structures but also to uncover them and their operations in order to allow people to deal better with the impact of these structures on their thoughts and actions. Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst who took the ideas of Freud and combined them with those of Saussure to develop the idea that the unconscious is structured in the same way as language. This position sees language as pivotal in the formation of the individual and also as central to the way in which the unconscious mind is structured.

Still others define structures as the models they build of social reality. One example of this is Pierre Bourdieu. Although generally considered a poststructuralist, Bourdieu exhibited elements of structuralism in his theory on habitus and field by asserting that structures can exist in the social world itself independent of language and culture.

Finally, a fourth group, such as anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (often referred to as "the father of structuralism" [Kurzweil 1980:13]), can be seen as being concerned with the dialectical relationship between structures of the mind and the structures found in society.

Although it arose in a number of different disciplines (Marx [as well as the structural Marxists] in political economy, Freud in psychiatry, and Lévi-Strauss in anthropology, among many others), the greatest interest in and development of structuralism is to be found in linguistics, especially the work of Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913). However, the field of linguistics in general, and Saussure in particular, has had a profound impact outside the field of linguistics. They helped give rise to the linguistic turn, or a shift in focal concern from social to linguistic structures, that has altered many of the social sciences.

Saussure was interested in the differences between *langue,* or the universal structure underlying all language, and *parole,* or the way speakers actually use the langue. *Langue,* however, was the more important of the two to Saussure; he believed it was most relevant to look at the formal system of language rather than the ways in which individuals made use of this structure. *Langue* can be seen as a system of signs where each sign depends on the other signs in the system for meaning. This is clearest in the case of binary oppositions. For example, the word *high* does not convey a sense of elevated positioning without at least an implied reference to its binary opposite low. The structure of *langue* is not one that is shaped by individuals but, rather, one that shapes the meanings of words, the mind, and ultimately the social structure. Lévi-Strauss took the work of Saussure on linguistic structuralism and applied it to anthropology. He reconceptualized a number of social phenomena (most notably kinship systems) as communication systems in order to subject them to a structural analysis.

Eventually, the concern for an underlying structure and the system of signs grew into a discipline in its own right. *Semiotics* is the field of study concerned with structure of sign systems. Semiotics is concerned not only with language but with all sign and symbol systems, in other words, with all forms (verbal and nonverbal) of communication.

— Michael Ryan

See also Althusser, Louis; Bourdieu, Pierre; Discourse; Lévi-Strauss, Claude; Poststructuralism; Saussure, Ferdinand de; Semiology; Structuralist Marxism

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STRUCTURALIST MARXISM

Marxism that came under the influence of structuralism—with its emphasis on meaning as deriving from a system of differences—criticised Marxist humanism, as found, for example, in the work of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979). Humanist Marxism placed the epistemological figure of "man" at the heart in its framework of the analysis of society, without always seeing that this was an epistemological stance, preferring instead to believe in the intentions and the will of "actual" human beings.

At its height in the decade 1965 to 1975, structuralist Marxism, was no doubt strongest in France, possibly, in part, because of that nation's rationalist tradition. The specification of such clear chronological markers, however, implies that such a Marxism's day has passed. But as will be noted later, it lives on in aspects of the epistemological stance of sociologists, such as Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), influenced by the epistemological school inspired by the work of Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962).

Structuralist Marxism has several strands, including the philosophical, and "scientific" Marxism promoted by Louis Althusser (1918–1990) in France; the genetic Marxism of Lucien Goldman (1913–1970), again in France; and Galvano della Volpe (1895–1968) and Lucio Colletti (1924–2001) in Italy. Structuralist Marxism consisted, first, of a method: The key achievement here was a "return to Marx," which opened up Marx's work to a critical and "symptomatic" reading (in the manner of Freud's interpretation of dreams). This reoriented political Marxism away from a crude, humanist, "battle of ideologies" approach, derived from Marx's early works, toward an understanding

of the implicit structure of the relations of production in political economy. Second, Structuralist Marxism, as with the movement of structuralism in general, de-centered the subject, so that history ceased to be seen as the expression of a subjective human essence. Third, history becomes discontinuous because it is not the history of a subject (whether this be man or nature or the state) but, rather, is the autonomous evolution of time in which numerous forces are at work.

