The Individual and the Social

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

If, as Wheeler claimed (1954, p. 13), archaeologists are digging up people, how is this the case? Where is the individual in the archaeological past? Are archaeological data collective, going beyond the individual personality? If so, in what sense? Individuals have appeared in the archaeological literature as powerful but anonymous agencies, for example a 'paramount chief might be inferred from the construction of Stonehenge, Silbury Hill or the Bush Barrow in the second millenium BC of Wessex. The work of an individual artisan may, perhaps, be recognized from examples of their work (Hill and Gunn (eds), 1977), but here individuality is reduced to idiosyncracy and creativity. Literary sources may, of course, rescue an individual from anonymity. However, archaeology has been predominantly concerned with units larger than the individual. We now want to assess this absence of the individual in considering the mediation of the individual and society.

Other cultures and other subjects

In the conclusion to his Huxley Memorial lecture of 1938 Mauss wrote:

> From a mere masquerade to a mask, from a role to a person, to a name, to an individual, from the last to a being with a metaphysical and ethical value, from a moral consciousness to a sacred being, from the latter to a fundamental form of thought and action… who knows even if this 'category', which all of us believe to be well founded, will always be recognised as such.
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> (Mauss, 1979, p. 90)

The 'category' that Mauss was referring to is the concept of the human subject, here conceived as a muted and variable entity radically open to different forms of constitution, both temporally and in different societies. Such a notion conflicts with our common-sense, twentieth-century Western ideas about what it means to be a human subject and the manner in which people live, think and relate to others.

There has probably never been a society which did not recognize the individual subject by such means as naming or being able to differentiate between and perceive physical bodies, but we should not conclude from this too readily that a transhistorical or transcultural form of subjectivity has ever existed, or exists now. Persons are not in any sense to be regarded as given and un-problematic entities. Conceptions of the subject differ between cultures and have altered historically in tandem with the practices, institutions and forms of reference constituting subjectivity; the obvious concomitants of this are differences in bodily gesture, practices of discourse, and patterns of conduct and interaction. Mauss (ibid.) usefully challenges any notion of a person as being reducible to a set of natural (biological) processes or as arising as a transcendental spin-off of a unitary 'human experience' of the world or society; or equally, as being a datum related to some supposed universal consciousness of individuality. Particular ways of specifying the individual or individuality may arise in all societies, but this does not necessarily entail a specification of subjects as being in any sense unique entities imbued with a distinc-tive consciousness, will or intentionality. Although naming of individuals is a commonplace in societies, i.e. the specification of a subject within systems of persons, this naming does not necessarily imply the constitution of persons as distinctive individual beings. In other words names and statuses while specifying persons do not necessarily individuate an autonomous ego as a separate agent with a personalized consciousness and independently constituted mode of individuality. In regard to Zuni: 'on the one hand the clan is conceived as constituted by a *certain number of persons,* activities, roles; and, on the other, the purpose of all these roles is really to symbolize, each in its own portion, the pre-figured totality of the clan' (Mauss, 1979, 65). In ancient China the individuality of a person was his or her *ming* and this removed from individuals all the connotations of perceptible, individual being:

the name, the *ming,* is a collective noun, it is something that has come from elsewhere: the corresponding ancestor had borne it and it

will be inherited by a descendant of the bearer. And when the matter was considered philosophically, when in certain metaphysical systems the attempt was made to express the matter, it was said that the individual is a compound of *shen* and *kwei* (two more collective nouns).

