations and from Claude Lévi-Strauss's structural anthropology and the more liberal tradition of economic anthropology (see Clammer 1975; see also Copans and Seddon 1978). In line with elaboration on their predecessors' arguments, the new economic anthropologists concluded that the growth of the capitalist world-system takes place through its boundary regions, which requires that the pre-capitalist social formations articulate with capitalism. At this point, I shall briefly outline the main ideas surrounding the controversy on what was dubbed the articulation of modes of production in the structural-Marxist line of thought, populated with the elements of gender, ethnicity and class struggle (see Raatgever 1985; see also van Binsbergen and Geschiere 1985).

Godelier (1973/1977) refined the Althusserian framework with the premise of anthropological fieldwork for uncovering the pre-capitalist social formations as a part of the social structure articulated in line with new logic. He posited that the structure of pre-capitalist social formations is based on kinship relations that enable the exploitation of descendants. For this reason, Godelier did not accord a dominant position to the economic as determining the position of all other instances in a pre-capitalist social formation. Rather, the economic is not discernible from other instances. Accordingly, the empirical problem here is to describe the connections among labourers, non-labourers, and instruments of labour in domestic communities wherein livelihood is organised around descent groups. In this respect, reproduction of productive forces and relations of

[5] Laclau's conception of the articulation of modes of production, however, diverged from the structural-Marxist approach: in the essay, he states that their starting point is 'the economic, political and ideological instances, which are present in all modes of production and whose articulation constitutes the specificity of that mode' (1977, 72–73). In short, he asked why there are only these instances and not others, while also posing the question of how the specific instances' articulation occurs in practice.

production take place because of kinship relations refining a domestic or lineage-based mode of production, which differs fundamentally from the capitalist mode of production.

The exponents of new economic anthropology concluded that the structure of society is arranged around kinship relations. For instance, in 1964, Meillassoux (see 1975/1981) empirically described a patrilineal system among the Guro people of the Ivory Coast. The elders of the villages exercise direct control over labour power because of social reproduction. Community members worked in communally owned fields to produce goods that were then appropriated by their elders. In these circumstances, production is not based on possessing means of production or holding private land. Instead, the village elders benefited from restrictions in access to circulation and exchange of goods, especially, used for marital payments. By establishing a family, younger men produce dependants and eventually can acquire the status of an elder. Hence, the non-productive members of Guro society maintained patriarchal dominance relative to the productive members by controlling the circulation and exchange of not only goods but also women.

After studying the people neighbouring the Guro, Dida, Terray revisited Meillassoux's ethnographic study five years after it was empirically conducted. Applying Althusserian categories that Godelier had introduced to the field, Terray (1969/1972) paid specific attention to means of production and forms of co-operation (such as hunting with nets) that require more teamwork than agriculture does. Hence, Terray found, unlike Meillassoux, that more than one mode of production may be exercised in distributing the means of labour and organising the ways of co-operating. With his corresponding description of the 'self-subsistence economy' of the Guro, Terray drew a distinction between two modes of production: The first mode dominates in a lineage-based system involving simple co-operation in agriculture, along with fishing, gathering, and animal husbandry. The second is visible in a 'tribe-village system', which he considered a more complex and egalitarian way of organising the social relations of production and distributing the productive forces used for hunting.

Various new economic anthropologists have argued with one another about the range of social relations necessary for characterising the articulation of modes of production in pre-capitalist social formations. Rey's take on the matter was that patrilineal groups as seen among the Guro formed from relations of production that indicate an exploitative relationship between the producers (peasants) and non-producers (the proprietors),

which other economic anthropologists did not consider a class relationship. Taking issue with Rey's understanding, Meillassoux responded with a claim that no one group takes advantage of another within a domestic mode of production per se, since both women and young men can achieve the status of an elder in the course of time. Hence, he reasoned, exploitation takes place only through the 'articulation of modes of production', because of a domestic mode that cannot exist as such without capitalism (1975/1981, 87). In the domestic mode of production, however, village elders' control over the productive members differs from the use of 'free labour' within a capitalist system, wherein the workers possess their labour power used as a commodity exchanged for wages.

With reference to class struggle, Rey, however, insisted that in the domestic mode of production, the exploitation of productive members of Guro society is specifically due to the appropriation of their labour. In Rey's work with the matrilineal groups living in the French Congo, for instance, the exploitation of surplus labour, for which the elders were not paying, was apparent through the subordination of young men who cannot become village elders, to whom they provide free labour. In this polygamous system, men become elders only outside their local residence or by accident without a guarantee of ever getting married. In addition, they offer marital payments increasingly in the form of money for the elders. Consequently, young men are pushed to sell their labour to proprietors of the land in exchange for wages, which puts an inexpensive labour force at the disposal of nearby plantation owners.

In early modern Europe, feudalism both protected and resisted capital as the transition to capitalism unfolded. Some pre-capitalist social formations seem to display resistance, at least to revolts (e.g., the Arab Spring), that crystallise amid ongoing neo-colonisation. Rey's treatment in 'Class Alliances' presents the articulation of the feudalist and capitalist modes of production as commencing with the class alliance between capitalists and proprietors. Marx described the latter more than a century earlier in the context of land rent as a feudalist form of appropriating surplus labour from the serfs. The claim by which Rey countered Marx's argument is that the 'ground rent is a relation of distribution […] of another mode of production with which capitalism is articulated' (Rey 1973/1982, 31). Hence, the feudal form of ground rent taking over peasants' surplus labour exists also within a capitalist system. This articulation between two systems benefits both the capitalists and the land-owners, who can co-exist in a class alliance for an extended time.

Although the entrenchment of these relations depends on specific historical circumstances, it shows a tendency to impoverish peasants who are tied to land they do not possess themselves. Rey's work on what he called the articulation of modes of production depicts the transition from one mode of production to another as occurring through a class drama played out on the stage of ideological and political instances, which are not cast as static states of being. The first phase of the articulation sees alliance of non-producers (land-owners and capitalists) activated against direct producers (the peasants) dispossessed of their land and instruments of labour in a phenomenon that protects both the capitalist and pre-capitalist social formations (pp. 21, 27). After this phase, capitalism takes root in the pre-capitalist social formation and the peasants must provide their labour outside their domestic communities. This move creates conditions analogous to the prevailing situation in many developing countries (p. 52). Moreover, elimination of the pre-capitalist modes of production requires a process of capitalist neo-colonisation to take place, rooted in extra-economic coercion and violence. The final phase, visible in the most developed countries, such as the United States, involves capitalist markets completing the destruction of peasant production, whereupon developing countries have no other option than to provide low-cost labour and raw materials. Rey's key point is that the transition from one mode of production to another is not set in advance. It goes beyond the economic base in the social forming of ideological and political instances that influence uneven, contingent and economic development. In this context, the concept of articulation is a tool intended for understanding the connections between/among multiple modes of production.

At the core of the controversy was articulation of social relations between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes. The parties in this debate regarded the social formations in developing countries as the articulation of the subordinated and pre-capitalist mode(s) of production under the dominance of capitalism, where capitalism has destroyed feudalism yet other forms of production persist in postcolonial territories. In this context, the concept of articulation gained currency for historical transformations with reference to contradictions and struggle. For example, the idea behind Rey's use of the term 'articulation of modes of production' is that one or more subordinate modes of production can exist alongside capitalism in the long term. The three stages outlined in 'Class Alliances', then, can be conceived of as eras rather more than moments: exchange and

interaction between two modes of production may continue for quite some time before one mode becomes subordinated and transition to another takes place. The defeat of the initial mode too is not an event but a phase. In Rey's work, each of these stages of articulation has a corresponding set of class alliances. These involve situational specifics and flesh-and-blood people, so the outcome of the struggle is not guaranteed in advance.

Ideology, Politics, and the Struggle for Hegemony

Formerly Althusserian sociologists Barry Hindess and Paul Hirst, counted as Althusser's main critics, argued that notions such as 'mode of production' and 'structural causality' should be abandoned in favour of the post-Marxist discourse-theory approach. With their criticism of the articulation of the modes of production, Hindess and Hirst (1977) reasoned that it considers structural causality as an effect of the whole in its parts—that is, in a manner similar to that in which the idealists used the term 'expressive causality', for which Althusser himself had criticised both Marxist humanists and economists. In place of the allegedly teleological and essentialist explanations wherein, with a focus on the mode of production, society is conceived of as a totality of the economic and class contradictions, they embraced an alternative in which this complexity boils down to 'a single structure of social relations', a social formation as an object of discourse. What is at stake in this argument is an attempt to contest the effort to appropriate the whole structure of society for a model that construes the social relations and various instances of the social formations on the foundation of the mode(s) of production, not as discursive formations. This contestation points to a shift toward a conceptual metaphor of social action that spotlights language and its structures (e.g., discourses). These scholars sought an alternative to the metaphors related to the articulation of modes of production.

> *Either* the articulation of 'relations' and 'forces' of production is conceived in terms of the connection between social relations and the forms in which their conditions of existence are realised *or* it must be conceived in terms of some kind of necessity in which the character of one object of discourse, the 'relations' or the 'forces', is deducible from the concept of the other. (Hindess and Hirst 1977, 55)

Thus, armed with critique that rejects models of articulating different instances within the social formation, sociologists took issue with Althusserians' claim that the social relations of production determine any social formation in the last instance through assignment of the dominant role to the mode of production. For Laclau, as one political theoretician of articulation who took issue with Althusser's views, the latter's most important contribution was to consider ideology in practice as an interpellation of the subjects (Laclau 1977, 101–102). Decisively, this part of the Althusserian paradigm ended up adapted to the agenda of discourse theory. It has prevailed, while the concept of the mode of production has been excised from social-scientific discussion.[6]

Although Althusserianism was a 'dead end' for many, it sparked a paradigm shift in cultural studies.[7] Spawned via the structural-Marxist paradigm, the institutionalisation of cultural studies in Britain was set in political and intellectual conditions impelled by the 'New Left', with which activists, educators, and literary critics alike were associated. Among the key names associated with the New Left are Hall, Williams, and Richard Hoggart, in addition to Thompson, who was among Althusser's

[6] A major line of critique of Althusserianism involves abstract theory that builds on the distinction between Marxist science and philosophy. Here, the philosopher's central task is to prevent ideology from penetrating the scientific practice. Formally, the distinction is the same as in dialectical materialism ('Diamat'), which was an orthodox Marxist doctrine in the communist movement. An illustrative example is the polemic work *The Poverty of Theory* (1978/1995), in which historian E.P. Thompson criticises Althusserians (such as a younger Hindess and Hirst) by way of a vulgarism from Marx and Engels's characterisation of anarchists—'all of them are *Geschichtenscheissenschlopff*, unhistorical shit' (p. 145). The criticism was levelled at structural-Marxist theory. Indeed, Althusser himself would retrospectively admit, in his *Essays in Self-Criticism* (1974/1976, 127) that in the mid-1960s 'our "flirt" with structuralist terminology obviously went beyond acceptable limits'. Even though Althusser's political and theoretical concern lay with ideological practices and class struggle, which were highly topical in the mid-1970s, Althusserianism went out of fashion. Even his most zealous disciples rejected him. For example, Rancière dubbed the Althusserian philosophy elitist.