Of course, no explanation of structuralism—whether or not of the Marxist variety—can avoid considering the innovation brought to the understanding of language by Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913); nor can it avoid noting the importance attributed to language in the social sciences influenced by a structuralist approach. The work of Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropology is a case in point. The structure of language becomes the methodological point of departure par excellence; the social world itself is like a language, based on relations, not on essential attributes.

For the structuralist view, then, language is a system of relations, not a collection of static elements (words). Value (e.g., meaning) is established through analysing the differential relations pertaining between the elements. Value emerges only in the relation between the elements themselves. As Saussure famously said, "Language is a system without positive terms." At another, more historical, level, structuralist Marxism was also developed by thinkers (Althusser, Balibar, Rancière et al.) for whom epistemology was the point of departure for analysing economic and political phenomena. Influential in this regard is the "father" of epistemology and the history of science in France, Gaston Bachelard. Indeed, if one looks to Bachelard here, structuralist Marxism begins to fall within a program of thinking and research that would clearly include philosophers and sociologists such as Michel Foucault (1926–1984) and Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002), even though their allegiance to Marxism was always weak.

Three aspects of Bachelard's thought endeared him to a structuralist approach. The first is his emphasis on epistemology, which implied that scientists should not be blinded by positivism but should develop a reflexive sense. In other words, knowledge of the subjective dimension is also important to the scientific project. Scientists need to grasp the real space in which they are working as well as the represented space they are studying. An appreciation of the difference between real and represented space requires recourse to theory. This is not to deny the real. For connected to Bachelard's emphasis on theory is his strongly held position that a rationalist framework (field of interpretation and reason) in science is impotent when detached from experimentation. Thus, although experiment without theory leads to naive empiricism, theory without experimentation is sterile.

Second, Bachelard proposes a nonsequential, noncausal (in the simple sense) explanation of history. Science, for example, evolves in fits and starts; it exemplifies "discontinuity" as much as, or more than, continuities. Newton's work cannot predict Einstein's, for example. In fact, this aspect of Bachelard's work was reinforced by his anti-Cartesian stance. So whereas Descartes had aimed to reduce reality to its simplest element, Bachelard argues that after the revolution brought by quantum physics, even an apparently simple element turns out to be complex. Thus, complexity (or "complex causation" as Althusser expressed it) is at the heart of things not simplicity.

Third, Bachelard made the imagination a fundamental object of analysis, a fact that opened the way to a structural view of subjectivity, even if Bachelard's own credentials as a structuralist were at best ambiguous.

In raising method to pride of place in understanding society and class struggle, structuralist Marxism focused on the relations between elements—whether in politics, or the economy—as Saussure had done in his revision of linguistics. Althusser thus argued that the nature, meaning, and importance of Marx's concepts were not given in advance in a self-evident, obvious way. Rather, they had to be produced through a symptomatic reading—particularly of *Capital*—to arrive at Marx's truly original insights, insights of which Marx himself might not have been entirely aware because the theoretical and philosophical language available to him was quite literally, pre-Marxist. More specifically, this language was anthropological and placed "man" at the center of a secular universe. To confirm this, Dostoyevsky (1821–1881), Nietzsche (1844–1900), and others proclaimed the death of God, without always recognising that if God is dead, so is man. For the anthropology in question is indebted to the same metaphysics as the religious orientation it opposes. Thus is Ludwig Feuerbach's (1804–1872) critique of Christianity reinforced by the same anthropological view of the world when he claims that things can be put to rights by substituting man for God—or rather, by saying that God is man's creation (Feuerbach [1841]1989).

Historically, a key question for Western intellectuals in the post-World War II period in light of dominance of Stalinism, concerned the true nature of Marxism. Was it necessary to accept that Stalin and the gulag were the inevitable outcome of Marx's intellectual and political legacy? For a number of key philosophers and thinkers, such as György Lukács (1885–1971), the discovery of Marx's early writings, which focused on the concept of "man," the answer was "no." Indeed, by way of these early writings, a case could be made, Lukács claimed, for saying that, within the capitalist system, the notion of alienation explained why human life had become so degraded. With the generalised commodification—and thus, objectification—resulting from the dominance of exchange-value under capitalism,

this argument said, humanity had lost touch with its natural human essence founded in community. The object had become a force over and against "man," not a force for liberation and enrichment. And it emerged that in France and elsewhere between 1945 and 1960, Marx's theoretical and metaphysical writings giving "man" pride of place in economic and political affairs came to be seen as the secret to all Marx's other works, including *Capital.*

