gender

Sex and gender

In film and television theory, gender is not sex. In a common distinction – whose popularization can be traced to feminist writing on culture since the 1970s (see **feminist theory**) – gender can be defined in contradistinction to sex. In this taxonomy, 'sex' refers to the biological and physical differences between men and women; while 'gender' refers to the cultural roles which are built up and linked to those differences. Thus, 'female' and 'male' are sexes, while 'feminine' and 'masculine' are gender roles. The characteristics associated with these roles in western culture include:

- Feminine/masculine
- Passive/active
- Weak/strong
- Emotive/intellectual
- Embodied/abstracted
- Private (home)/public (work)
- **Other**-identified/self-identified
- Process-oriented/goal-oriented
- Secretarial/managerial
- Nurse/doctor

And so on. These **binary** gender roles are always understood to involve hierarchies of value – the emotional and the private must not be allowed to interfere with the rational work of public decision making, the secretarial and nurse roles are merely support for the manager and the doctor and so on.

The distinction between sex and gender is often made in popular **discourse**. However, this is not always the case: at other times, the terms are used interchangeably (so that 'male' and 'female' are referred to as 'genders'). It should be noted, in respect to the different meanings of the term in academic and non-academic cultural sites, that recent theoretical writing has challenged the traditional distinction between sex and gender (see next section).

Like **'race'**, the taxonomy of 'sex' provides a way of dividing society into discrete groups of individuals. It provides the basis for the 'identity politics' (see **identity**) commonly known as 'feminism'. The role of 'gender' in this politics has been an ambivalent one.

The need for feminist writing in the 1970s to insist on the distinction between sex and gender can easily be understood. Writers who were championing such political concepts as liberty and equality for women were faced with essentialist arguments which insisted that the behaviours, characteristics and personalities of men and women were determined by nature and could not be changed. Such arguments were used to buttress unequal social institutions – women could not leave the home, join in public life, become politicians, hold powerful positions, and so on, simply because they were biologically incapable of doing so. Women's preference for the private sphere, for abnegating responsibility, for thinking of others before themselves, were all natural.

In the face of such arguments, feminist writing insisted that while sex – the physical distinctions between men and women – might be natural, the behaviours, personalities and characteristics associated with these categories – were not so. Instead, they were cultural and could therefore be changed. (It is worth noting the assumption which is accepted in such a rhetorical move – that if a quality is 'natural' it is therefore both desirable and unchangeable.)

This debate – about whether gender roles are natural or cultural – continues to resonate in popular culture to the present day, with **common sense** understandings of the situation swinging from one side to the other, and a regular roll-call of books by science journalists published each year which claim to 'prove' that gender roles are natural and determined by biology. It should be noted that it is, ultimately, impossible to know to what extent the roles which we name as masculine and feminine are biologically constructed. It is impossible to remove human subjects from culture in order to study them scientifically – this would be not only unethical, but physically impossible.

The work of historians of science such as Anne Fausto Sterling has made clear that, repeatedly throughout history, the claims of the biological sciences to have made 'discoveries' about the 'natural' differences between men and women have later turned out to be based on cultural prejudices. Sterling gives the example of nineteenth-century biological scientists who 'discovered' that women could not study at university as it would dry out their wombs, causing sterility and hysteria. From our contemporary viewpoint, the idea that women are biologically unable to study seems to be obviously untrue – we can now see the cultural assumptions which informed this scientific research. Currently, the most common scientific paradigms which are used to defend arguments that gender differences are really biological differences are sociobiology (argument by metaphor from animals), evolutionary biology (which is hypothesis without replicability) and psychology (a discipline which in fact studies culture and discourse).

Feminist cultural theory strongly argued that gender roles were cultural and changeable and began to examine the ways in which they were sustained and promulgated. In so doing, the analysis of **culture** – including feminist film theory and writing on gender roles in television – became a central part of a feminist project which attempted to show that the gender roles constructed by culture were disabling to women in particular ways.

Gender and film theory: content

Books such as Kate Millett's influential *Sexual Politics* (1971) suggested that the creation of gender roles in culture could be analysed by attention to 'stereotypes' and positive images (see **stereotype**). This terminology suggested that cultural texts supported gender roles by a process simply of repetition of characteristics – women were repeatedly shown to be weak, unable to defend themselves, powerless to take control of their lives and reliant on men. In response was proposed a project of deliberately producing 'positive images'. These representations, it was argued, would provide role models for women. This work sought the abolition of gender roles – although the categories of male and female would remain, the broad binary categories of masculine and feminine which are currently associated with them would be destroyed. Both men and women would be shown as caring, emotional, strong, independent, adventurous, and so on.

Gender and film theory: form

Writers such as Laura **Mulvey** went on to note that more than simply representing male and female characters in different ways, films offered masculine and feminine positions in the way they were structured. In particular, it was noted that women were often presented as 'passive', as 'objects', 'to be looked at'. In contrast, men were 'active', 'subjects' and able to 'look' (see **gaze, the**). This description applied not only to roles in the narrative, but to camera angles, shots, lighting, costuming, editing etc.

Psychoanalysis and gender

Underlying much feminist analysis of the construction of gender roles was a psychoanalytical approach. This provides a curiously ambivalent explanation for the formation of gender roles – partly social/cultural and partly essentialist/biological. Psychoanalytic writing explains the formation of individual subjectivity primarily in relation to sexual difference. In traditional psychoanalytic ways of thinking, there are two kinds of 'psyches' in the world – male and female (later writing attempted to produce psychoanalytic accounts of racial difference, but this is a far less developed process). To the degree that this is understood to be brought about by social/cultural factors – the organization of the western nuclear family, for example – it could be said that psychoanalytic thought is not essentialist. However, in many ways, psychoanalytic cultural relies on biological difference to explain gender – the presence or the absence of a penis (even in Lacanian psychoanalysis, where the physical object of the penis is replaced with the symbolic phallus, the relationship between these two objects remains a close one; see **fetishism; Lacan, Jacques; psychoanalysis**).

Pornography

The idea that the 'feminized' gender role in our culture includes passivity, powerless and the position of being merely an 'object' has also been addressed in writing on **pornography** – and particularly in that tradition represented by Andrea Dworkin. For Dworkin, pornography is the dominant category for understanding gender (an argument which is facilitated by Dworkin's definition of pornography as all cultural texts which show, invite or are violent against women – and her further

adoption of interpretive strategies which allow her to show that every representation of women falls into these categories). However, theoretical writing which comes after Dworkin points out that there are other ways to think about pornography than its being about gender – and indeed, other ways to think about gender than its being defined by pornography.

Feminist cultural theory and essentialism

In a way, by challenging gender roles, feminist film theory was inviting its own undoing – at least in the form which it existed – as it challenged 'stereotypes' and championed 'positive images'. For if men and women were represented in identical ways, then the category of 'woman' would begin to degrade – what would then make 'women' different from 'men'?