[7] Althusser suffered from mental-health problems and was hospitalised numerous times. In addition, several of his disciples, among them Poulantzas and Michel Pêcheux, committed suicide. Eventually, in 1980, Althusser strangled his wife, Hélène Rytmann-Althusser, receiving compulsory treatment for psychosis after her death and thereby avoiding a jail sentence. His writing continued in the next decade, with these pieces seeing the light of day after his death, in 1990. The attention to aleatory materialism (*alea* refers to the rolling of dice) is characteristic of Althusser's posthumously published works (see Lahtinen 1997/2009).

main critics (see Dworkin 1997; Hall 1980a, 1980b).[8] While Marxist humanists conceived of culture as an expressive totality, wherein each part expresses the essence of the whole (i.e., idealism), Althusser conceptualised the structure of society as a social formation of specific practices articulated in relation to one another. From a structuralist viewpoint, people live and make sense of their conditions of existence by means of the categories through which their experience has affected the unconscious structures. Althusser considered subjects of ideology and their interpellation, class struggle, and relations of production in relation to the capitalist mode of production.

In the 1970s, the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) applied the Althusserian paradigm alongside the notions of hegemony and resistance, in addition to semiology and psychoanalysis, in an attempt to bridge the gap between the structural-Marxist categories and the linguistic paradigm, wherein the subjects are constituted through language and ideology. A problem with this constellation and others, such as 'screen theory', was the notion of the universal subject (Hall 1980a, 69–70). In the mid-1970s, one of the groups at CCCS, who focused on theories of language and ideology, turned to Foucault's work insisting on historical specificity pertaining to language and subjectivity (see Hall et al. 1980, 186–209). In this respect, in their studies of popular culture they recognised that abstract theories of ideology and language lie across a gulf from the subjectivities of individuals. After the pioneering work done at CCCS, cultural studies and the discourse theory of the 1990s saw the concept of discourse eclipsing the notions of culture and ideology, in addition to that of language as a system of differences. Consequently, the catch-all term 'discourse' entered the vocabulary of the social sciences and humanities in a manner that disavowed its roots in structural linguistics, Marxist political philosophy, and psychoanalysis. All three were downgraded to nearly inconsequential components that reside outside social theory (see Sawyer 2002).

[8] Hall (1932–2014) was the first editor-in-chief of *New Left Review* (with tenure from 1960), an academic journal for the Left's contemporary theoretical and political debate. Hall became one of the leading Marxist intellectuals in Britain's New Left movement. In 1969, he started serving as acting director of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham. A decade later, Hall took up a chair as a professor of sociology without holding a doctorate. He taught Open University courses until his retirement, in 1998. Hall is famous for his interdisciplinary cultural-studies work, in areas such as youth, postcolonial, and media and communication research.

By the 1990s, a focus on pluralism, relativism, and individualism had entirely unseated the causal relations, class struggle, and alleged economic determinism. The 'culturalist' paradigm took off at the turn of the 1960s, when the New Left began a renewal of socialism in Britain, with a strong tradition in literary criticism and social history (Dworkin 1997). They defined 'culture' as meanings and values that have arisen from the historical conditions and social relations through which people relate to the conditions of their existence, along with the cultural traditions and practices wherein their ways of seeing have been expressed and materialised (Hall et al. 1980, 63, 66). These thinkers referred to the ideas and cultural practices that organise individuals' thoughts and action as composing 'a whole way of life'. From this perspective, their emphasis was on people's cultural activities that make their history. Culturalists analysed the long-term social and cultural changes in post-war British society in terms of the history of the working class, the Industrial Revolution, and consumer capitalism, in addition to the mass media and popular culture, which had become the main tools for communication in the era of advanced consumer capitalism.

Strivings for theory-informed political practice in Marxism had already stepped forth from the economic realm upon publication of the cultural- and political-hegemony-related transcripts in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*, written in 1929–35 and released in 1948–51 (the first edition in English was printed in 1971).[9] Lenin was among the politicians from whose thinking Gramsci drew in his practical endeavours. He employed Lenin's idea of hegemony specifically when taking part in a debate on the workers' movement (with which he became involved in city-level politics in Turin). Likewise, in 'Some Aspects of the Southern Question', from 1926, Gramsci (1978, 443) uses the notion of hegemony as applied by Lenin to examine

> the question of the hegemony of the proletariat: i.e. of the social basis of the proletarian dictatorship and of the workers' State. The proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to the extent that it succeeds in creating a system of class alliances which allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and the bourgeois State […], this means to the extent that it succeeds in gaining the consent of the broad peasant masses.

[9] Antonio Gramsci, born in 1891, was a linguist, political journalist, and incarcerated leader of the Communist Party in Italy who maintained opposition to Benito Mussolini's fascist regime until his death, in 1937.

In this respect, hegemony refers to the domination of one class over another—that is, 'the proletariat hegemony over the bourgeoisie'. In the context of this passage, the task for the progressive Italian working class is to organise a revolutionary mass movement against the state in a country with uneven division of the masses between the agricultural 'peasant' south and the industrialised 'bourgeois' north. For the hegemony of the bourgeoisie to be contested, a class alliance with the peasants is necessary if the working class are to be able to overcome the state apparatus. At this point, Gramsci relies on an idea of political action according to which it is possible to influence the course of history in relation to the prevailing circumstances of the day.

With the passage from *Selections from the Political Writings (1921–1926)* (1978), Gramsci was not yet able to proceed beyond dialectical materialism, wherein antagonistic production relations constitute the categories for all social actors, not least the classes. In other words, the actors' identity articulates in a fixed manner such that the classes derive their politics and ideology strictly from the economic foundation. With the material in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, hegemony had become a concrete and historically specific moment (Gramsci 1971/1999, 204–205). Hegemony is constituted in accordance with the prevailing 'relation of forces' at the level of the material forces of production and in relation to the social and political organisation of social actors as classes. Before a class can become hegemonic, however, the people must be aware of their unity. Their awareness can lead to a sense of solidarity extending beyond the narrow 'economic-corporative' interests within, for example, the confines of a labour union. Therefore, no social relation or law of the economic guarantees a 'collective will' as opposed to individuals' will and class consciousness.

Prison Notebooks presents hegemony that arises in a 'war of position'. It emerges at the fronts of civil society by way of prolonged sieges to articulate the subordinate groups into a dominant historical bloc. This strategy pointed the way to a new lesson for the workers' movement. It also deviated sharply from the more traditional orientation toward a revolutionary 'war of manoeuvre' against the 'bourgeois' state and its ideological apparatus (prosecuted through *blitzkrieg* to occupy the latter's territory). The struggle for hegemony opens a space for intellectual and moral reforms that enable articulating a wide range of contradictions to alter power relations. In this manner, the creation of hegemony builds on actors' ability to articulate their worldview such that it contains elements that would appear to be real in the people's day-to-day life. This commonly shared

understanding is 'common sense' (i.e., *senso commune*), by means of which the dispersed and fragmented ideological elements can articulate into unity with no a priori attachment to classes.

In this Gramscian expression of historical materialism, the term 'practice' refers to the social and political action through which Marxist philosophy emerges from a practical social activity as a theoretical practice and self-reflective political action—a 'philosophy of praxis'. In Gramsci's (1971/1999, 190–195) account, the aim for hegemony is to build consent constituted via the 'ethico-political' cultural sphere through the agency of 'organic intellectuals' doing epistemic work in educating the people, organising them, and leading them to form a 'historical bloc' (*en bloc*, a whole) by considering political action with respect to the social whole. He wrote of a conservative Italy in which ideological forces such as Catholicism organised the 'national-popular' cultural sphere in a way that left no space for its political rearticulation until the rise of Fascism. Only then did the contradictions of this social formation fuse in a revolutionary rupture. Accordingly, ideologies offer material for hegemonic struggles, which inform political articulations for purposes of achieving consent. A thoroughly Gramscian emphasis on political action is evident in the associated theoretical developments of political articulation.[10]

Conclusion

Althusser and his colleagues drew an analytical distinction between 'mode of production' and 'social formation', where the former is a theoretical abstraction and the latter is a 'complexly structured totality' with multiple levels—the economic, the political, and the ideological—which overdetermine one another. Instead of foregrounding the capitalist mode of

[10] In the 1920s, as at the time of *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, it seemed plausible that the socialist revolution of the proletariat would bring hegemony on behalf of which Gramsci was fighting. However, such a proletarian hegemony never arrived. In its stead, Gramsci had to face a historical conjuncture wherein right-wing populism gained its moment in the form of Fascism. The lesson to be learnt from this disillusionment was that history does not follow theory of class struggle. Instead, the outcomes of such struggles are rather unpredictable and contingent on other historical events. Gramsci saw this first-hand, experiencing it in both theory and practice. He developed the political role of an organic intellectual (i.e., the communist party), from which he exerted a profound influence on Marxist philosophy, its critique, and the politics of the New Left. Among the latter political theorists, it was Laclau who drew on Gramsci's work to take another look at a Marxist theory of ideology and class struggle in terms of discourse theory.

production as determining all relations or, alternatively, reducing ideologies and politics to superstructure, their articulation leans toward a process of creating the relations in practice at the level of empirically ascertainable social formation in the fashion presented in new economic anthropology. In the literature on the articulation of modes of production, new economic anthropologists such as Terray, Meillassoux, Rey, and Balibar argued that the capitalist mode of production does not evolve mechanistically or evolutionarily from the pre-capitalist forms, nor does it necessarily dissolve or transcend them. Instead, they gain structure in relation to each other, with the concept of articulation coming in here to signify their relationality.

A century after Marx's *Capital*, the return to Marx directed discussion toward the framework within which the notion of articulation is to be applied. Althusserian social science focused initially on the articulation of modes of production and their economic mechanisms and then on social action as language related to ideology, politics, and the struggle for hegemony. This move also marked a departure from a conception of society as a fully articulated whole that gives meaning to its every instance by means of a 'necessary correspondence' with the economic. It simultaneously entailed greater attention to other concerns—not least gender, 'race', and ethnicity issues—with structures similar to those found in language, all considered via the notion of discourse. In a fully articulated system of differences, there would be no open discursive field for political articulations of 'the social'. Structures do not come out of nowhere, though; people not only appropriate and adopt them, becoming their subjects, but act in multiple ways, including opposition and resistance.

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CHAPTER 5

Social Action as Language

Abstract Structuralists considered language to be a system of differences that overdetermines the action of individuals in such a manner that subjects are thereby constituted unconsciously. Deconstruction of the structural-Marxist or Althusserian paradigm, in turn, has considered social change in terms of the struggle for hegemony by also taking input from psychoanalysis. The latter project developed into discourse theory and political analysis in the tradition of the Essex school. In that school's stream of post-Marxist relational thought, discursive practices came to the fore. Its discussion builds on Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory, wherein articulation is political practice that occurs in a discursive field of social action in a struggle for hegemony. Post-Marxist discourse theory functions as a way of 'politicising' against the reductionist forms of Marxist theory and political practice, but it does operate with some Althusserian categories passed down from Lenin and Freud, such as contradictions and overdetermination. Hence, the argument is that social and political actors operate in a domain of articulation, relationally, as a language does.