When Jean-Paul Sartre called Marxism the "unsurpassable philosophy of the modern era," he meant by this that Marx had alerted the world to the necessity of an essentially humanist critique of capitalism, a critique that would reveal the importance of human subjectivity—thus, morality—in political matters and that, furthermore, would see history as the reflection of human consciousness caught at a given moment of time. To write history thus meant giving a phenomenological description of human consciousness. Through such a strategy, the determinist approach of economistic Marxism, inherited from the Second International, could be avoided.

Humanist Marxism had another feature, however, one that was more problematic. This is highlighted by Claude Lévi-Strauss's critique of Sartre's theory of history. Briefly, Lévi-Strauss argued that it is a mistake to raise the "I" to the power of "we," as Sartre's Cartesian notion of the subject had led him to do. In other words, it is inadequate to project qualities of the individual onto the collectivity. Sartre's approach entailed deducing the nature of collective entities, such as "the people," "the state," "the party," "the species" (man), from the nature of individual consciousness and inserting the result into a historical narrative hailing the triumph of the collectivity, whatever name one gave to it. By the 1960s, a number of intellectuals realised that Stalinism and totalitarian Marxism could be understood as regimes that precisely forced subservience to such collective entities. In this sense, Stalinism, rather than being the antithesis of Marxist humanism, could be seen as its continuation.

Moreover, if Marxism was a humanism because it focused on the relation between man and nature and between self and other, it would, from an epistemological and metaphysical perspective, be little different from a host of nineteenth-century philosophies of man that inherited the Enlightenment push for the secularisation of society, a principle underlying the French Revolution. It was necessary, then, to discover the truly unique qualities of Marx's thought, and it was this that raised questions of method. Marx cannot be inserted into the Enlightenment secular heritage so easily if the originality of his thought is to be preserved. Moreover, it is the humanist approach to Marxism that made a reconciliation possible between Marxism and certain strands of Catholicism, especially in France.

Consequently, through Althusser, structuralist Marxism argued for an "epistemological break" between Marx and Hegel and between Marx and Feuerbach, and it rejected the idea of a quiet and continuous evolution between the essential qualities of Marx's thought and what had gone before. "Epistemological break" implies that there is not even a continuity between Marx's method and concepts and those invoked by humanists of every stripe. Structuralist Marxism famously became a "theoretical anti-humanism," which opponents claimed was equivalent to its being Stalinist (cf. C. P. Thompson). Certainly, it was abstract rather than concrete or empirical, but whether it was inhuman in a moral sense is another matter. For, in fact, the whole field of moral and ethical action raises key questions that could be addressed only through the idea, developed in the theory of the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan (1901–1980), of the unconscious understood structurally as a specific kind of discourse. For Lacan, the subject is the subject in language, the subject as formed in and through the symbolic order oriented around the relationship between signifier and signified. Here, it is not that ethical action is impossible but, rather, that it is never the spontaneous process that the conscious ego often believes it to be. Here, there is no subject independent of the signifier. There is, in other words, no original human nature (or natural sexuality), giving rise to a subject identical with itself (where the subject is the self-conscious subject, entirely present to itself). The structural unconscious decenters the subject, and this is the view that structuralist Marxism also took before it—in the work of Althusser, in particular.

For its part, genetic structuralism, derived largely from two moments: The first was the debate around the historical relationship between Hegel and Marx, inaugurated by Jean Hyppolite (1969), where the key question centered on the extent to which Marx was, or was not, the inheritor of Hegel's system. The second moment came from psychology, where its chief instigator was Jean Piaget (1896–1980). The chief claim of genetic structuralism and its Marxist variant, as articulated in the work of Goldman, was that it soft-pedalled discontinuity in favour of a historical and evolutionist approach to the study of art and society. In effect, it sought to balance the overemphasis on "synchrony" (the same time: a static moment favoured by those influenced by Saussure) with diachrony (time as movement and evolution).