(Ibid., p. 76-7)

This suggests that actual concepts of personage may vary markedly from one group to the next and that the modern Western conception of a person as a bounded, unified and integrated being, a subject of distinctive cognition and dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, action and judgement is a rather peculiar idea. The ethnocentric bias of such a notion is very clearly brought out in Geertz's analysis of individuality in Javanese, Balinese and Moroccan societies. The Javanese concept of a person is arranged in terms of two sets of essentially religious symbolic contrasts: inside/outside; refined/vulgar - both of which subsume individuals. The former contrast differentiates between relations of human experience and spirituality and is contrasted with the observed realm of bodily behaviour, but both are considered to be an identical component of all individuals; the latter distinguishes between different sets of conduct. Individual persons become the momentary locus through which the two sets of oppositions prevail and confront each other - a passing expression of the permanency of these oppositions in human existence (Geertz, 1979, pp. 230-1). In Balinese society all aspects of personalized individuation are completely stylized, so that individuals become, in effect, dramatis personae in a symbolic play of affective emotions and actions. Physical subjects become, according to Geertz, 'incidents in a happenstance history' (p. 232). In Morocco personal being has a chameleon-like quality, differing according to the context for action, and individuals become effectively kaleidoscopes in the mosaic of social organization.

Construction of the self: the imaginary and the symbolic

Lacan, in his rereading of Freud, has explored the problematic relation between the subject and the social. This relation, he proposes, can be conceptualized in terms of two modes or realms in which the subject apprehends reality: the symbolic and the imaginary. As these are interdependent, the subject is always located at the intersection of the criss-crossing axes of the real, the symbolic and the imaginary. The symbolic order is that which confers meaning and relates the subject to a place in the social order of other subjects. The imaginary is the order in which the

subject develops a self-centred consciousness. The real is always an absent presence - that to which the symbolic and imaginary relate. Such a conception leads to the decentering of individual consciousness which is no longer regarded as the origin of meaning, knowledge and action.

Lacan proposes that the child, at birth, is a *hommelette,* a little person and also 'like a broken egg spreading in all directions' (Coward and Ellis, 1977, p. 101). The child, at this stage, has no sense of its own identity and no possibility of conceiving of itself as a unity distanced from that which is other or exterior to it. In the 'mirror phase' (Lacan, 1977, pp. 1-7), the child learns to recognize itself through the mirror as a being distinct from the outside world, yet this identity is also imaginary because it is an imaged or a specular knowledge. The child's imaginary identity with its image in the mirror (the 'other') is the manner in which the infant forms an image of itself as a distinctive objective entity. The imaginary relation of the ego to the body characterized by the mirror phase is constituted via a specular counterpart and so the relationship between subject and ego is essentially narcissistic. The image is more constituent than constituted for the infant. This specular form situates the agency of the ego prior to any social determination in an imaginary or fictional direction - imaginary and fictional because it suggests some degree of permanency to the I, rather than the I as always something being constructed. In the mirror phase the subject is represented as an image or something other, a stand-in reflection of the self and yet, paradoxically, this image constitutes part of the subject's self-knowledge and self-awareness.

It is only with the child's entry into language that it becomes a. 'full' subject entering into a determinate field of signification, of which the paramount example is language use. Speech entails the differentiation of I from *you* and creates a division between the subject of the *enunciation* and the subject of the e*nonce,* between the I that speaks and the I that is represented in discourse and that ultimately disperses the unity of the subject. The subject is situated in discourse by the 'I' and yet this I is always a substitute for the subject that speaks. The child that speaks always has to identify with the I yet this I is formed in terms of a matrix of symbolically defined relations and subject positions. As the subject is always linguistically and discursively constructed he or she is always a displaced or decentred subject, displaced and constituted across the whole gamut of discursive symbolic and material practices making up the social field. Hence there can be no unmediated discourse, no pure constitution of the self. The self is always created in relation to