However, other strands of cultural theory have insisted more strongly on essentialist positions – that the gender roles associated with women in our culture can be traced back to biology and nature. In this approach, rather than trying to change gender roles, the project of feminist cultural theory should be to attempt to revalue them, to celebrate traditionally feminine qualities.

Such an approach can be seen in the work of Luce **Irigaray** and Hélène **Cixous**. The concepts of '*parler femme*' (Irigaray – woman's talking) and '*écriture feminine*' (Cixous – women's writing) suggest that women's cultural expression will be feminine – by which they mean decentred; refusing an over-arching rational point of view; not relying on linear logic; challenging the patriarchal order; excessive, troubling and disturbing, and so on. For these writers, such gendered qualities are not purely cultural but can be linked back to the female body – which allows for decentred and open-ended pleasure, as opposed to the phallic, climax-oriented pleasure associated with men. Thus, 'masculine' forms of cultural production – linear narrative, coherent point of view – cannot produce truly 'feminine' representations.

These arguments are now generally regarded as unconvincing. The idea that particular aesthetic forms are essentially gendered, or have innate tendencies to be either 'radical' or 'conservative', is usually viewed with suspicion, although some such tendencies survive from the 1970s in writing which celebrates **avant-garde** production. It is now more generally accepted that the potential of aesthetic forms to serve particular political ends – to be 'radical', 'subversive' or 'progressive', whatever these terms might be taken to mean – must be judged in terms of the aesthetic and sociopolitical context in which they are used.

Experience

The category of women's 'experience' is also appealed to in order to stabilize gender roles in some 1970s feminist cultural theory. Here, women are more likely to enjoy, understand and relate to the cultural production of other women because they all share a similar outlook, brought about not necessarily by nature, but by common experience. This word, popular in 1970s cultural theory, has now been re-evaluated as it becomes apparent that personal experience is not an unarguable guarantor of truth, it is just as much within discourse as other aspects of culture (see **subject and subjectivity**).

The importance of the sex of the producer of a cultural text can be discussed more usefully within the context of **authorship**: information about the author is, it is accepted in our culture, a suitable intertext to bring to bear on the interpretation of a text. Because our current understandings of **identity** include sex as an important category, knowing that a particular film or television programme is produced, directed or written by a woman can be seen as important – without making any appeal to the ways in which that particular text might contribute to the formation of gender roles.

Masculinity

The attention so far in this entry to feminist writing and the ways in which it has dealt with the construction of (in particular) the 'feminine' gender role should not be taken as implying that it is only women who have gender; nor that the construction of masculinity is in any way less interesting. However, Roland **Barthes**' concept of 'exnomination' can be seen operating in the history of cultural theory around gender. Barthes notes that dominant groups tend to efface themselves from language, rendering themselves the unspoken norm against which everything else is judged. In this way, for several years it appeared that men were simply too obvious and normal to require any explanation. Since the late 1980s, however, this has become increasingly untrue, as an initial trickle of work analysing the construction of masculinity in culture has become something of a flood.

There are occasional early books which analyse 'masculinity in the movies' using the same taxonomy of stereotype/positive image which informs writing on femininity. However, these are largely isolated examples. The later work in the area can be divided into two broad streams.

One stream analyses the production of masculinity in terms very similar to those developed by film studies in order to analyse femininity – analysing the gaze, concepts of stereotypes and so on. In this tradition, pride of place must be given to Richard **Dyer**, who was committed to work in this area long before it gained its current fashionable status. Books providing textual analysis of the construction of masculinity in the cinema now appear at the rate of several a year. It is worth noting Dyer's explicit identification as a gay man, examined and explored in his work, and his attention to the relationship between sexuality and masculinity; this is representative rather than surprising – a certain tangential relation to the simple model of male/female relations produced by early feminist work (including the awareness that men could also be regarded as sexual objects) means that much of the analysis of masculinity is conducted under an explicitly homosexual rubric.

The other stream is a more sociological one, and shades into work produced by the men's movement. In the same way that feminist social movements provided the backdrop for analyses of femininity, the men's movement currently provides an interpretive framework for writing on the ways in which traditional constructions of masculinity 'hurt' men, and the urgent need to intervene in the production of these gender roles in order to protect men (Horrocks 1995). In the analysis of gender roles emerging from the men's movement, these roles must be changed in order to allow men to be more emotional – but there is categorically no desire to retire these gender roles altogether. In this tradition, it is vital that 'masculine' and 'feminine' roles are retained, and that, indeed, they retain much of their current composition (including the need for men to be 'strong' in relation to women). It is only the distribution of the capacity for emotional expression which must be changed.

Challenging sex

Up to this point, this entry has worked with the distinction which was proposed and popularized by feminist cultural theory since the 1970s – that sex (biological) and gender (cultural) can be separated in a functional binary. However, it is important to note that in the 1990s, this taxonomy was challenged – and indeed, in a certain tradition of writing (see **queer theory**), this challenge is now accepted as axiomatic. The most important writer in this regard is Judith **Butler**, who argues that the sex/gender distinction is a misleading one. She notes that the idea that the category of sex – that there are naturally two kinds of people in this world, male and female – is, in itself, a cultural one. In short, the very question, 'are differences between men and women biological and cultural?', makes the assumption that there are two discrete categories of people – named men and women.

Research has pointed out that even at the biological level, it is impossible to make an adequate distinction between male and female. 'Secondary' sexual characteristics, such as the distribution of body hair and body fat are not divided neatly into two groups: for example, a large proportion of women shave, bleach or wax their facial hair to try to fit into these cultural categories. Even in terms of 'primary' sexual characteristics, it is not obvious that easy distinctions can be made. In the biological sciences, definitions of maleness or femaleness sometimes depend on the role taken in reproduction – whether individuals produce sperm or eggs. But by this definition, post-menopausal women would be neither male nor female. If the definition is simply the possession of a penis or a vagina, then the large number of individuals born each year who are intersexed (some estimates suggest 2,000 every year in the United States alone) must be excluded from the definition. Again, these people face surgical intervention to make them either male or female – to make nature fit in with our cultural presupposition that there are only two.

discrete and distinct, sexes. Even on a chromosomal level, sex cannot be simply guaranteed: some XY infants are born with 'female' genitalia, and some XX with 'male'.

In short, the work of Butler proposes that the idea that there are two sexes is not a natural one, but is as cultural, and changeable, as the idea that there are two kinds of gender behaviour. Indeed, she goes so far as to propose that, in the absence of a simple 'fact' of biology to sustain this belief, the belief in two sexes is in fact supported by our cultural systems. Or, more simply, that it is the concept of gender which provides the basis on which the concept of biological sex is built – exactly the opposite of what was proposed in 1970s feminist cultural theory.

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by those who feel excluded from cultural capital. School learning is replaced by extra-curricular learning, allowing those who are subordinated in relation to formal education to build self-esteem and self-identity. Fiske views popular cultural capital as compensating for low cultural capital, although not necessarily challenging cultural capital's legitimacy.