Keywords Discourse Theory • Laclau, Ernesto • Language-game • Mouffe, Chantal • Post-Marxism

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Language as a Play of Differences

Among the metaphors applied most often in the social sciences and humanities to explicate language is an analogy of games, associated with analytical philosophers such as Wittgenstein. Portrayed via this imagery, language resembles playing a game. In his example of a make-believe builder's language, words such as 'blocks', 'pillars', 'slabs', and 'beams' are the names of the objects. In Wittgenstein's language-game, or *Sprachspiel*, a builder teaches an assistant a name related to an object to enable fetching an object that corresponds to the master's call. The language-game has a material aspect in the form of 'building blocks' that are not merely linguistic phenomena. In other words, the materiality of objects is a decisive part of the language-game that discourse theorists call a discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001, 108). Discourse builds regularity in a dispersion of its constitutive elements, according to discourse analysts, who stress the practices of language use in a manner similar to that of speech-act theorists. In addition, they consider non-discursive practices, activities outside language. Such a way of thinking about language's use as a discursive practice diverges from regarding language as a system of differences consisting of signs—i.e., from the approach employed in structural linguistics.

An analogy with games explicates words, along with their usage and meaning, by—via metaphor—comparing them to and contrasting them against other things, such as playing a game of chess. From the structuralist standpoint, the matter of the usage of words and their meaning in language is an external issue 'while everything having to do with its system and rules' (Harris 1988, 22) is an internal matter in structuralist terms. Therefore, if hoping to explain the meaning of a word, as in the history of ideas, one must also make sense of the language that sets rules for its various uses. Hence, language is like a game in the sense that both are 'self-contained' (p. 24). In a game of chess, it is not the chess piece as such that matters but its differential function (i.e., value) in relation to other pieces, which confers its distinctive character on the chessboard (Saussure 1916/1959, 110). In a similar manner, a word derives its meaning in contrast against other terms used systematically in language because of conventional rules. Language is unlike chess, however, in that it changes its rules historically in accordance with individual moves that can have contingent and unexpected consequences for the elements of this whole system (see pp. 88–89).

Structural linguistics is now a discipline largely consigned to history, but it was fashionable half a century ago. For instance, in his *Elements of General Linguistics*, André Martinet describes language as 'a double articulated system' (1964/1966, 24–29). In his outline of spoken language and its semiotic code structure, the first articulation takes place in a commonly shared plane of communication wherein each of the distinctive units (i.e., signs) is articulated out of the signifier and the signified. This first articulation takes place at a level where the smallest meaningful units are 'morphemes'. The second articulation arises at the phonological level, that of 'phonemes', which consist of speech sounds that are conceived of as signifying elements that lack meaning in their right. The latter articulation means the spoken expression of the distinctive units in speech. Through this double articulation, it becomes possible to enunciate utterances from a pool of a limited set of sounds to express potentially unlimited meanings on account of the phonological elements (such as syllables and sounds) that function as the distinctive units of language. Because of the double articulation, linguistic units can combine or displace in relation to one another, while the structure of language acts as a mechanism that sets rules for the interplay. The rule of double articulation defines language as a structure wherein meaningful units articulate out of distinctive elements and meaning takes its place in relation to all other elements in the semiotic system. The resulting spoken language comprises a limited quantity of speech sounds that articulate into an infinite quantity of meaningful units—words constituting sentences, paragraphs, chapters of a book, etc.

Saussure gave his lectures at the University of Geneva in Switzerland over a century ago. From those lectures, his colleagues and students compiled the posthumous *Course in General Linguistics* (Saussure 1916/1959), which expresses an analytical distinction between the signified (or concept) and the signifier (or sound-image). Although the two stand in an arbitrary relation, the relationship, when articulated into a sign, becomes conventional, albeit not natural. While the relation between a sound image and a concept is arbitrary, it is at the same time conventional because language is a social institution that one must learn before one can speak. Saussure refers to the link that produces the sign as 'signification' (cf. 'meaning'), and the sign is a basic unit of language, wherein an image of a sound refers to an idea as if the pair were 'two sides of a sheet of paper' (pp. 112–113). Importantly, the sign is only a link between the ideas and the sound images in the relationship between the signifier and the

signified. Saussure draws a parallel here between the way in which an air current causes the surface of water to ripple and how thoughts articulate with the phonic substance.

For Saussure, the founder of structural linguistics, language appears in what he denoted as 'the domain of articulations' (p. 112). In phonetics, articulation provides the means of speech, for example, in the pronunciation of consonants as described earlier in this work (air moves freely through the vocal tract until it is obstructed by the vocal organs and a sound is hence produced). Saussure, however, saw the sound as 'only the instrument of thought' conceived of as an image wherein a 'complex acoustical-vocal unit' articulates to an idea (p. 8). For distinctive units to be structured out of a 'shapeless and indistinct mass', articulation gives form to these units by uttering them aloud. The thrust of his argument is that a 'linguistic term is a member, an *articulus* in which an idea is fixed in a sound and a sound becomes the sign of an idea' (pp. 111–113). Articulation operates like a joint or member between the amorphous thoughts and sounds that form distinct signs. In the above extract from *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure defines articulation by means of an anatomical term, the Latin one for a joint (i.e., *articulus*); He gave this word itself a definition (on p. 10), as

> a member, part, or subdivision of a sequence; applied to speech, articulation designates either the subdivision of a spoken chain into syllables [the first definition] or the subdivision of the chain of meanings into significant units; *gegliederte Sprache* ['articulated speech', or 'articulated language' for Derrida (1967/1997)] is used in the second sense in German. Using the second definition, we can say that what is natural to mankind is not oral speech but the faculty of constructing a language, i.e. a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas.

Structuralist thinking adopted the latter definition of articulation, with language articulating 'a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas. I assume that the reason for referring to the *gegliederte Sprache* in this connection as an alternative to an anatomy-bound notion of articulation is to delineate a distinction against the more linguistically oriented definition involving an *articulus* (i.e., a linguistic part or member of a chain cut into syllables and sounds through speech). In the second sense, in contrast, speech (or language) forms a distinctive unit (i.e., a sign) out of 'the floating realm' (p. 112) of thoughts and sounds by means of

articulation that takes shape in language by cutting both of its sides—the expression and content—at the same time, as in the 'sheet of paper' simile. Saussure carries this idea further (pp. 120–122): 'In language [...] whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it', and the sign is a product of articulation that is 'a positive fact' having 'a substance'. Meanwhile, its 'individual members' not yet articulated are only 'differential and negative'; hence, they do not exist outside the system of differences that is language. Saussure paid close attention to the abstract rules and conventions of language as a socially instituted system of differences that relationally determines the value of each sign. In this respect, the referent is detached from anything that goes beyond language as a closed system of differences.

Saussure's synchronic approach to language marked a departure from diachronic linguistics, which concerned itself with the origins of language and its development. It was not until the late 1930s, however, that linguist Louis Hjelmslev branded Saussure's work 'structural linguistics' (Dosse 1991/1997, xxii), regardless of the word 'structure' having appeared only a couple of times in his *Course*. Moreover, Hjelmslev's colleague Roman Jakobson developed Saussure's ideas within the Prague Circle in linguistics as a general science of language that forms what Saussure had called a self-contained whole and a classification principle. In 1956, Jakobson, who worked with Hjelmslev and then with Lévi-Strauss, published an article on language and language disorders. In it, Jakobson distinguishes between the 'paradigmatic' and 'syntagmatic' axes of language, building on Saussure's synchronic approach. Saussure considered symbolic systems to have two axes: The paradigmatic axis has to do with the 'vertical' part of the system of signs, which allows selection of one element such as a word and its substitution with another (in associative relations). This is the metaphorical aspect.

The syntagmatic axis, in turn, addresses the metonymic aspect, which entails a combination of elements with reference to contiguity, forming 'horizontal' relations such as words articulated into sentences. Syntagmatic relations hold while language is present, linking distinctive elements into meaningful wholes. Paradigmatic relations hold only in the absence of language as a system of differences that allows a selection of distinctive elements and their substitution with others. Jakobson (1956) was able to carry his thinking into practice, distinguishing between two types of aphasia with reference to the phonological model: In a contiguity disorder, aphasic entails the absence of the capacity to keep up discussion in units

longer than a few words, which is associated with metonymy and a deficiency in forming sentences. In a similarity disorder, in contrast, the aphasic is incapable of choosing between individual words. This leaves the patient with a considerably restricted vocabulary, which is linked to the metaphorical aspect of language as a symbolic order.

Jakobson's study of language disorders influenced Lacan's application of the linguistic paradigm in his structuralist reading of Freud. Lacan adopted the notions of metaphor and metonymy from Jakobson as a condensation and displacement of meaning with respect to Freud's classic *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899/1913). In his return to Freud, Lacan put the structuralist and linguistic paradigm into action with this claim: 'The unconscious is structured like a language.' According to Freudian psychoanalysts, when one considers unconsciousness to stem from a structure such as language, slips of the tongue, for instance, unintentionally give away meanings to the signifying elements of the unconscious not organised by the ego. Rather than statements that articulate by way of conscious speech, the psychoanalyst attends to unconscious enunciations by the subject as an object of analytical attention. Lacan adopted Saussure's notion of language as a system of differences that consists not of signs but of signifiers. Only signifiers can produce a signified. Because of this, Lacan argued that the signifier is prior to the signified, which only slides beneath it. This represents a contrast against the stance of Saussure, for whom expression and content were like the two sides of a sheet of paper. In place of the sign fixing the relation between the signifier and the signified, there is a barrier that resists all signification.

Crossing that barrier is possible only because of the metaphors that substitute one signifier for another on the paradigmatic axis of language. The syntagmatic axis, in turn, is associated with metonymy in its combination of signifiers to form the 'signifying chain'. The 'network of the signifier' has the 'synchronic structure of language' (Lacan 1966/2006, 414), but the signifying chain must be punctuated if meanings are to be produced. This is because of the barrier, a 'bar' (*barre*) between a signifier and the signified, which resists signification but allows a combination or articulation of the signifiers and their displacement. In this process of articulation, the 'quilting point', 'anchoring point', or 'nodal point' (*point de capiton*) acts as a 'button tie' stitching up the sliding of the signifier temporally. The elements that stop the endless sliding of the signifiers are the nodal points, where quilting or anchoring temporarily prevents the signifiers from floating. Their movement halts here. If the sliding of the

signifiers does not stop at a quilting point, the subject will not submit to the symbolic order. Failure to become the subject of the symbolic order leads to psychosis, with certain language disorders being symptomatic of this. When submitting to the symbolic function of culture, the subject splits but does not fragment into pieces. In substitution for unrestricted pleasure (*jouissance*) and the torments of passion, lawful and neurotic subjects search for pleasure via culturally and socially sanctioned ways of realising the objects of desire.