the other and the subject loses control over meaning and signification in the parallel objectivity of discourse (Lacan, 1977, p. 70). Rather than being a given, the subject is an entity linked to and dependent on various strata of consciousness so that 'a signifier is that which represents a subject not for another subject, but for another signifier' (Lacan, 1973, pp. 180-1). Signifiers do not link individuals to other individuals, or even to the world, but to other signifiers. The subject therefore becomes an effect of the realm of signifiers within any particular socially constructed symbolic field and the subject's 'reality' is situated within this order. The subject should be considered as a *subject in process,* in a constant state of definement, individuation and construction: a network rather than a point in the social field. The reality of the subject, produced by discourse, is a transindividual reality. This entails that the experience of the subject has to be located at the level of the symbolic. The capacity to symbolize allows people to situate themselves in reality and yet subjects are never in a position to establish any control over the symbolic because people do not produce their own meaning: structures of signification are always given to them. Signification is a function of language and material practices which are both part of the being of the subject and yet at the same time distanced. Language is always received ready-made for subjects to use. At the same time it is through language use that the individual gains an identity and a capacity to transform the conditions of his or her existence. The subject cannot find his or her truth in a cogito because identity is dispersed in a field of signifiers in which the individual locates himself or herself and yet is dependent on a dimension which is always something more. The realm of the imaginary constructs and organizes a world centred on the subject while the subject's existential reality is radically decentred. The thought of humanity

> always faces the exhausting task of going back from the thought to the thinker; everything it says about man, is said by man, and this man is man only through that which isn't he, through the life of him and the culture around him ... he is always other, the other of others, and the other of his self: subject when he is object, object when he is subject.
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> (Dufrenne. 1967, p. 73, cited in Racevskis, 1983, p. 144)

History and the subject

It is, perhaps, most fully in the dialogue promoted by psychoanalysis that the paradoxical nature of the Western myth of the autonomous ego is most clearly revealed:

> Does the subject not become engaged in an ever-growing dispossession of that being of his, concerning which - by dint of sincere portraits which leave its idea no less incoherent, of rectifications that do not succeed in freeing its essence, of stays and defences that do not prevent his statue from tottering, of narcissistic embraces that become like a puff of air in animating it - he ends up by recognizing that this being has never been anything more than his construct in the imaginary and that this construct disappoints all his certainties? For in this labour which he undertakes *to* reconstruct *for another,* he rediscovers the fundamental alienation that made him construct it like another, and which has always destined it to be taken from him *by another.*
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> (Lacan, 1977, p. 42)

Lacan notes that the 'ce suis-je' of the time of Villon (mid-fifteenth century) has become completely reversed in the 'c'est moi' of the contemporary subject (ibid., p. 70). The subject and subjectivity in mathematics, politics, religion or \ advertising animates contemporary society and yet the symbolic character of these cultural interventions has at the same time never been more manifest. Yet this symbolic culture appears to us as having the character of an objective plenitude, the 'objectivity' of the mathematical symbol, the 'objectivity' of law and political discourse, of religious statements and the advertising image.

Foucault, in stating that 'man is an invention of recent date' and that were the structure of contemporary discourse transcended he would be 'erased like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (Foucault, 1974, p. 387), is making more than a rhetorical point. Foucault's archaeologies of Western culture, of knowledge, the clinic, incarceration and sexuality, have all signalled poignantly the radically different conception of the subject in Western capitalism as compared to that existing in pre-capitalist social formations. His focus on the decades around 1800 in *The Order of Things* is especially significant in so far as this was the period in which the 'sciences of man' - those sciences which privileged humanity as a centre and *telos* of their domain - were originally constructed, soon to take on their recognizable modern positivity. This was the appearance of Western humanity as a subject *in* and *of* discourse. Sometime at the end of the eighteenth century humanity appeared. Previously discourse had provided a fairly transparent medium of representation with linguistic forms and relations corresponding to specific elements in the world in which God had arranged a great chain of being and drawn language into correspondence with it. Humans were merely one kind of creation among many, each with

its allotted space, the essences, natures and definitions of which could be read off from a table of beings. There was no need for a finite being, MAN, to make representation possible or posit the existence of the nature of being in the world: 'In Classical thought, the personage for whom the representation exists, and who represents himself therein as an image or reflection, he who ties together all the interlacing threads of the "representation in the form of a picture or table" - he is never to be found in that table himself (ibid., p. 308). Instead of humanity as a being amongst other beings, he or she becomes a subject amongst objects and both the subject and object of self-understanding, knowledge and the organizer of a spectacle for self-appearance: 'the threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called man' (ibid., p. 319).