While Fiske examines how the mass media can support audience distinctions. Sarah Thornton (1995) has analysed how mass media such as film and television can threaten forms of 'subcultural capital' where fans seek to protect the skills and knowledges of their own 'underground' **subculture**. Both Fiske and Thornton move away from Bourdieu's assumption that distinction, being based on official culture, stems from one set of values shared, albeit unevenly, by all of society.

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MATTHEW HILLS

culture

> Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language.
>
> (Williams 1976: 76)

This entry summarizes the recent history of a word which, as Raymond **Williams** (1976) observed, has 'often provoked hostility or embarrassment'. In the context of film and television studies, 'culture' is difficult to separate from 'cultural theory', which has also shaped our understanding of it. What follows is largely written from a British cultural and educational perspective.

'The best that has been known and thought'

Social and economic changes in nineteenth-century Britain, as elsewhere, created the conditions which drew the attention of thinkers and writers to the condition of people who had moved into cities. Prominent among these was Matthew **Arnold** (1822–1888), critic, poet and inspector of schools. Arnold saw himself as at a distance from those with economic power (the Philistines), those with inherited social power (the Barbarians), and the mass of the people (the Populace). A demonstration by working-class men in Hyde Park, London in 1866 and disturbances in other parts of Britain in the following year, however, gave him the opportunity in *Culture and Anarchy* (first published 1869) to suggest that those with economic or social power should consider, at least in their own interests, their responsibilities with regard to the mass of the people. Arnold understood that moral values would no longer be buttressed by religion and that a shared conception of culture might be the necessary safeguard against 'anarchy' – in part the result of the Philistines' neglect of anything but material values, but more likely one outcome of working-class ignorance, oppression and discontent.

Arnold proposed a definition of culture:

> culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly and mechanically.
>
> (Arnold 1963: 6)

Arnold indicated that this studied pursuit of perfection involves 'developing all sides of our humanity, and as a *general* perfection developing all parts of our society' (italics in original). His emphasis is on culture as a process of 'becoming something, rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit'.

Arnold's account of culture now reads like a series of abstractions. This is partly the effect of quoting briefly from a book-length series of essays on culture written in a rhetorical and ironic tone to the British intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century. But it is also because Arnold is attempting to discern the best that can be derived from the secular and religious institutions of his time. Parliamentary politics in Britain was dominated by two parties, whose struggles for power emphasized the competitive ethos of the business classes of Victorian England, and the conservative interests of the traditional land-owners.

Neither side willingly recognized the rights and needs of 'the Populace' – the working class – nor an idea of the state beyond their own class interests. Arnold's idea of culture amounted to a radical attack on the mechanicality of their thinking, and included his conception of the state which challenged individualism and recognized collective obligations to all, irrespective of religious or secular interests, in the context of, for example, state education. Arnold asserts that culture is a *social* idea:

> and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing... For carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time... to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and the learned.
>
> (Arnold 1963: 70)

Religion in Britain was dominated by the Anglican church whose relationship with the Establishment ensured that as late as 1871 Oxford and Cambridge masters degrees, professorships and fellowships were not open to 'Dissenters' – that is, non-Anglicans. While opposing such conformity and uniformity, Arnold's idea of culture as 'inward' implies it is a process of change that meets desires beyond the materialistic. About the time he wrote *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold also wrote 'Dover Beach', a poem which speaks of the retreat of the 'Sea of Faith' and of a world which:

> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

Culture would enable all to learn live in such a world, and, for Arnold, the means to culture included education, criticism and poetry. In arguing for a new form of national education and in his life's work as an inspector of schools, Arnold attempted to put into practice the ideas which inform his theoretical writings. Poetry might awaken what Arnold describes in detail as 'the best self' which could discern ends beyond the immediate and the individual.

Raymond Williams (1966) points out the ambiguities that surround Arnold's view of the state, and condemns his misjudgement and fear of working-class extra-parliamentary activity. If we look at the 'touchstone' poetry that Arnold recommends as contributing to the educative process of culture we may see it now more in terms of a 'high culture' curriculum persuasively attempting to transcend personal taste. But Williams also draws attention to Arnold's recognition in his larger argument that culture is about more than the literary ('all sides of our humanity') or the individual.

'The common pursuit of true judgement'

The idea of culture as essentially a critical practice located most effectively in educational institutions owes much to the teaching and writing of F. R. Leavis. Arnold's conception of culture developed in reaction to the changes in British society he witnessed during his own lifetime. Culture offered a process and practice in living which might enable people to deal with the changes. Arnold's urbane rhetorical tone (see **rhetoric**) seemed to be reminding those in power that culture might prevail and that the Populace had to be reached by its civilizing power. In contrast, Leavis' tone now seems harsh and embattled, too conscious of the enemies, on the right and the left, of the kind of culture he espoused. Frank Raymond Leavis taught English at Cambridge University where with other scholars and teachers he produced the quarterly journal *Scrutiny* (1932–1953), whose influence on the study of English was similar to that of *Screen* on film theory and film studies in the 1970s (see **Screen theory**). As Williams suggests (1966: 246), Leavis' cultural position is dramatically suggested by the title of a pamphlet which he wrote in 1930, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*.

Added to the social changes to which Arnold responded positively were the cultural changes of the twentieth century, in particular the development of mass communications and mass literacy.

Located in an English department which seemed not to be responding to these cultural changes, Leavis felt that the organic social relationships, moral values and homogeneous culture which had characterized English society were disappearing. In their place was a shallower understanding of community and a too-ready response to the appeals, emotional and economic, of a materialistic society. Literature, and especially the novel, could remind people of moral values which were under threat, and could define 'life' as it could only be experienced, through individuals:

> A real literary interest is an interest in man, society and civilisation, and its boundaries cannot be drawn.
>
> (Leavis 1962: 200)

The study of literature 'is, or should be, an intimate study of the complexities, potentialities and essential conditions of human nature' (*ibid.*: 184). Leavis was opposed to literary theorizing, preferring to demonstrate specific critical judgements through detailed analysis of passages where he insisted crucial values lay. In his view, a judgement must be:

> a sincere personal judgement but it aspires to be more than personal. Essentially it has the form: 'This is so, is it not?'
>
> *Scrutiny*, vol. 18, no. iii: 27)

The analysis would be based on the words on the page, but it would express those values, in sexual and social relationships, about the cultivation and understanding of emotions and desires on which society should be based.

On the surface, *Scrutiny*'s antipathy to 'mass' culture was like that of the **Frankfurt School**, but Leavis argued that Marxism placed too great an emphasis on the way society determined cultural production. He was also suspicious of the Marxist position which proposed that a critic's duty was to evaluate literature in relation to class struggle. His deliberate eschewal of **theory** denied him the Frankfurt School's sophisticated theorization of class consciousness (see **Marxist aesthetics**).