ECONOMIC DETERMINISM

Marxism of the Second International, which collapsed in 1914, espoused an "official" Marxism that gave primacy to economic activity in the evolutionary transformation of society: The economic laws governing society would inevitably bring about a socialist, and then communist, society. Culture, by contrast, was seen to be "superstructural": the level of ideas and idealism, if not of false consciousness. Here we have an abiding issue in theoretical Marxism: The nature of the separation of the ideological superstructure

from the economic—therefore material—infrastructure. For the economistic view, the laws of the formation of the infrastructure determine the superstructure. Such was confirmed by the Comintern founded by Stalin in 1938. In other words, living, real communism promoted a blatant economic determinism.

It was precisely this simple determinism—implying that the economy was a totality that *expressed* underlying forces of production—that structuralist Marxism set out to contest. Instead, it offered a nuanced philosophical view of the relation between the economic and cultural spheres by saying that the economic never appears simply in its own right for all to see but, rather, appears in a displaced form in a wide range of activities, from art production and education to politics and religion. For this approach, it is not a matter of the economic sphere on one side and the superstructural dimension on the other. There is, rather, a fundamental imbrication of the two, to the point that it has to be admitted that a knowledge of material life can be gained only through the prism of ideas emerging in the superstructure. The argument is not unlike Freud's when he talks about the relationship between primary and secondary (or symbolic) psychical processes. The latter constitute the prism through which knowledge of the displaced actions of the primary processes becomes possible.

Or again we could point to a nondeterminist way of understanding technology—technology being fundamental to economic development, even for Marx. Thus, instead of technology determining social relations, it becomes a feature of, and is implicated in, the cultural field itself. Had not Marcel Mauss, the anthropologist most influential for structuralism before Lévi-Strauss, said that techniques of the body (even spitting) imply that, through techniques, technology crosses over into the psychical and social domains instead of being separate from them? It is not essentially, in the words of Marx, a "mode of production," found uniquely in the economy understood as the accumulation of goods. Or we could say that the economy is more than the quantitative version of it. The economic, as exchange—as giving and receiving—and as the search for equilibrium, as the principle of "zero-sum," and, above all, as the principle of differential relations between elements in the productive process, penetrates all the hitherto superstructural domains of society.

More specifically, Althusser and Etienne Balibar argue, in *Reading Capital* (1970), that Marx shows that it is the capitalist system itself that valorises a narrow view of the economy as determining the nature of social and cultural forms. Within the capitalist system, the economy appears only in the version in which consumers adopt a fetishistic attitude to commodities, meaning that goods are desired for their own sake rather than for the deeper insights into society at large that production provides—insights about how, for example, kinship relations might be structured by the mode of production, without being reducible to it.

The uneven development of the various levels of the socioeconomic formation mean that it is impossible to have a homogeneous whole that, mirrorlike, reflects society and the economy. Rather, it is a matter of "the effectivity of a structure on its elements" (Althusser and Balibar 1970:29). That is to say, at any given historical moment, one aspect of the whole can come into dominance. At one time, it might be the economy narrowly understood; at another time, it might be politics; at another, cultural elements. What emerges in dominance is a historical, not a theoretical question. The conditions of possibility of the historical determination, however, depend on the nature of the articulation of the socioeconomic structure, which is itself in time. Although it is not a simple whole, this structure has its laws and its order, and these are accessible only through grasping the nature of the relations between the elements themselves.

"Structuralist Marxism" is thus also a reading of *Capital* in terms of an epistemological position. The latter entails the idea that Marx founded a science, the science of history, and that this science can be found embedded in Marx's writing, if one knows how to look for it—that is, if one has a sophisticated idea of reading based on a scientific theory or if one has a rigorous method enabling a passage beyond the self-evident aspect of the text, a self-evidency that in all probability is governed by ideology.

By contrast, humanist Marxism in France was driven by Sartre's claim that existentialism is a humanism, ultimately subservient to Marxism. For Sartre, the main focus had to be on the moral status of particular acts. With the discovery of Marx's early writings in the 1930s, the members of the Frankfurt School, such as Herbert Marcuse, also claimed a humanist heritage for Marx and added that this humanism led to the conscious determination to escape the alienation implicit in the capitalist system. But where was humanist Marxism going? What would be the result if alienation were finally overcome? Is it equivalent to the end of politics?