Under this doublet 'man' appears as (1) a fact among other facts to be studied empirically yet at the same time providing a transcendental grounding for this knowledge; (2) surrounded by that which cannot be comprehended (the unknown) and yet as a potentially lucid cogito and source of all intelligibility (the cogito of Descartes); (3) a product of history, the origins of which could not be reached, and also the source or foundation for that history.

Formation and constitution of the subject

The subject of Western society is a subject very much bound up with and arising from the field of capitalist social relations and lending support to the principles underlying capitalist production (entrepreneurial freedom, competition etc.) Forms of property, law • and contract, notions of individual mortality and the proprietal subject enjoying certain 'rights' all arise from the reality of individual private possession linked with commodity exchange (Hirst, 1980). The proprietal subject who owns and acquires commodities also has certain possessive rights. Notions of greed, selfishness, laziness etc. only make sense in terms of, are ideational prerequisites for, and concomitants of capitalism which produces and reinforces subjects of a specific type - subjects who must be held accountable for their doings in the capitalist market place and who are supposedly free to radically alter the conditions of their own social existence.

This is not to claim that the mode of production simply determines the nature of subjectivity but that subjectivity is inextricably bound up with it. As we have argued, any social totality must be

viewed as an ensemble of partially integrated symbolic systems including language, economic relations, cultural production, religion, politics, which are mutually determining without there being any primacy of determination at any one level. Different forms of social life coexist in the form of an overall and overdetermined set of correspondences made possible by the symbolic nature of human thought and interaction. It is in terms of this network of correspondences, which do not exclude the possibility of gaps or fissures, that the subject finds explanation and justification for a particular mode of being and action. The subject becomes a transindividual relation made possible by the symbolic order both permitting the existence of subjects and the symbolic experience of those subjects. So-called 'humanist' attempts to explain society and history by taking as their starting point a human essence, the free subject of needs, work, moral and political action, find their reflection in the 'free' subject that is also the subject of the Law, playing a key role in the reproduction of capitalist social relations. As Barthes notes, the judicial notion of a consistent and unitary subject derives its power only in the form of being a particular representation:

> **this psychology has . . . the pretext of giving as a basis for action a pre-existing inner person, it postulates 'the soul': it judges men as a 'conscience'... in the name of which you can very well today have your head cut off [and] comes straight from our traditional literature, that which one calls in bourgeois style literature of the Human Document.**
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> **(Barthes, 1973, p. 45)**

Social relations cannot be reduced to the fiction of a domain of interacting and free agents.

The very idea of a subject that can both speak and be spoken about entails a paradox inherent in the use of the term in ordinary language. The subject of discourse can be that which denotes as well as that which is denoted. The subject understood as an embodiment of thought is a subject that creates or sustains sense. The subject can also be something that is brought under domination or repressive control: that which has the *capacity to subject*. So, the subject can be a support or medium for discourse and at the same time be controlled or dominated by discourse or material practices: an active agent and an agent acted upon. This brings us to subjectivity, subjugation, agency and power.

Subjectivity and power

The appearance of humanity in a field of discourse, as documented by Foucault, can be regarded as issuing in a new mode of social existence in which people become subjectified and reified as objects of knowledge - 'bodies' in a field of forces constituted by power-knowledge strategies instituting an integration of the subject in terms of the overall social field.

New methods of classification, hierarchization, codification, surveillance and a disciplinary technology focusing upon the body developed in the nineteenth century, producing fresh types of coercion and subjectification. The prison (Foucault, 1977) remains one example, among many, of the technology of discipline, surveillance and punishment - one of the most visible and clearly articulated sites of practices widespread in society. In Foucault's terms Western societies are disciplinary societies. In the present context this is important because discipline creates a new type of subject, a fresh form of subjectivity, and a novel manner of subjugation.

1   Discipline operates on the body. The subject is approached as an object to be analysed and separated into finely controlled constituent parts: arms, legs, head etc. The aim of these operations is to produce a docile and easily manipulated body. For example different parts of the body may be minutely trained, as in army drill, with a standardization of operations being the ideal.