Where Arnold implies that culture, through criticism, can respond to and sustain society, Leavis saw culture as a strategy for resistance through criticism: culture opposed to society. *Scrutiny* and Leavis argued that culture depended on a sensitivity to literary tradition and language of which only a minority was capable. But central to *Scrutiny*'s project was the expansion of that minority by placing English Studies at the centre of humanities education in schools and colleges. Generations of teachers, inside and outside formal education, were trained to read the texts recommended by *Scrutiny* in the way Leavis demonstrated, and to read all other texts evaluatively. Terry **Eagleton** wrote as late as 1983 that the Leavis view of English Studies 'has become a form of spontaneous critical wisdom as deep-seated as our conviction that the earth moves round the sun' (Eagleton: 1989: 31).

The popular arts and popular culture

Eagleton and Williams both acknowledge the effectiveness and appeal of *Scrutiny*'s educational project, but point out that morally responsible behaviour was not exclusive to those who read literature. As Williams observes:

> for good or ill, the majority of people do not yet give reading this importance in their lives; their ideas and feelings are, to a large extent, still moulded by a wider and more complex pattern of social and family life.
>
> (Williams 1966: 297)

Earlier forms of film and television studies were an attempt to set the boundaries of the study of culture wider than English literature by looking more closely at some aspects of working-class life in the middle of the twentieth century. *The Popular Arts* (1964) by Stuart **Hall** and Paddy Whannel exemplifies this moment in British cultural history. The authors challenge the conservative cultural pessimism of Leavis and his colleagues:

> The old culture has gone because the way of life that produced it has gone. The rhythms of work have been permanently altered and the enclosed small-scale communities are vanishing. It may be possible to resist unnecessary increases in scale and to re-establish local initiatives; but if we wish to re-create a genuine popular culture, we must seek out the points of growth within the society that now exists.
>
> (Hall and Whannel 1966: 39)

Hall and Whannel then go on to argue along familiar lines about making judgemental discriminations in relation to films and television programmes. Close readings of selected texts support the argument that these popular forms demand a different analytical approach from high art, but their moral value is significant:

> The moral statements made by art are made in aesthetic terms . . . they are embodied in the manner of presentation. To discover the moral meanings in art and entertainment we must first respond to them in their own terms.
>
> (*Ibid.*: 31)

In re-creating a popular culture, Hall and Whannel distinguish between the popular arts and 'mass art'. They contrast the marketing of a mannered style like that of Elvis Presley or Liberace with the performance of Ella Fitzgerald or Miles Davis whose work suggests a complexity of experience and accessible expression: 'helping us to know the feelings we have more intensely and to realise them more subtly'. From a moral rather than political perspective they endorse Theodor **Adorno**'s unsympathetic remark about much popular music: 'the composition hears for the listener'.

As with Leavis, culture here is bound up with critical practice and moral and social responsibility, but Hall and Whannel are more positively responsive to the changes brought about by market forces and the new media. Film, television and music get detailed critical attention, but fashion, magazines and 'teenager' consumption are recognized as part of a 'revolution in cultural taste', and are subject to sensitive comment. Although the comparison between jazz and pop music inevitably favours the former as 'aesthetically and emotionally richer', Hall and Whannel's openness enables them to recognize the Beatles, in 1965, as 'a distinctive break with earlier patterns' if 'essentially child-like, androgynous, pre-pubertal'. Like Arnold and Leavis, their address locates education, inside and outside schools and colleges, as the site where culture is to be re-created, analysed, theorized and understood.

Culture and cultural studies

Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* has become central to accounts of culture and cultural studies because it placed on the agenda concerns which continue to inform discussion of the concept. As well as proposing a definition of culture, as his predecessors had done, Williams addressed more directly the *relationship* between culture and society: what were the forces forming or determining culture? How were we to understand artistic intention and individual or group response in the context of mass distribution and **consumption**? How did the possession of power – economic, social and symbolic – affect attitudes to, and the uses of, culture? As with all Williams' books, the tone of voice is interrogative and undogmatic, identifying itself with his formation as Welsh-British working class.

William's initial definition of culture takes up the word's earlier meaning and offers a famous formulation:

> Where culture meant a state or habit of mind, or the body of intellectual and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life.
>
> (Williams 1966: 18)

In *Culture* (1981) this definition is developed using a mode of semiotic analysis (see **semiotics**) that the intervening years had made available:

> Thus there is some practical convergence . . . between the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life' within which, now, a distinctive 'signifying system' is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in all forms of social activity, and . . . the more specialised if more common sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities', though these . . . are now much more broadly defined to include not only the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the 'signifying practices' – from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising – which now constitute this complex and necessarily extended field.
>
> (Williams 1981: 13)

When culture becomes 'a whole way of life' no single discipline can contain the objects of study: furthermore, study is not simply of artefacts or ideas but of 'signifying practices' which entails attention to the processes of production and

by those who feel excluded from cultural capital. School learning is replaced by extra-curricular learning, allowing those who are subordinated in relation to formal education to build self-esteem and self-identity. Fiske views popular cultural capital as compensating for low cultural capital, although not necessarily challenging cultural capital's legitimacy.

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This entry summarizes the recent history of a word which, as Raymond **Williams** (1976) observed, has 'often provoked hostility or embarrassment'. In the context of film and television studies, 'culture' is difficult to separate from 'cultural theory', which has also shaped our understanding of it. What follows is largely written from a British cultural and educational perspective.

'The best that has been known and thought'

Social and economic changes in nineteenth-century Britain, as elsewhere, created the conditions which drew the attention of thinkers and writers to the condition of people who had moved into cities. Prominent among these was Matthew **Arnold** (1822-1888), critic, poet and inspector of schools. Arnold saw himself as at a distance from those with economic power (the Philistines), those with inherited social power (the Barbarians), and the mass of the people (the Populace). A demonstration by working-class men in Hyde Park, London in 1866 and disturbances in other parts of Britain in the following year, however, gave him the opportunity in *Culture and Anarchy* (first published 1869) to suggest that those with economic or social power should consider, at least in their own interests, their responsibilities with regard to the mass of the people. Arnold understood that moral values would no longer be buttressed by religion and that a shared conception of culture might be the necessary safeguard against 'anarchy' – in part the result of the Philistines' neglect of anything but material values, but more likely one outcome of working-class ignorance, oppression and discontent.

Arnold proposed a definition of culture:

> culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world; and through this knowledge turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly and mechanically.
>
> (Arnold 1963: 6)

Arnold indicated that this studied pursuit of perfection involves 'developing all sides of our humanity, and as a *general* perfection developing all parts of our society' (italics in original). His emphasis is on culture as a process of 'becoming something, rather than in having something, in an inward condition of the mind and spirit'.

Arnold's account of culture now reads like a series of abstractions. This is partly the effect of quoting briefly from a book-length series of essays on culture written in a rhetorical and ironic tone to the British intelligentsia of the late nineteenth century. But it is also because Arnold is attempting to discern the best that can be derived from the secular and religious institutions of his time. Parliamentary politics in Britain was dominated by two parties, whose struggles for power emphasized the competitive ethos of the business classes of Victorian England, and the conservative interests of the traditional land-owners.