For its part, structuralist Marxism (Althusser, Balibar, Badiou, Godelier) saw the gaining of a knowledge of the form and content of the "social formation" as the central issue. Thus, in the work of Althusser and Balibar, the idea of "economic" is broadened to include ideological and political factors that interact with the economy—an interaction that is crucial, even if the economy is still determinate "in the last instance" (which never comes: the origin is never present). Here, there is—again following the lead of Freud—an issue of "overdetermination," meaning that there is a complex and not a simple relation between cause and effect. There are contradictions between different levels of the social formation. And in any case, the economy can, at mininmum, be seen as the scene of exchanges at a structural level: exchange of goods, exchange of women.

GENETIC AND NONGENETIC MARXISM

Along with Goldman and Piaget, structure emerged in a genetic form in the work of the historians of the *Annales* school in France, for whom the "*longue durée*" (long span) is beyond the consciousness of *histoire evenmentielle* (history of discrete, everyday events). The *longue durée* is the slow centuries of time, barely perceptible and yet inexorable. It is history equivalent to the changes in climate patterns and geographic transformations. Indeed, the *longue durée* is a "spatialisation of time" as structure is in the field of nongenetic structural Marxism. The objective of the history with this very broad focus is to escape the narrowness of history as chronicle, where individual events are recounted but where a deep understanding of their logic and complexity is impossible. Events history is inherently simple, for it is always reducible to the individual events themselves.

HISTORICAL MOMENT OF STRUCTURALIST MARXISM

Although structuralist Marxism had its formal beginning with the work of Althusser in the mid-1960s, its roots were in fact more concrete. They were linked, not only to the dissatisfaction with the moral Marxism propounded by Sartre, and with the subjectivist Marxism promoted by the Frankfurt School, but also to opposition to all movements that valorised the agent of action to the exclusion of social conditions. The context of action needed attention. Back in 1947, Heidegger (1889–1976), in his "Letter on Humanism" ([1947]1993), criticised Sartre and his insistence that the human subject was its acts: that existence preceded essence. Such an approach privileged consciousness inordinately as well as the idea of moral responsibility. "Man" became responsible for what he did, despite the situation. However, Heidegger was less concerned to criticise consciousness and moral bearing and more concerned to question the privileging of beings (existence) at the expense of Being.

In keeping with the critique of agency and consciousness inaugurated by structuralist Marxism, Pierre Bourdieu articulated a structuralist sociology aiming to provide a complex theory of the individual in a given society as both constituted by and constituting the social world in which he or she is located. Forms of perception, apperception and appreciation are in large measure articulated through Bourdieu's concept of "habitus," which is also defined by the levels of cultural and economic capital specific to a given agent. Saying this implies that, through the concept of habitus, a structuralist approach "breaks" with a commonsense epistemology based on the obviousness of perception—the level of empiricism for Althusser. The complexity that habitus points to evokes the space where the scientist works and, thus, the influence of Bachelard. For Bourdieu, complexity also arises because, as Marx said, human beings *produce* their way of life. More specifically, habitus is a kind of grammar that sets the limits to action without determining how a specific individual will act within it, just as the grammar of a natural language sets the limits to possible speech acts without determining the kind of speech that will be enacted in any contingent situation. Overall, Bourdieu's claim is that class struggle is a struggle between the habitus of the dominant and the habitus of the dominated class as much as it is a struggle between social positions based on the differential possession of economic and other forms of capital. In fact, the reproduction of the unequal distribution of economic capital cannot occur, Bourdieu argues, outside the framework of the habitus that enables the unequal distribution of economic wealth to become manifest. Even though he belongs to no Marxist school, Bourdieu, like Marx, refuses to accept the status quo, a status quo in favour, clearly, of the dominant class. Class struggle is therefore the name of the political and social game for both Marx and Bourdieu, and the reality and truth of this game can be revealed through rigorous scientific research—what Bourdieu calls a knowledge of necessity.

Where Bourdieu differs from both Marx and structuralism is in his refusal to see class in solely economic terms—however broadly *economic* is defined—and in his refusal to accept what he calls the "objectivist," or "scholastic" illusion of structuralism, an illusion that gives too little weight to "practice" or to agency. In short, actions, often couched in complex strategies, for Bourdieu, do make a difference.