Post-Structuralist Deconstruction of the Linguistic Paradigm

The structuralist paradigm rose dominant, reached its peak, and was reshaped into post-structuralist critique within a rather short span of time.[1] Instead of the irony of opposites in social sciences, wherein the structures and actors stand for each other dialectically, the linguistic trope for structuralism was the metaphor in itself. In the broadest sense, the structuralists' metaphor extends to any system of meanings—for instance, marriage rules and systems of kinship. Historically, structuralism followed phenomenology, criticising approaches that build on action theory's way of interpreting subjective meanings, which focused on the individuals and understanding of their subjective 'life-world'. At the same time, however, many French intellectuals such as Althusser did not want to identify with structuralism and rejected the label.

After World War II, the leading intellectual in France was Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom 'existence precedes essence' in a form of becoming. By advancing existentialism toward understanding of the human mind, phenomenology inspired a new generation of young philosophers. The father figure for most structuralists, however, was not Sartre but an anthropologist, Lévi-Strauss, and a phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who saw the social world as made of symbols and signs (see Brown 1987, 101; see also Dosse 1991/1997, 23). Lévi-Strauss, whom French intellectuals consider the leading academic behind structuralism, published his

[1] Transition from French structuralism to its 'post-structuralist' critique was visible already in 1966, at a symposium titled 'The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man', held at Maryland's Johns Hopkins University, where Lacan, Barthes, Derrida, and many other leading French intellectuals presented their ideas to the Anglo-American audience.

breakthrough work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, in 1949.[2] In it, he claims that the basic kinship structures order marriage rules in a manner paralleling language by prohibiting some relations while stipulating others. A key foundation for the social order is the 'incest taboo', which he asserted is universal. It subsumes the natural order with the order of culture. On the one hand, it strengthens the relationships among the members of the system because of their exchange. In this respect, the prohibition of incest not only forbids some marriages based on bloodline but also produces a social order in terms of culture. On the other hand, marital relations are arbitrary and conventional, similar to language (Lévi-Strauss 1949/1969; Dosse 1991/1997, 19–30). The idea of a law that underpins all social relations and governs all forms of social exchange in the manner of language swept like a virus across diverse fields of study.

For the structuralist generation of social scientists, language was similar to the collective conscience conceived of by Saussure's contemporary Durkheim, which binds people together in society. Both Durkheim and Saussure built their theories on the symbolic structures and systems of signs, and they employed similar vocabulary. However, Saussure never cited Durkheim. There is no proof of him even having been aware of Durkheim's work (Alexander 1988, 4–5; Heiskala 2003, 182). Instead of Durkheimian sociology, Saussure articulated semiology (1916/1959, 16, 121), 'a science that studies the life of signs within society'. A key aspect of it is that once a sign articulates with another sign, the 'two signs, each having a signified and signifier, are not different but only distinct' from one another. In this manner, signs gain their meanings socially in relation to each other. Language, in turn, consists of the abstract rules and codes that govern the articulation of signifying elements into meaningful units at the grammatical level. In other words, the structure of language is prior to any expression or utterance.

The studies of literary theorist Roland Barthes extended structural linguistics further. He turned it into a sort of semiology that serves fields other than phonology. While Saussure had anticipated such progression in his *Course*, semiology as developed by Barthes did something more. He offered a theoretical model for analyses of denotation, connotation, and myths, which linguists had excluded from their approach. For his *Mythologies*, Barthes (1957/1972) deciphered the myths of the 'petit

[2] Lévi-Strauss lived to the age of 100 unlike many of his contemporaries such as Merleau-Ponty, who died in 1961. Both were born in 1908.

bourgeois' ideology by applying semiology, including advertisements and the world of entertainment, in his consideration. Barthes's poetic style and theoretical writings on French popular culture made him one of the most prominent intellectuals of the structuralist movement in the 1960s.

That decade was the beginning of the shift from linguistics and structuralist semiotics to the sprouting discourse theory from the phenomenological tradition in philosophy. Lacan established his own school of psychoanalysis, represented by his seminars, where he taught the French elite, who were not enmired in the disputes within Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxist philosophy.[3] For one of the seminars, on the 'reverse of psychoanalysis', in 1969–1970, he addressed the issue of the problems wrought by the institutionalisation of psychoanalysis in higher education. Lacan's lectures on the subject delved into the four discourses that unfold a particular structural relationship, the master-signifier's relation to all other signifiers and its relation to the 'split subject' that arises from the relationship wherein the master-signifier represents the subject in relation to all other signifiers in the field of knowledge. An excess product in this process is a surplus that is 'the object-cause of desire', which is born out of lack of enjoyment. This leftover prevents the master-signifier—which may be any signifier representing the subject—from completely taking over the subject.

As the foregoing description hints, Lacan held in his theory that the model for all discourses is 'the discourse of the master'. This discourse is grounded in the dialectic between master and slave. In it, the master strives to appropriate knowledge from the slave like capitalists make effort to appropriate the surplus value from labour. In the second of the four discourses, 'the discourse of the university', the master-signifier holds what he called the position of truth; here, knowledge occupies the dominant position for control of the truth. In the position of the other lies the object-cause of desire of the split subject for purposes of knowing, even when the master does not hold a dominant position. This type of discourse is a modern form of the discourse of the master, wherein the

[3] In 1966, Lacan's work was published, as *Écrits*. This hefty volume of his collected writings gained him a considerable public reputation, albeit partly as a theoretician whose writings are nearly impossible to grasp. At the time, several new universities were born in the wake of the May 1968 student and workers' revolutions in Paris. At one of the most prominent of these, in Vincennes, a committee of leading French intellectuals chose Foucault as the head of the faculty of philosophy, who proceeded to hire several Althussero-Lacanians as its first staff (Dosse 1992/1997, 147–151).

master-signifier takes over knowledge from its subjects in an abstract and theoretical form that renders it displaceable. Lacan's own discourse theory falls into this bucket. In his lectures to students and the radicals of Vincennes, Lacan expressed expectations that revolutionary struggle and hysterical questioning would ultimately lead only to a new master, who would put the subjects in the position of the slave. The reverse is psychoanalysis. In 'the discourse of the hysteric', the split subject obtains a dominant position. It wishes the master to produce knowledge as the truth of its object-cause of desire, which is missing. That is the starting point for the final discourse, 'the discourse of the analyst'. In this context, the analyst must turn into an object-cause of desire of the split subject. Knowledge can become the truth of the split subject, subverting mastery and dominance as 'the cure' in practice. The aim in psychoanalysis is, in other words, to bring back enjoyment to the subject via analysis of the symptom (for discussion, see Evans 1996, 45–47; see also Kurki 2012, 64–90).

By the time of his death, in 1980, Lacan had amassed transcripts for 27 seminars (which an admirer and relative by marriage, Jacques-Alain Miller, has been compiling retrospectively into books based on the lectures). He had accumulated a set of critics too, with many of his colleagues challenging Lacan's teachings, among them Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983; 1980/1987) in their two-volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. To their post-structural way of thinking, desire is a productive force, not a lack of subject. In addition, they contested Marxists' precept by which class struggle is a motor of social change. The entire legacy of Lacanian psychoanalysis is still controversial, and most social theorists do not admit his work to the canon of the social sciences and humanities (cf. Foucault, whose discourse theory gained nearly undisputed regard as a sociological classic). A cautionary example of the confusing and multitudinous contradictory uses of the term 'discourse' is, however, visible especially in the post-structuralist debates. Because of these, Foucault has been accused of overly broad use of the concept, although many of these accusations lack a reference point in his actual work and stem from false assumptions and misreading as pointed in above (Sawyer 2002, 434–435).

One contemporary of Lacan in French post-structuralism was Derrida. A deconstructive philosopher who criticised both Saussure's linguistics and distant predecessors such as Rousseau with his 'Essay on the Origin of Languages' (1781/1966), Derrida, argued that those authors saw only 'two distinct systems of signs; the second [writing] exists for the sole

purpose of representing the first [speech]' (Derrida 1967/1997, 30). Accordingly, he established a distinction from the structuralist tradition with his notion of *différance* (note that the standard form of the French word uses an 'e' rather than an 'a'), which refers to a difference that one can only see, not hear. Because this neologism itself can be distinguished from the popular French word only in written language, it is an effective tool in deconstructing the phonological claims of the superiority of speech. In terms of Rousseau's myth of the origins of language, language without a difference is a collection of inarticulate sounds and unintelligible gestures. Articulated speech, in turn, inaugurated a difference from this state of nature as a symbolic order. In Derrida's treatment, the play of differences forms an unbounded space for the articulations 'by means of which elements are related to each other' infinitely. For Derrida, nothing precedes the play of differences, and no subject has power over the articulations.

Derrida deconstructed various metaphysical and speculative notions in his books *Of Grammatology*, *Speech and Phenomena*, and *Writing and Difference*, all published in 1967. As a substitute for deciphering the codes and myths with reference to semiology as Barthes did, Derrida applied philosophical treatments from phenomenology, especially from its German tradition, according to which philosophy builds on metaphysics. He scrutinised metaphysics in reference to 'deconstruction', which is 'both destruction and construction' (see Dosse 1992/1997, 17–41). Derrida deconstructed, for example, the opposition set up between writing and speaking, wherein speech seems to be a natural form of language while writing is only its artificial trace. In 'logocentrism', a specific form of which is the 'phonocentrism' evident in the abovementioned phonological claims, speech is superior to writing. Speech builds on the 'metaphysics of presence' and writing ruptures it with respect to 'archi-writing', which is a condition for the systematic play of differences. Applied in this connection, 'différance' is a catchword associated with the verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer'. Under this notion, each element exists in relation to others, from which it differs, and the definition of meaning is deferred through the endless chain of signification (Derrida 1972/1981; see also Ryan 1982, 11–12). From this standpoint, no meaning or origin external to the continuous differing and deferring exists; there are only ghostlike traces of being that deconstruction can expose.

Articulation of Nodal Points as a Discursive Practice

Post-Marxist political theorists such as Laclau and Mouffe, their students in the Essex school, and the still active philosopher Slavoj Žižek, among others, have developed discourse theory toward more of a political philosophy, where a new social logic had been in order for the New Left. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe cite hegemony as the most important discourse-theoretical category for political analysis. They clarify that this involves articulation of the above-mentioned 'nodal points' or 'master-signifiers', terms that refer to a 'particular element assuming a "universal" structuring function within a certain discursive field' (1985/2001, xi). The condition of hegemony entails the discursive elements articulating in practice, not because of any inherent relationships to each other through certain internal laws. Their model implies a lack of totality—the unity of discursive elements is constructed socially and politically in contingent terms. Post-Marxists position this as 'anti-essentialism' running counter to the Althusserian approach with its universalistic inclination.