Neither side willingly recognized the rights and needs of 'the Populace' – the working class – nor an idea of the state beyond their own class interests. Arnold's idea of culture amounted to a radical attack on the mechanicality of their thinking, and included his conception of the state which challenged individualism and recognized collective obligations to all, irrespective of religious or secular interests, in the context of, for example, state education. Arnold asserts that culture is a *social* idea:

> and the men of culture are the true apostles of equality. The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing... For carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time... to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and the learned.
>
> (Arnold 1963: 70)

Religion in Britain was dominated by the Anglican church whose relationship with the Establishment ensured that as late as 1871 Oxford and Cambridge masters degrees, professorships and fellowships were not open to 'Dissenters' – that is, non-Anglicans. While opposing such conformity and uniformity, Arnold's idea of culture as 'inward' implies it is a process of change that meets desires beyond the materialistic. About the time he wrote *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold also wrote 'Dover Beach', a poem which speaks of the retreat of the 'Sea of Faith' and of a world which:

> Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
> Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain.

Culture would enable all to learn live in such a world, and, for Arnold, the means to culture included education, criticism and poetry. In arguing for a new form of national education and in his life's work as an inspector of schools, Arnold attempted to put into practice the ideas which inform his theoretical writings. Poetry might awaken what Arnold describes in detail as 'the best self' which could discern ends beyond the immediate and the individual.

Raymond Williams (1966) points out the ambiguities that surround Arnold's view of the state, and condemns his misjudgement and fear of working-class extra-parliamentary activity. If we look at the 'touchstone' poetry that Arnold recommends as contributing to the educative process of culture we may see it now more in terms of a 'high culture' curriculum persuasively attempting to transcend personal taste. But Williams also draws attention to Arnold's recognition in his larger argument that culture is about more than the literary ('all sides of our humanity') or the individual.

'The common pursuit of true judgement'

The idea of culture as essentially a critical practice located most effectively in educational institutions owes much to the teaching and writing of F. R. Leavis. Arnold's conception of culture developed in reaction to the changes in British society he witnessed during his own lifetime. Culture offered a process and practice in living which might enable people to deal with the changes. Arnold's urbane rhetorical tone (see **rhetoric**) seemed to be reminding those in power that culture might prevail and that the Populace had to be reached by its civilizing power. In contrast, Leavis' tone now seems harsh and embattled, too conscious of the enemies, on the right and the left, of the kind of culture he espoused. Frank Raymond Leavis taught English at Cambridge University where with other scholars and teachers he produced the quarterly journal *Scrutiny* (1932-1953), whose influence on the study of English was similar to that of *Screen* on film theory and film studies in the 1970s (see **Screen theory**). As Williams suggests (1966: 246), Leavis' cultural position is dramatically suggested by the title of a pamphlet which he wrote in 1930, *Mass Civilisation and Minority Culture*.

Added to the social changes to which Arnold responded positively were the cultural changes of the twentieth century, in particular the development of mass communications and mass literacy.

Located in an English department which seemed not to be responding to these cultural changes, Leavis felt that the organic social relationships, moral values and homogeneous culture which had characterized English society were disappearing. In their place was a shallower understanding of community and a too-ready response to the appeals, emotional and economic, of a materialistic society. Literature, and especially the novel, could remind people of moral values which were under threat, and could define 'life' as it could only be experienced, through individuals:

> A real literary interest is an interest in man, society and civilisation, and its boundaries cannot be drawn.
>
> (Leavis 1962: 200)

The study of literature 'is, or should be, an intimate study of the complexities, potentialities and essential conditions of human nature' (*ibid.*: 184). Leavis was opposed to literary theorizing, preferring to demonstrate specific critical judgements through detailed analysis of passages where he insisted crucial values lay. In his view, a judgement must be:

> a sincere personal judgement but it aspires to be more than personal. Essentially it has the form: 'This is so, is it not?'
>
> *Scrutiny*, vol. 18, no. iii: 27)

The analysis would be based on the words on the page, but it would express those values, in sexual and social relationships, about the cultivation and understanding of emotions and desires on which society should be based.

On the surface, *Scrutiny*'s antipathy to 'mass' culture was like that of the **Frankfurt School**, but Leavis argued that Marxism placed too great an emphasis on the way society determined cultural production. He was also suspicious of the Marxist position which proposed that a critic's duty was to evaluate literature in relation to class struggle. His deliberate eschewal of **theory** denied him the Frankfurt School's sophisticated theorization of class consciousness (see **Marxist aesthetics**).

Where Arnold implies that culture, through criticism, can respond to and sustain society, Leavis saw culture as a strategy for resistance through criticism: culture opposed to society. *Scrutiny* and Leavis argued that culture depended on a sensitivity to literary tradition and language of which only a minority was capable. But central to *Scrutiny*'s project was the expansion of that minority by placing English Studies at the centre of humanities education in schools and colleges. Generations of teachers, inside and outside formal education, were trained to read the texts recommended by *Scrutiny* in the way Leavis demonstrated, and to read all other texts evaluatively. Terry **Eagleton** wrote as late as 1983 that the Leavis view of English Studies 'has become a form of spontaneous critical wisdom as deep-seated as our conviction that the earth moves round the sun' (Eagleton: 1989: 31).

The popular arts and popular culture

Eagleton and Williams both acknowledge the effectiveness and appeal of *Scrutiny*'s educational project, but point out that morally responsible behaviour was not exclusive to those who read literature. As Williams observes:

> for good or ill, the majority of people do not yet give reading this importance in their lives; their ideas and feelings are, to a large extent, still moulded by a wider and more complex pattern of social and family life.
>
> (Williams 1966: 297)

Earlier forms of film and television studies were an attempt to set the boundaries of the study of culture wider than English literature by looking more closely at some aspects of working-class life in the middle of the twentieth century. *The Popular Arts* (1964) by Stuart **Hall** and Paddy Whannel exemplifies this moment in British cultural history. The authors challenge the conservative cultural pessimism of Leavis and his colleagues:

> The old culture has gone because the way of life that produced it has gone. The rhythms of work have been permanently altered and the enclosed small-scale communities are vanishing. It may be possible to resist unnecessary increases in scale and to re-establish local initiatives; but if we wish to re-create a genuine popular culture, we must seek out the points of growth within the society that now exists.
>
> (Hall and Whannel 1966: 39

Hall and Whannel then go on to argue along familiar lines about making judgemental discriminations in relation to films and television programmes. Close readings of selected texts support the argument that these popular forms demand a different analytical approach from high art, but their moral value is significant:

> The moral statements made by art are made in aesthetic terms . . . they are embodied in the manner of presentation. To discover the moral meanings in art and entertainment we must first respond to them in their own terms.
>
> (*Ibid.*: 31)

In re-creating a popular culture, Hall and Whannel distinguish between the popular arts and 'mass art'. They contrast the marketing of a mannered style like that of Elvis Presley or Liberace with the performance of Ella Fitzgerald or Miles Davis whose work suggests a complexity of experience and accessible expression: 'helping us to know the feelings we have more intensely and to realise them more subtly'. From a moral rather than political perspective they endorse Theodor **Adorno**'s unsympathetic remark about much popular music: 'the composition hears for the listener'.