Like Althusser's, Bourdieu's work is also marked by the approach to epistemological questions in science inaugurated by Gaston Bachelard, where the notion of an epistemological break is crucial. Bourdieu, however, includes in the equation, the social disposition of the researcher. The researcher can thus go through a kind of "mental transformation," or "conversion of thought," which breaks with spontaneous yet preconstructed perspectives that support the existing social system.

With his emphasis on the way privilege is reproduced—especially through education, where the next generation inherits the benefits of its forebears—Bourdieu has an affinity with genetic structuralism. For it is in the passage of inheritance that time enters the picture and the exclusively synchronic (= one time) approach of "pure" structuralism is modified if it is not entirely rejected. On this basis, too, the agent of the system can play a part in the determination of social conditions through the implementation of strategies—strategies that the idea of agents as mere supports for the structure (as in the work of Althusser) leaves out.

PLACE OF IDEOLOGY

For structuralist Marxism, ideology becomes a practice. Writing of the phenomenon of ideology, Althusser cites

Pascal who offers advice to the one without faith, the one who does not know how to pray: kneel down, move your lips and you will believe, entreats Pascal. Believing—ideology—is thus in the everyday practice, not in a prior faith worked out intellectually. Thus for Althusser, ideology is not a competing intellectual system, but a way of being and acting. Ideology interpellates—calls—individuals to come to be what the system wants them to be. Ideology is a way of using identity to create human supports for the system. In addition, according to Althusser, "ideology has no history."

Slovoj Žižek follows up this practical structuralist Marxist approach to ideology by arguing that ideology is what cannot be rationally justified: We might know that consumer behaviour is furthering the interests of capitalism, but we engage in it all the same. For ideology cannot be explained by false consciousness, which would imply that once people become enlightened, they would change their behaviour. It is rather a set of practices through which individuals constitute themselves in the social world. Only an unthought-out voluntarism could argue that it is enlightenment and education that will bring people to their senses. Such an approach cannot meet Marx's point in the theses on Feuerbach that "the educator also needs to be educated."

KINSHIP AND THE MODE OF PRODUCTION

It would be wrong to think that stucturalist Marxism attempted to analyse and explain only modern capitalist societies of the Western sort. There was, in addition, a lively debate about the status (historical, political, philosophical) of precapitalist economic formations. Could the latter be explained by a Marxist science, or would it have to be conceded that Marx still had work to do here and that therefore the notion of mode of production is limited in relation to explaining the dynamics of noncapitalist, or precapitalist societies and cultures? Certainly, it was recognised that a narrow conception of the "economic base" had little to offer in interpreting societies structured around kinship relations.

When discussing the question of the economic base versus kinship as the determining factor in the reproduction of society, a number of writers in the field made the mode of production sui generis, an entity in its own right that either dominated or did not dominate the spheres of power and social relations. This, however, is to take a very narrow view of "economic." For the latter could be defined, in keeping with Marx's early writings, as the way humanity produces its means of subsistence—that is, the economic field is the one in which humans first of all survive and then do, or do not, flourish. On this basis, the opposition to Marx is not so much that he privileges the economy, which, as structural Marxism argued, can be articulated throughout a system in a highly displaced form but that the economic thesis cannot envisage the nonsurvival, or self-destruction, of a society. To say "economic" (and the reproductive power that accompanies this) is to say no to death—forever, if possible.

CRITICISMS OF STRUCTURALIST MARXISM

However, some societies have a destructive principle at their very heart: Only in such social formations can a noneconomic way of life not based in physical needs be envisaged. This is the sense, then, of Marx's reductionism—a reductionism that is also an essentialism, because it says that the economy is determinate, not historically, but in principle, as has been noted by several major commentators (Baudrillard 1981; Laclau and Mouffe 1985). Ultimately, therefore, as sophisticated as structuralist Marxism was in its theoretical approach, it nevertheless gave into the idea of a founding principle revealed philosophically rather than historically.

Moreover, in wishing to keep a tight reign on the role of the subject and of agency, structuralist Marxism added a further essentialist aspect to its framework. For while it is true that subjectivity and the notion of the subject can also lead to a certain essentialism when the subject is defined in a noncontingent, or analytical, way, it is also true that subjectivity can be seen as the place where action changes things. Subjectivity is action—or, the subject is always "in process" (Kristeva), an "open system," restructuring itself in light of new experiences and, reciprocally, changes a small part of social reality in the process.