2   Discipline results in the control of time and space. Discipline requires precise control of time and the regular repetition of practices in time, for example the school timetable. Space and the organization of individuals in space is produced in specific ways; hospitals, prisons, schools, factories and military establishments all establish and operate in terms of ordered grid patterns allowing individuals to be divided, organized and supervised. The act of looking over and being looked at is a central means by which individuals become controlled in disciplinary space and time.

3   Discipline results in a proliferation of discourses enmeshing the subject and individualizing him or her. By means of the compilation of detailed records and dossiers on individuals every subject becomes a subject that can be known, subjected to a normalizing judgement and discourses of power. Deviancy from the standards of the disciplinary apparatus can be measured, defined and controlled.

Discipline in contemporary Western societies is a manifestation of power. The development of Western discursive practices, especially in institutional and official bureaucratic forms, has favoured the development of discourses and practices that actualize domination and repression throughout the social field: the family, the school, the museum, the hospital, the factory. Thus a new potential for violence and subjugation is actualized in the very systematism of power strategies. What constitutes the subject and forms of subjugation is the operation of power, both as a positive and as a negative force in society, by producing knowledges and actualizing them in specific forms. We might then say no power without subjects and subjugation and no subjects or subjugation without power.

What we are stressing is the centrality of power in social life. Power is a force and process to be found in all social totalities and, historically, different modalities of the operation of power produce different subjects, forms of subjectivity and types of subjugation, One concomitant of this is that the subject in capitalist social formations will have a fundamentally different type of subjectivity and be subject to different forms of subjugation than in other societies. Specific forms of practices which produce subjects in contemporary western society might be delineated:

1   Modes of inquiry which produce 'truths' giving themselves the status of sciences and objectivizing the subject in various ways: for example the positivist social sciences.
2   The development of practices in which the subject becomes divided from within or without so objectivizing him or her: for example divisions between the criminal and the upright citizen, the sane and the insane, the healthy and the sick, the sober and the alcoholic or drug user.
3   Discourses in which people turn themselves into subjects:: for example as subjects of sexuality or capital accumulation and commodity exchange.
4   Creation of subjects in terms of ethnic or social or religious divisions.
5   Creation of subjects in terms of those who possess knowledge and those who do not.
6   Creation of subjects as effects of the division of labour and economic exploitation separating individuals from what they produce.
7   Forms of property, law and contract create subjects with specific 'rights' and 'claims'.

8   Creation of subjects in language, communication through material or linguistic forms, i.e. the realm of the symbolic.
9   Ideological practices create subjects, practices which are interbedded and intertwined in points 1-8 above.

An examination of the category 'person ', 'subject' or 'agent' reveals it to be by no means universal, nor a homogeneous unity. Following Lacan we might also argue that individual consciousness is not the simple origin of meaning, knowledge and action. Instead the human subject is situated in a social and symbolic field. The conception of an autonomous ego, is, after Foucault and Lacan, historically specific; a feature of the emergence of the human sciences, the agent must be situated within historical practice. This draws attention again to archaeology as discourse, a practice constituting objects of knowledge. Foucault's work also shows the centrality of power in the constitution of subjectivity, and in social practices more generally. Social practice involves subjectivity and subjugation, *power to* and *power over,* agency and control. So power is both creative and oppressive and social actors are knowledgeable, not passive.

In the last chapter we questioned the category of the social, interrogating its coherence and definition and pointing to its location within archaeological practice. We argued instead for an open conception of social order stressing its constitution in social practices, which immediately involve relations of negotiation, strategy and power. In this chapter we have extended this position in arguing that the individual social subject is dispersed and decentred, situated in a nexus of power, historical and political practice and the symbolic. We now focus on the mediation of the social and the individual in considering social practice and structure.