As with Leavis, culture here is bound up with critical practice and moral and social responsibility, but Hall and Whannel are more positively responsive to the changes brought about by market forces and the new media. Film, television and music get detailed critical attention, but fashion, magazines and 'teenager' consumption are recognized as part of a 'revolution in cultural taste', and are subject to sensitive comment. Although the comparison between jazz and pop music inevitably favours the former as 'aesthetically and emotionally richer', Hall and Whannel's openness enables them to recognize the Beatles, in 1965, as 'a distinctive break with earlier patterns' if 'essentially child-like, androgynous, pre-pubertal'. Like Arnold and Leavis, their address locates education, inside and outside schools and colleges, as the site where culture is to be re-created, analysed, theorized and understood.

Culture and cultural studies

Raymond Williams' *Culture and Society* has become central to accounts of culture and cultural studies because it placed on the agenda concerns which continue to inform discussion of the concept. As well as proposing a definition of culture, as his predecessors had done, Williams addressed more directly the *relationship* between culture and society: what were the forces forming or determining culture? How were we to understand artistic intention and individual or group response in the context of mass distribution and **consumption**? How did the possession of power – economic, social and symbolic – affect attitudes to, and the uses of, culture? As with all Williams' books, the tone of voice is interrogative and undogmatic, identifying itself with his formation as Welsh-British working class.

William's initial definition of culture takes up the word's earlier meaning and offers a famous formulation:

> Where culture meant a state or habit of mind, or the body of intellectual and moral activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life.
>
> (Williams 1966: 18)

In *Culture* (1981) this definition is developed using a mode of semiotic analysis (see **semiotics**) that the intervening years had made available:

> Thus there is some practical convergence . . . between the anthropological and sociological senses of culture as a distinct 'whole way of life' within which, now, a distinctive 'signifying system' is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in all forms of social activity, and . . . the more specialised if more common sense of culture as 'artistic and intellectual activities', though these . . . are now much more broadly defined to include not only the traditional arts and forms of intellectual production but also all the 'signifying practices' – from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising – which now constitute this complex and necessarily extended field.
>
> (Williams 1981: 13)

When culture becomes 'a whole way of life' no single discipline can contain the objects of study: furthermore, study is not simply of artefacts or ideas but of 'signifying practices' which entails attention to the processes of production and

reception, encoding and decoding (see **encoding-decoding model**). 'Cultural studies' becomes the academic context in which culture is examined; film and television studies can be located within this context with the recognition that they are not discrete and self-contained discourses (see **discourse**). Indeed, as Williams constantly argued, the history of cultural studies in Britain is the struggle to oblige institutions to include those areas of cultural experience which challenged the 'symbolic power' of those controlling academic institutions (see **Bourdieu, Pierre**).

Though the stress in Williams' cultural analyses is on signifying practices which express aspects of human experience and how they relate, the base and superstructure model informs his thinking about the fundamental relationships between culture and society (see **base and superstructure; signifying practice**). In *Marxism and Literature* (1977) and elsewhere, however, he examined in detail the limitations of material determination and resisted theoretical generalizations about cultural formation which could not be grounded in specific analyses of the causes and natures of, for example, changes in signifying practices at specific historical moments. His writing about culture and cultural studies is a continual oscillation between an identification of a cultural phenomenon – a television programme, television itself, a 'key word' – and the anatomizing of the social conjuncture surrounding and structuring it.

The time, in the late 1970s, when Williams' ideas were developing within the British cultural and academic context co-existed with the impact of other theorizations of culture which claimed to be more substantially located in Marxism. Structuralist theories of culture, particularly associated with Louis **Althusser**, and later Michel **Foucault**, gained currency through recent English translations and their circulation in journals like *Screen*. These theories challenged the particular history of individual or social experience as the foundation of cultural practice; the lived experience which a particular reader or viewer brought to any text needed to be understood in relation to his or her antecedent construction as a subject whose identity had been formed with the establishment of **consciousness** (see **Lacan, Jacques; subject and subjectivity**). Subjects were interpellated by texts or institutions, like culture, which functioned, 'ideologically', on behalf of the state.

'Ideology' added another further dimension to the analysis of culture (see **ideology and hegemony**). Althusser identified culture as an ideological state apparatus, but the distinction, if any, between ideology and culture has since been the subject of continuous debate. However, Althusser's formulation positioned culture once again as having a social function; whereas Arnold argued that culture could reconcile social divisions, Althusserian Marxism proposed that culture as ideology perpetuated social divisions in the interests of those in power – a conclusion which, from a different direction, Eagleton had arrived at in his analysis of Arnoldian culture.

Neither Williams' nor Althusser's account of culture concentrates on popular culture, but the fact that both draw on Marxist social theories led to an examination of the role of culture in the relationship between dominant and subordinate classes. The extension of the idea of culture to include those signifying practices associated with the mass of the people, however, meant that popular culture became the object to be theorized by those with an interest in the social and political function of culture. Film and television occupied a particularly interesting position as media which could be seen as central to the experience of most people and an obvious site for the operation of ideology through culture.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Althusserian and Lacanian modes of explanation provided the platform for Laura **Mulvey**'s attack on the patriarchal nature of mainstream Hollywood cinema. Film, as a popular cultural form was seen to reinforce existing power relations; spectatorship articulated the unconscious male desire to objectify and dominate women. Even those who dissented from psychoanalytic accounts of cinema's ideological apparatus argued that Hollywood narratives, especially those which deployed its version of **realism**, operated to reaffirm an individualistic, white, male supremacist ideology (see **psychoanalysis**). Other ethnic or **gender** groups were effectively marginalized by mainstream cinema and television. John Fiske's analysis of the *Hart to Hart* series in *Television Culture* (1987) stands as an example of this kind of ideological effect (see **ethnicity**).

The development of cultural studies in the 1980s and 1990s further complicated the understanding of culture. The model of culture as a site of hegemonic contestation between dominant and subordinate groups, and the sophistication of encoding and decoding models challenged recently established paradigms and opened up other possibilities. Fiske's own later work, building on that of writers associated with the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, indicated ways in which encoded messages from, for example, a multinational company like News Corporation or MTV might be decoded and used by teenage girls to develop their own group culture and identity in a movement of resistance to the dominant encoding. The **binary** polarities of mainstream and marginal cultures were challenged by **queer theory** or a **multiculturalism** which argued that such categorizations ignored the complexities and variety of cultural experience within so-called minorities, and reinforced the cultural domination of groups whose power was, in practice, limited to the need to find new markets, sometimes by attempting to incorporate the culture of groups outside the mainstream. Some accounts of post-modernity present it not as simply a capitulation to consumerism, but as a cultural development which sublated high culture and popular culture, de-centring traditional sources of cultural power (see **modernism and post-modernism**).

The place of film and television has changed both in cultural study and in the culture at large. Changed delivery systems, the fragmentation of audiences and the development of what Jim Collins (1993) calls 'the array' have meant that these cultural phenomena exist in a different way from their first entry into culture. In the academic context, courses ostensibly concerned with national histories or political geographies, for example, now include film and television not as 'accompanying illustrations' but as important ways into understanding a 'whole way of life'.