Regarding 'radical democracy', Laclau and Mouffe committed in both theory and practice to the contingency of all social relations that are open to a hegemonic struggle in such a manner that they claimed no relationship to have priority over others. At the core of radical-democratic politics is the notion of contingency and the idea that identity is not fixed outside the discursive field of articulation. Laclau contributed especially to the ontology of discourse theory, while his spouse Mouffe additionally made a political call for 'agonistic pluralism' criticising 'deliberative democracy' (with reference to the latter as found in the work of John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas, see Selg 2011, 169–172; Laclau 1996; Mouffe 1999). For Mouffe, this entailed challenging liberal-democratic models inscribed in theory that are regarded by many people as indifferent, descriptive, and apolitical. In the politics of deliberative democracy, the discussion builds on liberal-democratic values such as freedom of speech, which many consider a universal ideal. Agonistic pluralism, on the other hand, also recognises the adversaries of these, confronting them for what they are. Said adversaries have a right to defend their position, which implies consent built in hegemonic struggles.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 113) argued that a prerequisite to a struggle for hegemony is the expansion of a political space filled with

floating signifiers that are not yet fully formed and instead are partially fixed. According to Laclau (2005, 116, 226), '[t]he logic of the *objet petit a* [i.e., surplus desire/meaning in Lacanian psychoanalysis] and the hegemonic logic [in Marxist philosophy of praxis] are not just similar: they are simply identical'. A signifier acquires different meanings in different contexts and articulates signifying chains through a nodal point (Lacan's *point de capiton*, or master-signifier) that structures an open discursive field of action. This opens a discursive space for ideological and political struggles for hegemony over elements that are not essential but overdetermined by one another. In contradiction with a self-contained and fully articulated system of differences as seen in Saussure's notion of language or Marx's conception of social structure as an articulated whole such as *Gliederung*, social relations are now conceived of as contingent articulations in a discursive field, which leads to the struggle for hegemony wherein 'radical democratic' politics and action take place.

By means of the practice of articulation, Laclau and Mouffe explained, the constituent elements of a discourse organise in such a way that their relative identity changes. Such an articulated entity is not, therefore, a fully structured discursive totality akin to a machine or an organism, whose parts are in a necessary relation with one another and determined by this structured whole. Articulations take place instead because of dislocation of its elements to fix the meaning of the signifiers that float freely in a discursive field. In this sense, articulation is a discursive practice that 'consists in the construction of nodal points' around which the signifying elements are temporarily organised or fixed as discursive moments. According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, 113),

> the partial character of this fixation proceeds from the openness of the social, a result, in its turn, of the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity.

In the field of discursivity, this contingency is governed by the logics of equivalence and difference, which stand in constant relationship with one another. From this point of view, the 'chains of equivalence' (see p. 170) articulate around discursive subject positions to produce a group identity out of differences in opposition to 'the other', as in the case of the working class versus capitalists, while antagonisms resist this symbolisation (the 'real' contradictions conceived in the relations of production, for instance). The logic of difference is applied to resolve this split in aims of

disseminating the various antagonisms in a relatively open discursive field for the struggle over hegemony. Hence, no social formation is a fully sutured and self-confined whole because of the surplus (or *objet petit a*), which is due to an excess that subverts the fixed meanings (p. 113).

Radical democracy is grounded in an assumption of 'the contingency and ambiguity of every "essence"' of the social (p. 193). In a complex social formation replete with contradictions, the overdetermination of all social relations (in other words, the overflow of its discursive fields) implies that society has no existence other than as a necessary limit to arbitrariness. Antagonisms arise from this failure to achieve a sutured whole based on lack seen at the core of all social identity. In this respect, 'the presence of some objects in the others prevents any of their identities from being fixed' (p. 104). This definition delimits fully constituted systems of difference such as language by illuminating their borders as a symbolic order. Consequently, we find antagonisms or the negativity at the core of the social and the constitutive struggles for hegemony. Accordingly, the political appears as a discursive field based on social and political action as the contingent articulations of social relations employed to constitute the people against the hegemonic power bloc. The demands for democracy extend in this manner in the new domains of struggle as the above-mentioned radical-democratic politics.

According to Laclau (2006, 103–104), Marxists conceptualise the contradictions and struggle as taking place in objective social relations whereas antagonisms set the discursive limits to the objectivity itself. This stance does not permit any object to carve its own identity. Rather, an identity is created through the empty signifiers that name the objects of a discourse retroactively, thereby setting up the reference point after the act of signification. For purposes of this discussion, the empty signifier is a nodal point—that is, a 'signifier without the signified' (see Laclau 1996, 36; see also Žižek 1989/2008, 109). As the nodal point, a signifier is emptied of its meaning for the project of articulating other signifiers to symbolise the absent identity (Stavrakakis 1999, 80). In 'Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?', Laclau (1996, 44) offers an example of an empty signifier through Hobbes's state of nature:

> [I]n a situation of radical disorder 'order' is present as that which is absent; it becomes an empty signifier, as the signifier of that absence. In this sense, various political forces can compete in their efforts to present their particular objectives as those which carry out the filling of that lack. To hegemonize something is exactly to carry out this filling function.

In early modern political thought, people acknowledged the rule of an absolute sovereign as a legitimate order of society for the simple reason that it seemed the only alternative to inevitable disorder (p. 45). As for new social movements, the aims behind the struggle for hegemony are not always so clear but still signify resisting the system in its present state (p. 41). To construct a nodal point of an ideological discourse in a manner that fills the gap with whatever appears as its closure implies taking it as if it were real. This calls for political articulation as an alternative to following every rule to the letter.

Regarding contingency, every identity seems relative, and it enables articulatory practices by discursive means. Discourse is made up of divergent positions, moments where its constituent elements have a relative identity. 'Articulation' is any practice that forms a relationship between two or more elements such that a change in their identity emerges. One consequence of this structuring practice is a discourse. However, such an entity is never unified, never a self-contained whole. Hence, social structure defined as a structured totality is impossible (p. 114). Taking the place of such a whole is an open discursive field where overdetermination complicates forming of identities and its elements never fully articulate to the signifying chains. Since all identities are relative, no articulation of the constitutive elements to discursive moments is ever complete. The practice of articulation, therefore, consists of the construction of nodal points that temporarily fix floating signifiers to quilt their identity in such a way that the identity of their constitutive elements changes (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001, 113).

Every attempt of closure quilting the identities is therefore doomed to fail because identity forms relationally—that is, in relation to all other elements in the discourse. Writing in *Emancipation(s)* (1996), Laclau discusses empty signifiers as referred to above. Since becoming an empty signifier entails a signifier getting emptied of its meaning, every signifier that refers to other signifiers can become a master-signifier: 'a signifier without a signified'. Žižek (2000, 108) took a lesson from Laclau and Mouffe in this regard—to conceive of the political with reference to the hegemonic struggles—but went on to criticise the normative appeals favouring a liberal-democratic state, characterising them as 'the renunciation of any real attempt to overcome the existing capitalist liberal regime'. For post-Marxism, it follows from the overdetermined social relations in the symbolic order that hegemony comes about in an open discursive field

of action where the political is an empty space of the discursive elements not articulating into structured totalities.

In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989/2008), Žižek calls the object of ideology a 'rigid designator'. For him, it acts as a nodal point around which the identity of the ideological elements is temporarily fixed, supporting signifying chains. In his psychoanalytical reading, ideology supports the identity after a traumatic encounter with the real—i.e., with antagonisms, which resist symbolisation by revealing the limits of the symbolic. In this respect, antagonism overlaps with Lacan's notion of 'the Real' that resists signification. For both, a process of signification always encompasses an unattainable object-cause of desire remaining as a residue or leftover. The *objet petit a* is crucial because it gives consistency to the split subject.

In radical-democratic politics, several social and political positions relate metonymically with one another around certain nodal points that discursively articulate ideological elements. Its opposite is totalitarian politics. Fascism builds ideologically on, for example, anti-Semitism, wherein ideological elements condense metaphorically in the figure of 'the Jew'. This is illustrated well by national socialist ideology's literal division of the political into two opposing camps. Consequently, the identity of mutually distinct elements was reduced to equivalences, where each difference became displaceable by the others, such that the definition came in purely negative terms. 'Jew' reappeared for fascists as the excrement of a rotting social body that remained intact only in a paranoid conspiracy theory that led to very real mass destruction (see Laclau 1996, 36–46; Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001, 130; Žižek, 1989/2008, 95–144; see also Stavrakakis 1999, 76).

Grossberg (1992, 54) states the following in his cultural theory:

> Articulation is the production of identity on top of difference, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices [...]. Articulation is the construction of one set of relations out of another [...]. Articulation is a continuous struggle to reposition practices within a shifting field of forces, to redefine the possibilities of life by redefining the field of relations—the context—within which a practice is located [...]. Articulation is both the practice of history and its critical reconstruction, displacement and renewal.

In stitching up distinctive identities, fragments, and structures from bits and pieces, there are no necessary correspondences in their

articulation to a particular position or to a particular set of experiences, as the above example attests. In fact, it appears that, in principle, anything articulates with anything else. This gives the concept of articulation a potentially limitless range of reference. For various connections to be made and remade in practice, some links are broken, creating room for the creation of new ones. Thus, follows a field of action that goes beyond the economic to the prevailing conjunctures in which practices are located and changed. The process also includes actors who are active in contexts that create the circumstances in which people live and where social change can take place.

In work building on the discourse-theory approach, Grossberg (pp. 52–61) describes the lines and breaks between practices and their effects as most real: one finds a practice manifested not where it is used but at the site of its effects. Hence, the relations and connections are contingent and made repeatedly. This approach is called radical contextualism because of its commitments to 'relationality' and 'contextuality', which are considered necessary for understanding 'what is going on' in contemporary conjunctures. This relational or contextual approach is embodied in the concept of articulation, which characterises 'the analytic practice of cultural studies' (Grossberg 2010, 21). It is, in fact, one of the central concepts for cultural studies, where it acts as 'a sign of avoiding reduction' (Slack 1996, 118). Cultural-studies scholars have engaged in reflexive reassessment of 'the theory of articulation', from which the concept has reached new audiences.

Conclusion

Structural linguistics proffered 'articulation' as an anatomically oriented metaphor covering the linguistic parts of language. These link formless thoughts and sounds to form distinctive signs via language, which forms a system of differences. The 'social action is language' conceptual metaphor is built on the paradigm of structuralism, which became fashionable in the social sciences with the resurgence of structural linguistics ushered in by social anthropology. For French structuralism, as in structural linguistics, language is a system of differences. Rather than following a linear representation of time, language is synchronic, so history became 'a process without a subject'. One problem found in this approach is its universalistic notion of the subject. Structuralists' anti-humanism was an attempt to eliminate this issue but ended up highlighting it instead. At the base, such

notions do not account for actors' subjective meanings. Structuralists' failure to develop an alternative to phenomenology for coming to terms with the transcendental subject invited post-structuralist critique.