Of course, the ultimate criticism of structural Marxism was, and is, that it is intellectualist. In this, it goes beyond Bachelard's call for theory to grasp the place from where the scientist works—a use of theory that accepts the synthetic, open-ended nature of reality—and becomes an end in itself, a law unto itself, unable to identify with what Pierre Bourdieu called the "logic of practice." Instead of opening things up with its theoretical boldness, structuralist Marxism closed things down; it privileged the production of a theoretical practice of analysis articulated in discourse, a discourse having the structure of language as Saussure ([1916]1983) has outlined it, therefore a discourse eminently analysable at every point. In effect, against structuralist Marxism, reality cannot be reduced to discourse. There is a nondiscursive reality. Reality, like the subject, is also difference, otherness, the event, the shock of history, the revelations of time, what cannot be easily, if at all, assimilated into a structure.

To suggest that the structuralist version of Marxism is flawed is not to say—far from it—that the opposing humanist position and its variants is superior in its explanatory power. Even if structuralist Marxism was determinist and intellectualist, there was a historical reason for its emergence, and this was to show an interpretation of Marx that privileged neither consciousness nor an essentialist

idea of "man," as was common in the nineteenth century. Moreover, if the strictures about a Marxist science, as proposed by Althusser, ultimately turned out to be dogmatic, they had the effect, at the same time, of forcing intellectuals and others to think again about what science is. And in this regard, a more rigorous approach to the study of society shows that there are aspects of social and cultural life that are simply not available to consciousness, and all the self-conscious work in the world will never give access to the crucially "hidden" structures of social life, in the same way that consciousness cannot have access to the structure of language because it is also a product of language. In Freudian terms, there is an *un*conscious dimension to life and society.

It nevertheless remains true that if the "truth" of politics and society resides in the unconscious social structures, it would seem necessary for intellectuals to take on the responsibility of revealing these to the public at large. There is, then, the easy accusation against structuralism that, for it, society has to be run by elites as the keepers of truth. Such an issue opens up the question Nietzsche raises of the *ressentiment* of those who perceive that they are in the position of slave and not of master. For while a claim to science is problematic in the domain of politics, the claim that scientific knowledge cannot be directly available to all surely goes without saying.

Such questions, which cannot be answered fully here, serve to show that, for all its faults, structuralist Marxism raised serious and fundamental questions about how scientific and intellectual work is carried out in supposedly liberal democracies.

— John Lechte

See also Althusser, Louis; *Annales* School; Bourdieu, Pierre; Discourse; German Idealism; Habitus; Marx, Karl; Marxism; Saussure, Ferdinand de; Žižek, Slavoj

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STRUCTURATION

Structuration theory is a broad-ranging sociological ontology in which social practices are postulated as the basic constituents of the social world. Sociological ontologies differ from ontologies in the philosophical sense of the term. Whereas philosophical ontologies derive from primordial metaphysical questions such as what is the ultimate nature of being and existence, sociological ontologies begin more modestly by asking questions about the generic (i.e., transcultural and transhistoric) properties of social life subject to sociological inquiry. Prior to structuration theory, two antithetical positions dominated ontological thinking in sociology. On the one hand, individualism maintained that the social world is constituted by actors impelled to behave in certain ways by their own interests or motives or by their interpretations of their situations. On the other hand, collectivism maintained that the social world is constituted through the effects of social groups that shape, channel, and constrain social action. Structuration theory develops a third approach to sociological ontology that is neither individualistic nor collectivist, although it incorporates key insights from each.

Structuration theory maintains that social praxis is the most basic property of all phenomena of sociological interest. Social praxis is simply the generic term for practices of all kinds in the same sense that the individual is a generic term for actors of all kinds. Structuration theory's emphasis on praxis begins from the intuitively appealing insight that whatever types of social events or forms of structured collectivities may arise or change in a given culture or historical era, these types of events or forms of collectivities are generated in the course of social conduct and through the consequences of this conduct. Long-lasting forms of events and enduring collectivities that maintain their structural features for extended periods of time result from the reproduction of broadly similar forms of praxis. Conversely,