Culture is indeed a complicated word as Williams warned us. But, so long as we continue to use it to think about the aesthetic, social and political practices of individuals, groups and nations, it should not be otherwise.

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PHILIP SIMPSON

current affairs

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identity

In her 1998 study of costume drama in British cinema, Pam Cook makes the following point about identity and film:

> with its emphasis on masquerade, [the **genre**] is a prime vehicle for the exploration of *identity*, encouraging cross-dressing not only between characters, but metaphorically between characters and spectators, in the sense that the latter can be seen as trying on a variety of roles in the course of the film.
>
> (Cook 1998: 6)

Here, Cook links elements of 'identity' on screen to processes behind and in front of the screen and to contradictions as well as synthesis. Yet 'identity' also has an immediacy beyond theory, as the 'politics of identity' has become a common designation for strategies of ethnic (see **ethnicity**), **class**, **gender** and other conflicts and their own contradictions. Indeed, critics and producers often tie mass media to the creation or resolution of a 'crisis' in identity, whether national (see **national, the**), group or individual. None the less, the multiple and seemingly changeable identities of pastiche and travesty constructed in texts and theory also underscore the ambiguities of identity as both a critical and a political term. Its uses may conflate or conceal processes of social formation, relations of self and **Other**, and relations of power within and among groups. Hence, its critical usage must be carefully charted even as the study of identity challenges apparently established categories of race, gender, age, class and nation.

The concept of identity

Identity in social and cultural studies has developed several meanings that influence its readings in film and television (see **reading and reception theory**). Paul Gilroy, while noting its genealogy in psychological and philosophical studies (often oriented to the meaning of the individual), distinguishes three primary current referents. First, identity refers to self or individual constructions of meaning. While this is close to its meaning in earlier theories, it should not be confused with 'identification', which posits psychological or psychoanalytic relations between film and **audience**, as richly explored in work by Laura **Mulvey** and Christian **Metz** (see also **psychoanalysis**). While selves are present in production and formative readings of identity, cultural theories more often deal with *collectivities* or 'others'.

Second, identity may refer to collective categorizations that are meaningful within a larger social framework – hence, 'national identity', 'ethnic identity' or 'gender identity'. Here, there is an implication of sameness as well as an insistence on difference. Nevertheless, identity may reflect categories imposed from outside or the polarization of categories – French identity in relation to Hollywood or African-American identity in relation to 'whiteness' (see **white**). This usage also highlights certain characteristics valued within particular frameworks in which identities must be distinguished, such as landscapes or heroic myths as signifiers of national identity. Finally, this usage ties critical studies – at least apparently – to politics beyond the text.

Third, identity carries the value of participation and the construction of social labels. As such, theoreticians take the psychological roots of the concept, in the sense of a bounded and integrated personality, and expand them onto a social landscape of complexity and action. The first social usage allows us to interrogate the primary traits of 'African-American', 'queer' or 'working-class' identity. The second usage, meanwhile, poses different investigations, such as, 'does a working-class identity exist in twentieth-century America?', 'How do film and television contribute to the construction of such identity?' or 'What are the conflicts between African-American identity and queer identity?' Thus, the concept 'identity' raises questions of contradictory or contested claims to myths and figures. In both of these latter meanings, however, one must ask who benefits, and how, from constructions or divisions of identity.

Moreover, one must be careful not to reify identities (see **reification**). Many critics have underscored the need to see identity as a process, involving active construction with regard to media as well as change over time. People, moreover, may juggle more than one identity – a vague cultural label is often applied to gender, location or ability in order to avoid reductive categorization, but this remains a dilemma of structure and context. **Hybridity**, or the recognition and fusion of two or more identities – Iranian exile and American citizen, lesbian and black, or the East–West fusion of Hong Kong – also pervades contemporary discussions of identity and how it is explored through media of reflection or reflection on media. These questions arise in films as diverse as *The Crying Game* (Neil Jordan, 1992) where national, gender and racial identities are contested, and *Mississippi Masala* (Mira Nair, 1991) with its Afro-Indian love story.

These bifurcations incorporating internal and external usages as well as differentiated and strategic identities must be kept in mind when identity is applied to film and television. Here, the concept facilitates analysis of **culture** and intention in the production process as well as textual manifestations, whether in the discussion of Hollywood and American identity (inside and outside of

the United States), national and transnational television, or 'race' films. At the same time, any analysis must be balanced by the social construction of audience identity. This ranges from the reproduction of dominant **discourse** – the identity of the American 'TV generation' – to alternative ritualizations of identity around classic or cult films (see **cult film and television**), to **oppositional** texts and receptions. All these uses highlight the **text** of film and television as an arena for **negotiation** of identity rather than a simple or transparent representation.

The text itself, obviously, cannot be overlooked. Elements of plot, scene and **myth** are not only features that have been constructed to reinforce identity on screen. These signifying practices are also markers of **difference** for asserting alternative identities (see **signifying practice**). Noël Burch (1979), for example, has argued that the formal elements of Japanese silent cinema embody language and cultural values that reconstitute difference *vis-à-vis* classical Hollywood cinema (see **classical Hollywood cinema and new Hollywood cinema**). A similar question of aesthetics and identity emerges in Manthia Diawara's (1993) reading of the film *Daughters of the Dust* (1991) by the African-American filmmaker Julie Dash. Diawara contrasts the space and tempo of **narrative** with 'white' forms and identities. It is noteworthy that in all these cases, the formation of identity remains contrastive as well as constituted by concrete elements. Similar textual claims could certainly be made for Iranian cinema by filmmakers like Majid Majidi and Abbas Kourastiami, where prescriptions of Islam favouring child actors, heavily fated plots and inexpensive camerawork have defined a national style – although not necessarily one that redefines transnational culture.

A final caveat must be noted: the spread of studies of identity has been fostered by the emergence of cultural studies since the 1970s, including the concealing usages which Paul Gilroy critiques. Nevertheless, to understand the range of theoretical applications possible, we must incorporate earlier studies that speak to identity without using the term specifically, which are often reassessed by later studies. At the same time, this entry only suggests some of the uses and limits of a term in its critical florescence: other issues, critics and readings deal with these same general points. Here, we focus on the use of 'identity' in the analysis of textual and extra-textual processes, including production and reading. We also delineate possibilities of formation of 'group' identity and the construction of national and transnational identities that use – and shatter – these frameworks.

Looking for group identity

The critical analysis of **African-American cinema** in the United States has always faced the question of African-American identity in American society, informed by thinkers from the formative voices of W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington through political and intellectual figures such as Franz **Fanon**, Malcolm X, bell **hooks** and Stuart **Hall**. Representation on screen, whether Oscar Micheaux's race films, D. W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) or Spike Lee's *Malcolm X* (1992), are embedded in history, production and theory as well as reading. J. Ronald Green (1993), for example, suggests historical dilemmas in reviewing the pioneering work of Thomas Cripps, who embedded studies of identity within the dual identity of African-Americans, as posed by DuBois. While Cripps concentrated on assimilation rather than autonomy, Green argued that Micheaux's ambivalent grappling with segregation envisioned a new aesthetic (see **aesthetics**) and a new African-American identity. Yet Cripps (1993), in response, asked where the data on readership and black criticism exist to 'prove' any such identity. While these films use black actors and treat dilemmas of the black population, identity still demands data of interpretation and action.