SOCIAL PRACTICE AND STRUCTURE

In social practice the individual agent is always already positioned in relation to structure: relational sets of meanings,.concepts, signs which provide principles for conduct in a meaningful life-world. Any social acts draws upon these already existing structured sign systems or conceptual schemes for the ordering of experience; but every manifestation of structure in an action is a concretization of structure through its effects on social practice and on the object world. This realization of structure contains the possibility of the

reordering or transformation of structures because meanings and principles for conduct are re-evaluated in practice, in the negotiation between and manipulation of social agents, in the historical and conjunctural circumstances of practice, and through the contingent effects of unintended consequences of practice.

Action, in other words, is in dialectical relation to structure and social context. It begins in structure, is mediated by structure, and ends in structure, but its realization in the world may result in the rearticulation or transformation of structure. This is the concept of structuration: structure is both a medium and an outcome of social practice (Giddens, 1979, 1984). So individuals pursue projects which make sense in terms of structure. Negotiation and strategy are central to this social practice which is a chronic relation of forces between social agents with differing aims and interests. This is what we mean in emphasizing social practice as fundamentally political, in emphasizing the centrality of relations of power.

POWER

Power, in archaeology, has been conceived primarily in terms of ranking and control. As a possession, some sections of society have more power than others; they have more status. In this way power is conceived to flow from the top to the bottom of society. Ranking comes to refer to the unequal distribution of power. Power seemingly requires theorization in terms .of some sort of essence which may be possessed. The concept is reified. Archaeologists have concentrated very much on the role played by power and ranking in the reproduction of society, on describing patterns of hierarchy and control of resources (see chapter 2).

We take a different line. Any analysis of power concerns us with the social roots of power, attempts to achieve and maintain power, and counter attempts to subvert power strategies and sap the social bases of power on the part of those subjected to its exercise. Power should not be understood in terms of an all-important essence in society residing at a specific place, something which may be possessed, 'taken up' and exercised. Instead, power is a feature of society which is irreducible to individuals or groups or specific areas of the social field such as the economic or the political. In other words, power has no necessary and unitary form of existence. Rather than being conceived as *a* feature of the social we regard it as being coextensive with the social field as a whole. Relations of power are thus interwoven and networked with respect to the

specific conditions of existence and effects of social practices. Power resides throughout: the entire gamut of social practices and in the structural ordering of society. Power is that aspect of human practices which *brings about effects,* or permits the achievement or attempted achievement of outcomes. These may or may not be transformative in intent. Power may usually be connected with the sectional interests of individuals or groups involving exploitation, domination and subjection, and resistance to these practices, but this is its usual effect rather than part of its definition. Power is also a positive and not just a repressive feature of the social.

Power resides in all social intercourse because in any social encounter actors inevitably employ, to a greater or lesser extent, different sets of resources, material or non-material. Power relates to and works in terms of these material (technologies, raw materials, control over coercive and non-coercive media) and non-material resources (knowledge, information, position within the overall field of social relations, competences and skills), which individuals, groups and collectivities draw upon routinely in their day-to-day conduct. Power is dialectically related to these resources. It both draws upon and reproduces them. This is why power is not something exercised by individuals, something which can be possessed, but the effects of its operation usually result in a structured asymmetry of resources benefiting certain individuals or groups as opposed to others. Power is, therefore, to be linked with interests, but not as a reflection of interests but rather a feature which works through interests in a variety of forms and without a predetermined outcome. Consequently power, and struggles operating in terms of power, form a fundamental feature of societal reproduction and transformation (see chapter 6).

THE SYMBOLIC

We have already discussed how the subject is situated in a symbolic field: the symbolic, signs and signification, is an essential dimension of social practice. It, too, mediates practice.