The post-structuralist approach, then, cast aside language as a system of differences, in favour of emphasis on a play of differences wherein the signifiers are unable to fix meanings or to anchor the identity of the subject that is split between the conscious statements and the unconscious enunciations, which resist symbolisation. With post-Marxist discourse theory, the concept of articulation demonstrated its power by opening a discursive space for ideological struggles that quilt the signifying chains in practice. A space opened, in turn, for examining political articulation as negation of the social structure wherein the economic defines political objectives or the hegemonic task of a given social group. This contemporary usage has its roots in the Essex school, which approached social relations as a product of articulations at the political level. For discourse theorists and cultural analysts of that orientation, the ideological and political are structured similarly to a language or culture, which are epiphenomenal in relation to the action of individuals, and society is subordinate to the actors who constitute it. The core problem in this approach is that it consigns the 'social structure is an articulated whole' metaphor to the dustbin of history, from which any return to Marx becomes difficult. With the discursive turn, in this respect, one turns one's back on the social structure as an articulated whole, a concept well worth keeping if one is to avoid reduction wherein society turns into a language-game or a non-hierarchical actor network.

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CHAPTER 6

Discussion: Reflections on Reductionism

Abstract In classical sociology, society was portrayed at first by means of the anatomical or biological metaphors of the natural sciences. It was amid more sweeping social changes that the concept of articulation shifted from the 'limbs of the social system' metaphor toward a discursive practice that brings forth and organises signifying elements with emphasis on human action. One larger motion showcased by the waning of the idea of an articulated whole, which Marx's notion of *Gliederung* described decades ago, is an integral shift from social structure to social and political actors and their networks. More recently, 'articulation' has been conceptualised as a discursive practice in line with the discursive turn whereby social scientists have come to view the identity of discrete elements as contingent on individuals' actions and specific changes wrought by means of articulatory practices in an open discursive field of action. On the one hand, the concept of articulation is a sign of a break that can lead to reductionism wherein society becomes a discussion about society. On the other hand, it expands a discursive field wherein struggles for hegemony hinge on political articulations.

Keywords Articulation • Economism • Marxism • Post-Marxism • Reductionism

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The Discursive Turn to Political Articulation

Just as metaphors serve poets in an art form that meshes unconnected words, thereby associating meanings with them by creating unexpected new links via expression, social scientists and cultural analysts use conceptual metaphors to translate abstract notions such as the social structure and social change into more concrete concepts. Articulation is especially noteworthy, in this context, for its double meaning applied for 'a structure or linkage' and 'articulate verbal expression'. Recall that the Latin idea of *articulus* was an anatomical or biological notion used in referring to the bones and the joints, or a state of connection, and the nodes or nodal points of a plant. It has also been applied to combining elements, parts, or subdivisions, especially in speech, that appeared in 'the domain of articulations' (see Saussure 1916/1959, 112). In structural linguistics, 'articulation' developed from an anatomical term employed to link linguistic parts of language as 'a member, an *articulus* in which an idea is fixed' (again see Saussure, p. 113) with their effective organisation to 'a system of distinct signs corresponding to distinct ideas' (p. 10).

We know from the concept's history as probed in previous chapters that 'articulation' is cognate to the German term for social structure by means of which society once was grasped as a hierarchical articulated whole of the social system's limbs. Within this conceptual metaphor, the setting of *Gliederung*, articulation is like a linkage between individual members of the body, with the German term being translated into English as 'articulation' correspondingly. Marx adopted the notion of *Gliederung* from Hegel but employed it to counter the reification of social relations in the form of abstract ideas (Weber 1994, 614). In contrast to the hypostasis of totality, Marx considered social structure as an articulated and hierarchically structured complex whole. Recall that, instead of philosophical idealism, the starting point for Marx's critique in *The German Ideology* was the 'real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live'. In Marx's historical-materialist philosophy, 'the ideality of moments' turned into the members, the elements of the unity, an articulated whole of society.

By presenting Marx as the founder of a new science, focused on the capitalist mode of production, Althusser stressed the picture Marx's theory painted of a complex process of contradictions and determinations besides the economic with reference to an articulated whole of particular social formations. Because it factors in the stratified nature of social reality,

a conceptual metaphor of articulation that renders social structure as an articulated whole can afford depicting society as a complex, hierarchical, and articulated order rather than a self-subsistent whole akin to nature. The new economic anthropologists later refined the conceptual metaphor via evidence from developing countries. They found social formations that consist of articulations of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production, articulations wherein the capitalist mode dominates but does not necessarily destroy pre-capitalist forms such as the domestic mode of production. Hence, the modes-of-production controversy has manifested itself both in theory (typically with reference to Marx's *Capital*, as in the first issues of *Economy and Society;* see Wolpe 1980) and empirically in connection with such anthropological fieldwork.

Althusser retained Marx's *Gliederung* and elaborated on the 'articulated whole' conceptual metaphor for social structure. Althusser, as a member of the French Communist Party, insisted on a break from Marxist humanism. This was analogous to Marx's eschewing of the idealism and bourgeois philosophy found in 'German ideology'. Althusser made his case with a critical stance to Gramsci, who as a former leader of the Italian Communist Party had already taken issue with economism wherein the political and ideological instances of society merely express the fundamental class contradictions built on the economic base. Gramsci himself reconsidered the metaphor of the base and superstructure as presented in Marx's preface to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859) ('The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life-process generally', p. 160). In place of mechanical or structural causation, in which the economic determines the superstructure, Gramsci introduced the notion of hegemony in his Marxist philosophy of praxis to reclaim social change.

In the struggle for hegemony, social structure cannot stand still as an articulated whole—the connections and breaks have to be articulated in practice. The central question, then, is about the order in which to articulate 'the limbs of the social system'. Laclau adopted the concept of articulation for his discourse theory on the basis of the 'social action is language' metaphor. He assumed that, in themselves, 'ideological 'elements […] have no necessary class connotation, and that this connotation is only the result of the articulation of those elements in a concrete ideological discourse' (1977, 99). A rebuttal by Hall, however, points out that a specific articulation of certain ideological discourses has been held through long expanses of history. Crucially, articulations occur at a specific

politico-historical conjuncture. Hall's ideas are made clear in his analysis of Thatcherism, addressing the ideological discourse of authoritarian populism composed in 'a contradictory juncture between the logics of the market and possessive individualism, on the one hand, and the logics of an organic conservatism, on the other hand' (Hall 1988, 53). This led to the criticism in which Hall reasoned that 'necessary non-correspondence' of discursive practices, being 'a radical dispersal of the notion of power' to 'everywhere', turns into a form of reduction upward, a form evident in post-structuralist streams of relational thinking.

As characterised by Hall here, post-structuralists applied a notion of 'difference' without having a concept of 'articulation' as unity-in-difference. For that reason, post-structuralist discourse theory built only on a play of differences with regard to language used in the discursive field. The notion of articulation found in post-structuralist theories is not the same as *différance*, a difference that cannot be heard, only seen. In post-structuralism, the subject's identity is not fixed and the meaning is always deferred. This view can lead to the idea of a decentred subject and the endless play of differences.

At the same time, however, the post-structuralist critique of Marxism does demand consideration. According to cultural analysts, investments in a discursive field such as those of popular culture are not only ideological but also affective; hence, they matter in different ways to different people, in line with certain 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977). For Grossberg, cultural analysis of articulations entails mapping out these interrelated vectors that point in many directions and considering numerous real-world connections (1992, 61). According to him (1986b, 72–73), anti-reductionism of the sort found in Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is horizontal and multidimensional; it builds on process ontology that is not vertically aligned but flat. Critics of Althusserian structural Marxism concluded that ideology theory takes a narrow approach, homing in on mere ideological effects, while post-structuralism-inspired cultural analysts and discourse theorists take account of real-world experiences, thanks to notions such as affect and affectivity that extend beyond the collective consciousness, representation, signification, and 'the ideological'.

Relational thinking regards 'articulation' as neither a substantial concept for self-subsistent wholes acting under their own rules and norms nor one to do with social interaction wherein social structure is immune to effects of individuals' action. Rather, it proved integral to ideology theory-related controversies whereby the space for discussion of social relations

came to admit hegemonic struggle. In this newly opened space, the working class was no longer a privileged and universalistic subject. This, in turn, freed a discursive space for political articulations seemingly negating the Marxist premises that the economic and class determine the political objectives or hegemonic task of a certain group of people.

Nevertheless, post-Marxist discourse theorists replaced the complex notion of society with the idea of antagonisms—that is, with negativity at the core of the social structure. At the same time, somewhat paradoxically, an exclusively discursive position that negates the concept of ideology can lead to reductionism wherein society reduces to mere discussion about social phenomena. While conflating individual actors with the social structure implies a self-sufficient whole without any actors apart from classes, post-Marxist discourse theory appears to conflate structures with the struggle for hegemony.

Marxist Critique of Economism

As displayed in everyday understanding, individualism is a typical form of reductionism that social scientists criticise. For example, unemployment is both an individual-level and a structural problem, yet for individualists, it reduces to merely attributes of individuals and, therefore, is deemed an individual's own fault. By the same token, strong opposition to individualistic explanations may lead to reductionism of its own, wherein unemployment becomes merely a product of the capitalist system. The social sciences apply 'reductionism' in a pejorative sense. For instance, historical materialism is accused of reducing the social consciousness of individuals to the historical and material circumstances in which people live. From this angle, Marxists betray a strong tendency to cast social relations in a manner aligned with economic determinism and class reductionism. For their adversaries, then, Marxists' ways of portraying social relations pay no heed to actors other than the classes.

Marx's review of classical political economy starts with a critique of individualism but is not as limited as such criticisms suggest. To counter claims made by both liberalists and anarchists, his 'Critique of Political Economy' presents an argument that society 'does not consist of individuals, but expresses the sum of interrelations, the relations within which these individuals stand' (1857/1973, 265). Thus, Marx declared the starting point to be the relationships that cast individuals in mutually unequal social relations. Individual people positioned in this manner are

not 'masters' or 'slaves' outside 'the complex social relations that constitute them' as subjects, he states on the same page. In other words, there is no escape from these binding ties, yet they remain subject to social change, which transforms the subjects. According to Marx's 1857 introduction to *Grundrisse*, in the so-called bourgeois society, with the bourgeoisie as the ruling class and the proletarians having nothing to sell but their labour, the elements that articulate social structure are arranged in a more complex way than they were before (p. 105). When reflecting on the capitalist mode of production, Marx produced profound thoughts about the social relationships that bind people in society and change them—thoughts perhaps more radical than any of his contemporaries'.

Marx posited that although bourgeois society differs from all other social formations in history, it has risen from the ashes of previous social forms through the elements that already existed. In other words, it has a history, and that history has fundamentally changed the elements from which the capitalist relations of production are formed. This means that the most abstract theoretical categories, such as capital, wage labour, and landed property, are bound up with 'their order within modern bourgeois society' (p. 105). Note that it is not to be confused with civil society. For Marx, in bourgeois society, simple categories such as labour grow more complex in relation to the past, and the present is a vantage point that allows the best view of their change. In other words, the complex relations of production aid in understanding the past relations that are their elementary forms. Marx's interest in precapitalist social formations was limited to proof that the capitalist mode of production has a history in the form of primitive accumulation of capital, which involves separation of the worker from the means of production. Marx found the forms of appropriation to be linked to the relations of production specific to each era and characteristic of it.

It was in this respect that Marx metaphorically identified the social structure of 'bourgeois society' as an articulated whole. Through the notion of *Gliederung*, he portrayed social change as an outgrowth of the social struggle between formations, such as classes. A genuinely reductionist understanding would have the economic represent the only determining structure of bourgeois society, articulating around a single line of class conflict. Instead, a capitalist social formation is like an edifice whose upper floors (i.e., politics and ideology) rest on its foundation for an economic base. The problem with the latter, more nuanced view, lies in taking the base-and-superstructure metaphor as a theoretical model wherein

bourgeois society becomes a totality that expresses a hidden structure or the economic base in every instance of the social formation. While opponents of Marxism deem it guilty of precisely such economism, reductionism is also characteristic of the opposite position in ideologism.

In Soviet-style Marxism, Marxist-Leninists accused the Second International's socialist democrats of economism (see Bottomore et al. 1991, 168–169). For Lenin (1917/1970), social change was a result of political action aimed at revolution, not of economic class struggle as it was for socialist 'revisionists'. Gramsci, from his position within the leadership of Italy's communist party, expanded on the criticism, stating in *Prison Notebooks* that economism is typical of laissez-faire liberalism and revolutionary syndicalism, which have nothing whatsoever to do with Marxist philosophy of praxis (1971/1999, 369–384). A distinction between the state and civil society, wherein economy is a part of civil society that the state should not regulate, forms the basis for the free-trade ideology. This fundamental distinction between the economic and political defines economism. In an ideological strategy such as 'austerity', neoliberal 'economists' depict the economic as a non-political instance outside politics; thereby, democratic values such as 'equality' and 'justice' can be dismissed since they do not belong to the political decision-making of the economic realm. Ideologically, this is a deliberate attempt to transform the welfare state and politics. Revolutionary syndicalism, in turn, is grounded in the economic interests of sets of people with a specific occupation who are subordinate to the ruling class and its hegemony. In the struggle for hegemony, however, 'trade unionism' never extends beyond strictly limited economic interests, in what Gramsci called another form of economism (pp. 369–373), which was typical for the social democrat workers' movement, according to Lenin.

Importantly, Althusser's anti-humanistic theory was a political response to the Marxist humanism embraced by the French communist movement. For him, social change results from ideological and political struggle, whereas both Marxist humanists and communists rejected such a premise. While economism attends to the economic in a manner that neglects ideological and political struggles, Marxist humanists did not find the contradiction between capital and labour to be the main cause of social change. Althusser (1974/1976, 86) paired humanism with economism as the opposite sides of bourgeois ideology. He had already targeted humanist members of the French Communist Party by saying that 'the philosophical (theoretical) myth of man is reduced to ashes' (1965/1969, 229), and

he would persist vociferously regarding Marxism as distinct from such conceptions of the world. Gramsci, whom Althusser painted as having reduced Marxist philosophy to history, was seen as guilty of a theoretical collapse of the former into the latter. Philosopher André Tosel has even referred to this critique as 'the last great theoretical debate of Marxism' (per Thomas 2009, 8).

It is worth reviewing the theoretical battle briefly. The structural-Marxist conception of social structure as an articulated whole is organised in terms of contradiction and overdetermination. A social formation is composed of a relatively independent superstructure overdetermined by the economic 'in the last instance', where the relations are conceived of via the metaphor of ideological and political superstructure upon economic base. The critique of it coalesced in the Gramscian method called the philosophy of praxis, which was applied in relation to hegemonic struggles, especially in Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxist discourse theory. At the pole opposite of structural-Marxist critique of economism is ideologism, where an open discursive field of society grows indistinguishable from the struggle for hegemony. Table 6.1 presents a summary of both below.

An important contribution of Laclau and Mouffe's book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is the Lacanian argument that, in a process of articulation, the quilting point or anchoring point stitches up the sliding of the signifier. In the book, they depict signifiers as floating freely in an endless flow of discursivity until they become partially fixed with meaning. In their discourse theory, a signifier obtains a meaning when it articulates into a chain of signifiers temporarily. The nodal point, where the discourse partially fixes the meaning, forms because of a political articulation that changes the identity of its elements. Notwithstanding that, the identity of elements is never complete. This points to a surplus that is open for change. In summary, articulation here is a discursive practice that 'consists

Table 6.1 The discursive turn toward political articulation

Structural-Marxist critique of economism:	Post-Marxist discourse theory:
• Social structure is an articulated whole (*Gliederung*)	• Social action is language (a 'domain of articulations)
• The 'base and superstructure' metaphor proves suitable concept	• The metaphor 'society operates like a language' serves the argument
• Society is not a totality but expresses the economic only in the last instance	• Society is an open discursive field of struggle for hegemony

in the construction of nodal points' around which the signifying elements come to be temporarily organised or fixed for a moment (1985/2001, 113). An alternative to this social order is a discourse without any fixed meanings.[1]

Laclau and a group of his students in the Essex school of discourse theory and political analysis continued discussing the concept of articulation and applying it in their deconstruction of Marxism. According to Laclau and Mouffe, no society is a fully articulated and self-contained whole. These post-Marxists' substitute for the positivist notions of society as antagonisms. That is, the negativity begets the social, and the symbolic differences disperse across the discursive field. Their brand of discourse theory maintains that one condition for hegemony is the expansion of a discursive space awash with floating signifiers. The expansion affords a hegemonic struggle over those elements that determine the others. Signifiers of such kinds gain different meanings in different contexts, and they articulate the signifying chains through nodal points structuring the discursive field. To become one of these points (i.e., a master-signifier), a signifier is emptied of its meaning and transforms into a signifier such as 'society' that does not have any meanings except in its function as a signifier.

In the articulated system of differences portrayed in structural linguistics, no space remains for ideological and political struggles or for articulatory practices that could change discursive orders. Instead, articulations take place because of dislocations or surplus to fix the meanings of the floating signifiers in a discursive field. From the political point of view, the chains of equivalence articulate around different subject positions to produce group identities out of differences (e.g., the working class vs. capitalists). The next step is an attempt to dissolve antagonisms and social divisions that resist symbolisation or categorisation. In a democratic nation-state, there is a relatively open discursive space for political and ideological struggle over hegemony. This renders a change possible. In the

[1] In *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari present a metaphorical link between schizophrenia and capitalism, whilst Lacan's psychoanalytic theory holds that psychosis is a failure to access the symbolic order. Where the latter renders the schizophrenic its outlaw quite literally, Deleuze and Guattari presented the symbolic order itself as psychotic by dint of its power to destroy capitalism. From this perspective, the schizophrenic person is a revolutionary and hence not made subject to the symbolic order, while for psychoanalysts such a person being psychotic signifies a severe mental illness that the psychoanalysis is not capable of treating.

preface to the second edition of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001, x) note that they emphasise the moments of political articulations, on which hegemony is contingent. In other words, hegemony hinges on a contingency, which is a form opposite necessity. With such declarations, the authors committed to the conception that there is 'necessarily no correspondence' among, for instance, the capitalist state, the property-owning classes, and bourgeois ideology, which articulate only in practice (e.g., people vs. power bloc, in a struggle for hegemony).[2]

According to Hall's 'On Postmodernism and Articulation' interview (Grossberg 1986a), the reduction of bourgeois society as structured totality to its economic cause is downward reductionism that relies on assuming that the economic is independent of all other instances of the social formation (such as the political and ideological). In this context, 'articulation' is a sign of rejecting an economism-oriented approach wherein bourgeois society is a totality expressing the economic in every instance of the capitalist social formation. In a less economistic view of bourgeois society, the economic determines which of the instances of social formation is dominant at a given time. For cultural analysts, the idea of no necessary correspondence between particular instances of the capitalist social formation points to the relations, or articulations, which do not have any guarantee, even in the 'last instance'.

A struggle against economism can—but need not—take a form opposite 'reductionism upward'. This had such an impact that, for Hall (cited by Grossberg 1986a, 56), the conceptual metaphor 'society operates like a language' constitutes the 'theoretical revolution of our time'.[3] On the one hand, there is great power in viewing social change through a conception in which the various instances of the social formation function

[2] Laclau's 'radical democratic politics' gained political significance in the activities of the 15-M movement, in which the indignados mobilised to occupy Spain's major city centres on 15 May 2011. This anti-austerity movement arose at a time of crisis in the 'Eurozone', in opposition to a national ruling bloc consisting of members of the social-democratic and conservative parties who had succeeded one another in political power for decades in a system that seems corrupt. The leaders of the left-wing populist party Podemos organised a mass movement against the elites, which altered common ways of speaking about the political system in Spain (see Iglesias 2015). With the 2016 elections, Podemos established a political alliance with United Left (IU) and others, challenging the two-party system but ending up in the opposition. Laclau, who inspired this movement in theory and practice, died two years earlier while lecturing in Spain.

[3] We should take this statement with a pinch of salt, though.

discursively. On the other hand, an image in which society operates in the manner of a language can be too easily distilled to the notion that 'society is language'. Therefore, a useful conceptual metaphor for society's manner of operating can oversimplify it thus far that society ends up a mere discussion of it. This departure from the notion of base and superstructure manifested itself in discourse theory as an inversion of economism with reference to 'necessary non-correspondence', and it spread from there as post-Marxist discourse theorists completed the reversal of structural Marxism by deconstructing it in terms of discourse theory.

Post-Marxist Discourse Theory and its Critique

In Marxist-Leninist ideology, the proletariat's task was to put an end to class-linked antagonism by destroying its opponent, the bourgeoisie. With the collapse of the dictatorship of the proletariat, history proved that society never reaches a totality that puts an end to the political and to all antagonism. It should not come as a surprise, then, that more recent post-Marxist relational thinkers (Laclau and Mouffe 1985/2001) have conceptualised articulation as 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified' (p. 105) rather than seeing society as some articulated whole that gives meaning to all parties involved.

In post-Marxism, the result of the articulatory practices is discourse. The discursive construction of the social formation from among distinctive elements means that the political constitutes the social structure. Only at the level of the political, Laclau reasoned, can differences articulate to the chains of equivalence in opposition to 'the other' in an antagonistic relationship. The aim of radical-democratic politics is to extend the social structure in an open discursive field of action and deconstruct the emancipatory project in a manner consistent with new social movements that have shifted their focus from politics and ideology to identify issues.[4]

No form of political ideology can fully articulate the social structure. Nevertheless, a particular hegemonic bloc can actualise hegemony at the political level and, thereby, articulate the social order temporarily. In

[4] In the politics of New Left, post-Marxist struggle against economism caused a retreat from the classes. The paradigmatic example of this is Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985/2001), which characterises a socialist strategy for the struggle for hegemony, wherein the proletariat does not occupy a revolutionary position. As Wood (1986/1998, xi) suggests: 'Post-Marxism may be yesterday's news, but its progeny is very much alive in today's intellectual fashions'.

political struggles for hegemony, articulations are populist or popular, and they are attempts to articulate the differences between the people and the ruling bloc. This is part of their very nature and a vital concern in hegemonic struggles. Hall's use of the concept (per Grossberg 1986b, 62), which differs from Laclau and Mouffe's, refers to signifying practices that are cultural and ideological, not necessarily political and discursive. In Hall's theory of ideology, articulation is an ideological practice when engaged in fixing the chains of equivalence such that people perceive them as inevitable, not social or discursive constructions of signifying practices floating in the symbolic realm.