Actions are not just constrained and limited by external conditions such as the friction of physical space but also by the conceptual categories by means of which the social is constituted. Cognition, however, does not simply posit limits but also creates a field of possibilities for action. The social world as cognized by social actors has both referential value and existential meaning. Any conception of history as meaningful must recognize that signs

are always already situated in structures but whose meaning may be reconstituted in action. Signs relate to other signs in structure as a collective symbolic scheme providing meaning for action. In structure signs have an abstract sense, signifying within a collective scheme of signification in terms of their relations with other signs (see chapter 4, pp. 136-43). Although signs relate to other signs in structure in an abstract fashion, their relationship to action entails a different significance. It is one of potential rearticulation and the constitution of fresh meanings. In action signs become positioned in a contingent relationship with regard to individual purposive activity and collective social strategies. In the contextual matrices of situated social activities signs become set in a contingent relationship to objects. They may take on a particular rather than a purely abstract referentiality and become subject to combination and recombination with objects and other signs from which fresh form and meaning may arise. In other words, signs, codes, symbols and categories may always take on new meanings because their meanings have their realization in relation to specific political projects and strategies.

So in social practice signs are brought into a referential relationship to the objects of actions. Action grafts particular contextual meanings to the conceptual values of signs. Secondly, they become subject to contingent relationships affecting their semantic values because signs are not just experienced by actors as something standing outside themselves but are always dialectically related to their political *interests.* As Sahlins point out:

> the sign represents a differential interest to various subjects according to its place in their specific life schemes. 'Interest' and 'sense' (or 'meaning') are two sides of the same thing, the sign, as related respectively to persons and to other signs . . . Reference is a dialectic between the conceptual polysemy of the sign and its indexical connection to a specific context. Notoriously, signs have multiple meanings as conceptual values, but in human practice they find determinative representations, amounting to some selection or inflection of the conceptual sense. And because the 'Objective' world to which they are applied has its own refractory characteristics and dynamics, the signs, and by derivation the people who live by them, may then be categorically revalued.
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> **(1981, pp. 69-70)**

Put more simply, what this suggests is that signs or conceptual categories are always dialectically related to situated social action and the interests and values of actors. Meaning is precarious; its

reproduction may result in its reconstitution, because action results in the re-evaluation of the meaning of the sign in practice, in a fundamentally political and historical context of power, interest and strategy.

IDEOLOGY AND SUBJECTIVITY

As a concomitant of the considerations advanced above, we argue that no social practices exist without signification and without being situated within an overall symbolic field. Signifying practices have specific determinations and effects in the field of social relations, creating, reproducing or transforming this field. They are a necessary element in any form of social practice.

Ideology is a form of signifying practice which acts to constitute subjects in a specific way in specific circumstances in order to reproduce rather than transform the social totality. Consequently, ideology can only have an existence and an effectivity through subjects. As a form of power it subjugates subjects. Following Althusser (1971) we can regard ideology as an imaginary relationship between people and their conditions of existence. It is not an illusion or a 'false consciousness' of that reality. Rather than regard ideology as a set of illusions we can think of it as forming a set of representations (discourses, images, myths, practices) concerning the real relations in which people live. This notion of ideology as representation in and for subjects emphasizes its familiarity and naturalizing qualities. Ideological practices are always likely to be practices that are recurrent, practices presented in a new way, practices that are already 'obvious' from previous discourses and practices. Ideology may be particularly effective in the constitution of forms of subjectivity and in effecting subjugation because it tends to represent not the real, or even a distorted reflection of the real, but that which is supposedly natural, obvious or beyond question. What ideology systematically suppresses is the nature of its own construction in signifying practices. As emphasized by Althusser (1971, p. 155), ideology is both a real and an imaginary relation to the world: real in that it is the way that people *live* their subjectivity within the field of social relations that governs their existence; imaginary in that it systematically prevents full self-reflection of the conditions of existence in which subjects find themselves. Within the ideologies of capitalism it is perfectly 'obvious' that we are all autonomous individuals, possessing a distinctive will and consciousness, an enclosed,

personal subjectivity, and 'free' to participate in the capitalist market and to direct the development of our own destinies. As individual speakers it is also 'obvious' that we are both the owners and origins of our utterances.

In considering Lacan's work in psychoanalysis we have already been concerned to demonstrate the construction of the subject in language and the symbolic order. Since the symbolic order must be considered to be, in part, an ideological order all subjects are constructed in and constrained by ideology. The network of subject positions which make action possible are produced in the symbolic realm of human signifying practices and ideology tends to displace the contradictions which exist between different forms of signifying practices. As ideologies are not merely reflected in the psyche but lived they are always inscribed in the materiality of social practices and objectified in material manifestations. Subjects must necessarily live their relations to their conditions of existence and hence they must live through ideological practices. Ideology operates by positioning the individual as a subject in relation to a certain meaning. So, ideology both produces individuals with a subjectivity and also subjugates them within the social totality with its always already existing sets of contradictory principles for action, motivation and meaning. As Coward and Ellis note, 'ideological practice is necessary to societies of whatever kind because the individual is not the centre of the social whole: the social process has no centre, no motivating force' (1977, p. 74). If ideology is necessary to any society in the process of subjectification and subjugation then we must distinguish between two senses of ideology: ideology as a necessary and positive force; and ideology as legitimating systems of repression and social domination. The former creates subjects; the latter, as a dimension of power, subjugates subjects in the interests of certain hegemonic individuals, interest groups or classes (we take this up further in chapter 6).

The concept of ideology has already been taken up in archaeology. Some have used the concept as part of a social reconstruction of the past: ideology refers to that part of society which masks social inequality or contradiction in society and so prevents radical social change (e.g. Shennan, 1982; Kristiansen, 1984), Others have applied the concept to archaeology itself and have shown how archaeological reconstruction, for example in museums, may hide social inequality or contradiction in the present. The concept of ideology is here central to the project of a critical archaeology (see chapter 7) which aims to investigate the

production of the past in the present (e.g. Leone, 1981, 1984; Meltzer, 1981).

Hodder has produced an effective critique of such use of the concept (1986, pp. 61-70). He argues that people are not fooled by ideologies; they do not simply succumb to 'false consciousness'. And that if ideology masks 'real' reality, how is *objective* social reality *to* be defined? How are we to decide,between different definitions of social reality (masked by ideology)? Hodder also criticizes the cross-cultural nature of the concept: that it pays insufficient regard to the specific historical context; and it pays little attention to the production of particular ideologies, where they come from.

While we also criticize the identification of ideology with false consciousness (Shanks and Tilley, 1982, p. 130) and the simple functionalist use of the concept as masking contradiction, we hope to show how ideology may be situated within particular social practices (see above and chapter 4) and is involved in social change (chapter 6), while the concept remains central to a critical awareness of archaeology as a disciplinary practice (Shanks and Tilley, 1987; chapter 7 below).

We have presented a case for a fresh notion of subjectivity - a position which goes beyond dogmatic humanism or anti-humanism. Any position which displaces or decentres the subject is regarded by some (e.g. Thompson, 1978) as fundamentally dehumanizing, a Stalinist intervention. What such a position tends to overlook is the constitution of different types of subjects in different societies and the historically peculiar conception of the subject in our own society and its relation to capitalism. The free, autonomous subject going around conferring meaning and significance at will is also an ideological component of capitalist social relations. We should not, of course, seek to abolish the subject or humanity. To the contrary, we should restore that humanity by founding a critical position for conceptualizing a new type of subject: the subject as a *trace* within the social field; as constructed in language, by relations of power and signifying practices; a subject ideologically constituted but also aware of the possibility of being subjugated by, that ideology. To regard human subjects as being constructed is to recognize their sociality, their insertion within a symbolic field. Any subject is therefore transindividual, a locus for action rather than a point from which that action arises. The subject is always present, always doing, creating, knowledgeable of many aspects of his or her social existence. But this presence, action and knowledgeability also entails an absence

- the absence of the other - of the domain of the symbolic, a primary area of which is material culture. We must therefore aim to divert attention from the essentially *isolated* subject of the capitalist market-place to focus on a social subject that is created in the otherness of human existence. We are refusing that symbolic violence which ignores who we are, that would make us a mere component of the system, and we refuse the inquisition of those 'scientific' practices which would place us in a field of objectifying determination that goes beyond the social. This brings us to a position where we may tackle material culture, the primary object of archaeology, as a signifying practice.