In Hall's reading of Althusser, ideologies form systems of representation, comprising concepts, ideas, and myths that materialise in practice. Hall insisted that people are subject to ideology throughout life (1985, 106–107). In stark contrast to Marx's notion of ideology as false consciousness, it empowers people 'to make some sense or intelligibility of their historical situation' (Hall, cited by Grossberg 1986a, 53). This approach differs from some Althusserian formulations based on the metaphor of the base and superstructure, formulations wherein there is a 'necessary correspondence' between individual instances of the social formation. It also differs from post-structuralist discourse theory's inversion of the structural-Marxist view. Hall criticised this inversion, or mirror image, for its horizontal relations between various practices that do not relate with each other outside a discursive field based on 'necessary non-correspondence'. For Hall, in contrast, articulation offered a non-reductionist tool for thinking about these relations in a new way with reference to 'no necessary correspondence' (Hall 1985, 94).

Hall found it crucial that no correspondence is necessary between individual instances of a social formation in reference to articulation. When articulations do not have any a priori guarantee, one can take a non-reductionist, relational approach to society. Addressing economy, politics, and ideology as discursive practices brought a breath of fresh air into cultural analysis. At the same time, however, the overall picture of class-based society fragmented into social and political struggles that are structured in network-like discursive fields of action. Therefore, it bears reiterating Hall's warning in that this replacement for 'necessarily no correspondence' between different instances permits economy and society to function 'as if' they were a language on their own, although they retain a structure that

operates as any system of differences does. Hall wielded the concept of articulation to accentuate the crucial difference between the simile '*x* operates like *y*' and its reduction to '*x* = *y*' (see Grossberg 1986a, 57).

Hence, the concept of articulation has become an academic catchword in cultural studies but also a reminder to avoid reduction in both theory and practice (Slack 1996, 118). Hall did much more with articulation because it was one of the key concepts in his cultural theory (e.g., Angus 1992; Clarke 2015). His early writings link it with the idea of an articulated whole of social structure and then with political articulation as a site of ideological and political struggles. For the 'social action is language' metaphor, he saw articulation as a discursive practice of connecting 'distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary "belongingness"' (Hall, per Grossberg 1986a, 53). It was in that context that Hall contested the Marxist tendency to think about actors as classes by asking 'how an ideology discovers its subject rather than how the subject thinks the necessary and inevitable thoughts which belong to it' (p. 53). His use of the concept of ideology sets him apart from discourse theorists, for whom a 'discursive formation' regulates dispersion of diverse contradictory elements (e.g., Foucault 1969/1972). Although the lens of discursive formations allows thinking about the relations of power and knowledge, it helps little with the questions of resistance and ideological dominance, which Hall cited in the Grossberg interview as his most important theoretical and political concerns.

The theoretical framework for Hall's thinking did not come from post-Marxist discourse theory. Instead, its foundation is the metaphor 'social structure is an articulated whole'. The concept of articulation encompassed here provided him with a way to theorise on the complex social formation consisting of different practices that stands for 'society'. Hall supplemented his interpretation by engaging in dialogue with post-structuralists, for whom society consists of a lack of totality or an absent whole in an open discursive field of action without any rules/restrictions other than language as a play of differences. He concluded that the problem of the fully discursive position is that 'there is nothing to practice but its discursive aspect' (Hall, cited by Grossberg 1986a, 56). Hence, anything is articulable with anything else in the realm of floating differences. Articulating signifying elements into a discursive moment in such a manner as changes their identity is only the first moment of articulation. The

second moment stems from the ways in which 'discursive moments' 'do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects' (p. 53). Some articulations can break easily, and they are subject to disarticulation. Others are stronger, as in the case of organised religions. They offer their subjects a worldview but also an opportunity to shape their religion and identity. Therefore, religions are immensely persistent in the face of social change. Still, no articulation lasts forever. None is permanent. That is, articulations are history-bound and constituted and maintained in practice.

The Jamaican-born Hall cited the illuminating example of Rastafarians rearticulating certain signifying elements from the Bible to mesh with their experiences via means of expression such as reggae music that spoke to people in their own terms. Rastafarianism is a religious ideology that allowed many detached people in the western Caribbean to make sense of their subordinate position as subjects living in exile from 'the Promised Land'. Articulations that at first appeared completely arbitrary to the world at large were, in this context, expressive of the black diaspora. As ideological and political subjects situated, people obtained a voice, which turned into a social force and articulated many persons as subjects to a Rastafari movement. While most of them were in poverty and racially discriminated against, these circumstances do not reduce to any specific class position or cultural experience as such; however, significant categorisations such as class and race were. The articulations occurred at a specific politico-historical juncture, where they had their own 'conditions of existence' (Hall 1985, 113–114). Hall's cultural analysis of politico-historical conjunctures draws, in this context, from Gramsci's and Althusser's works, which were fundamental for the Birmingham school of cultural studies, which built on conjunctural analyses and descriptions of the articulations between a social formation's instances.

A particular conjuncture results from contradictions and overdetermination; this negates the idea of necessary correspondence. The notion of a conjuncture (per translator Ben Brewster, as cited by Althusser 1969, 250) has a double meaning: it refers to joining or being a joint (that is, an articulation) and to an economic juncture or crisis (see Grossberg 2006; Koivisto and Lahtinen 2012). In this context, theory-informed Marxist political practice—the purpose behind which was to analyse the capitalist mode of production for the benefit of socialist revolution—turned out to be an apt tool for assessing and intervening in hegemonic struggles

instead.[5] In Hall's own politico-historical conjuncture, a post-war hegemonic relationship between Labour and the Conservatives ruptured and spilt over into conflict between workers and employers in the mid-1970s. In Britain, Thatcherism challenged the consensus as a consequence of economic crisis, racial conflict, and syndicalist confrontation occurring in a backward and heavy industrial structure at the unstitching of the British Empire. It contested consent-based hegemony that had been built on rapid economic growth governed by the welfare state, which now had come under attack. Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher started to dismantle the welfare state through cutbacks in the public sector, applying free-market ideology. She articulated her political project via 'authoritarian populism' that followed conservative moral codes and rules of behaviour from the Victorian era. According to Hall (1988), this articulated into a social force in terms of an ideology replete with anxiety. In that ideological expression of authoritarian populism, deliberately apolitical ways of speaking found subjects for the ideology by exhorting citizens to recognise that the state had spiralled out of control.

Thatcherism addressed upwardly aspiring middle-class people who sought a 'proper' identity in a time of historic change and social conflicts, when the old social fabric seemed to be tearing into tatters. Hegemony means not rule but consent out of various competing and conflicting interests articulated to a ruling bloc. Once this point is reached, fragmented and heterogeneous ideological elements can articulate to the 'common-sense' conception of the social world, with which many people can identify. Thatcher even stated that 'there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families'. In other words, there are only the actions of atomic men, women, and families forming the nucleus for community life, from which others are excluded as surplus people (or 'Lumpenproletariat'). After the Conservatives, Tony Blair's 'New Labour' took a similar course, based on the 'Third Way' of Giddens, according to which no conflicting gender, class, and race interests remain anymore and there is only globalisation before which all

[5] Per Göran Therborn (2008), in the Marxism of the twentieth century, '[t]he classical Left was driven by the "irreverent collectivism" of the socialist working-class and anti-imperialist movements, while other contemporary radical currents for women's rights or human rights, for instance, have a more individualist character' (pp. 4–5). Therborn scrutinises the post-Marxism of the twenty-first century, which is characterised by a gap between Marxist theory and political practice, where the alleged 'triangle of social science, politics and philosophy (…) has been broken', perhaps irrevocably (p. 119).

people are equal (Hall 1998, 9). In this context, political actors were not only citizens or consumers but subject to law-like economic forces that seemed as unavoidable as what is found in economism, leaving less space for the political and ideological struggles for hegemony, which also formed a foundation for anti-globalisation movements.

In his use of the word 'articulation', Hall referred to connections or links that, rather than being necessary, require specific conditions of existence, which means that they have their own determinations. This leads to the dissolution of some articulations and the constitution of new ones in their own politico-historical conjunctures (Hall 1985, 113). For example, 'racial' and ethnic categories can be dominant ways of quilting ideological chains in social formations. In this process, the word 'black' might signify surplus meaning in a chain of equivalence that articulates both with the articulation of capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production and with racial discrimination in every instance within the social formation. Consequently, those categories can be articulated with the exploitation of, for example, black and female migrant workers operating in the service sector.

Nevertheless, racism is also an ideological discourse. It exists not just at the level of material practices. This is a social or discursive construction out of conflicting ideological elements forming an ideological discourse that influences the common sense of the people. What something is, in other words, receives its meaning in relation to others. Chains of equivalence between distinct ideological elements that differ in nature are products of articulation. In this relational view of both agency and structure, the subjects are subject to the structures yet are also able to act and fight for the structures' change. In the language supplied by the conceptual metaphor of articulation, the elementary forms of the social structure do not articulate by themselves, and actors have to twist and bend the 'members of the social body' into a certain position in a struggle for hegemony such that they can exert a power of articulation.

Conclusion

In a fully articulated whole of social relations, action is epiphenomenal in relation to the structure of society, which is constitutive of actors. To avoid pulling everything downward, social scientists must acknowledge that the ideological and political do not reduce to the economic, as Gramsci and Althusser both pointed out in their readings of Marx. After all, in

economism, the class conflict between capital and labour determines society in a way that leaves no discursive space for other types of contradictions, along lines such as race/ethnicity and sex/gender. Political articulation structures individuals as the subjects of ideological discourses in a manner contingent on the social relations and on forces of production that bind people together and change the ways in which they conceive of self and others. At the same time, the process is aleatory. Far from fixed, it is open to changes.

The concept of articulation contributes constraints and affordances to thinking about these relations and their formation in connection with social structures and language. For example, considering modes of production from this angle reveals that the economic modes of production can articulate as a language does without the reader falling into the reductionism of a fully discursive position (i.e., collapsing society to mere discussion of society). In other words, in the 'articulation of modes of production', the economic refers to a relatively independent structure articulating with other instances of the social formation in such a way that the notion of society does not evaporate. It also considers spatial connections and discursive links between differences and acts of giving expression. Therefore, it compasses the relations of both structure and action in a non-reductionist manner, and it can facilitate historical materialist analysis of social change in times of uncertainty.

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