Other perspectives on identity emerge from a volume on disability and media published by the British Film Institute and the Arts Council of Great Britain (Pointon and Davies 1997). Here, general concerns over the stereotyped representation of the disabled are tempered by recognition that this situation cannot change simply by replacing texts or producers. Those who had learned these stereotypes as disabled could find other identities reinforced. Moreover, the range of people categorized as disabled makes suspect the construction of any synthetic identity that conceals divisions of physical condition, gender, race and politics. Hence, identity provides a central theme of discussion of text and reception because of the political impact of both media and readers, yet theorists and critics need caution in recognizing **dialogic** complexities. In the multiple processes involving the producer, the text, reading and the many constitutive identities of the audience, identity proves a 'messy' business.

In the first case, theory starts from pre-existing constructions of difference: 'black' existed as a category and as agents grappling with identity long before cinema and television. Any oppositional search for black identity was reinforced by segregated theatres as well as movies, production, texts and reading. While *The Birth of a Nation* articulated one aspect of imposed identity construction of blacks by whites, black identity was also shaped by subsequent reactions and protests, engaging political critics as well as specialists in cinema. In the second case, a movement to change the status of the disabled, politically shaped by previous struggles for identity, raises different values of stereotypes, access and incorporation. An individual might not identify as a disabled person at all points in his/her life, much less constitute a collectivity. It is impossible to hold identity as a concept equally applicable in both cases without recognizing complexity, process, context and action.

Yet, any focus on dialogic identity should not underestimate production and text. This proves especially true in reflexive **documentary**, which often represents media about identity. These works can be individualistic, but can also posit broader group questions like those raised by Marlon Riggs' *Tongues Untied* (1989) or Trinh T. Minh-Ha's *Surname Viet, Given Name Nam* (1989). Other documentaries, especially those made by ethnic and/or sexual minorities, with a relatively low budget, question how their group identities have been constructed and imposed on them by the mainstream media. Through their autobiographical works, these filmmakers try to challenge stereotypes by articulating their struggle for self-identity (see **stereotype**).

Distribution creates special settings that define group identities. Screenings of cult films like *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (Jim Sharman, 1975) entail rehearsals of identity. More 'serious' films like *Amistad* (Steven Spielberg, 1997) or *Shoah* (Claude Lanzmann, 1985) are used to reinforce group identity in other public settings. Similarly, over the history of film and television, generational identities, defined in terms of children, teenagers, adults and senior citizens, have been constituted as identities in both genres and audience. **Fandom**, from Trekkers to teenagers, also facilitates the creation of markers, scenarios and places (conventions) where identity is reaffirmed. The proliferation of cable and audience research has allowed targeted marketing of identities. However, questions of hegemony and **consumption** always remain: who speaks for whom and whose identity is shaped through these actions and experiences?

Group and identity are, therefore, at once independent and interdependent in media, reflecting sometimes problematic axioms of social category as well as genre and audience. This concept can be explored further by examining the meanings of media and identity with regard to one of the primary deconstructive challenges of the twentieth century – national, transnational and hybrid identities (see **deconstruction**).

National identity, globalization and hybridity

Pam Cook's work, noted at the beginning of this entry, focuses on national identity in film as constructed in studios. Here, the recounting of British history was cloaked in glamour and action without an explicitly patriotic agenda. Britishness became an act of imagination, not documentation. Still, Cook warns that elements of nostalgia and home should not be linked only to conservative viewpoints: the left might use this same imagination to claim an alternative form of national unity. Moreover, the construction of identity consistently has faced contradictions within the nation, including those based on the experiences of women or minorities excluded from national efforts.

These constructions of identity emerged from studios and directors rather than specific state projects. Yet they may easily shade over into statecraft within an historical milieu or even the life of a particular director: Frank Capra's Americanness, after all, was part of both *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Why We Fight* (1942–1945). The first film

incorporates classic elements of the good 'little' guy saving the community; the impact of its theatrical release was augmented by generations of holiday screenings on television as well. Capra's work on the *Why We Fight* series served to indoctrinate American soldiers about the values of defeating the Axis. Propaganda and national documentaries raise special concerns: the process of constructing national/Allied identity was not so different from Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934), except for the side one fought on.

This does not imply that such efforts at conscious identity-building as a part of statecraft do not create their own contradictions of identity at the meshing of plans, actions and reading. Luke Gibbons (1996), for example, has shown how the Irish state presumed an identity as a nation, rooted in traditions, which would be reinforced by locally produced programming, especially in television and film. Here, outsiders are viewed as dangerous modernizers in the reconstruction of Irish identity. Yet rural dramas and citizen talks shows, Gibbons has found, as well as some patriotic films, actually subverted this imagined community by questioning Irish myth in its own terms.

Any recognition of interests and boundaries suggests the importance of reading national identity in transnational settings, often epitomized by local opposition to the **globalization** of Hollywood and American television. Kristin Ross (1995), for example, traced the multiple impacts of American imagery, conveyed through media, on a French society that at once rejected and adopted these forms in the aftermath of the Second World War. Neither French nor American society built a simple new transatlantic identity; both engaged in a mutual transaction. Other studies of audience have focused on the widely disseminated American television series *Dallas* in terms of individual and collective readings. Liebes and Katz (1990), for example, found distinctive readings of this series among immigrant Jews in Israel or between Jews and Arabs that confirmed each group's own beliefs and values, their different identities.

Nations themselves are also in flux. Hong Kong and the ambivalence of colonial traditions leading to its 1997 transition to Chinese sovereignty has evoked intriguing critical readings of hybrid identity and concealment in its flourishing film industry. Hong Kong cinema epitomizes the ambiguities and contradictions of cinema that allow spectators to explore their own liminal status and to map out futures. Meanwhile, Hamid Naficy (1993) has looked at identity in terms of those who have moved away to exile rather than the political unit itself. In his careful reading of Iranian television in Los Angeles, Naficy notes the repetition of images of the homeland coupled with visions of new consumption. Here, media are seen as a response to a crisis of identity through a surfeit of presences that allow a new hybridity for exiles also negotiating their ongoing relation to the United States.

A post-modern politics of identity is a major concern of media theory and criticism at the end of the twentieth century (see **modernism and post-modernism**). Myriad studies are produced each year that grapple with issues of identity – gender, race, nation and other possible categories. Yet, Ella Shohat and Robert Stam (1994) warn that the politics of identity may lead to antagonistic self-representation rather than dialogue. Instead, they propose that media might become tools in the pedagogy of mutual and reciprocal relations. Here, the issue of identity in media comes full circle to merge with the politics of identity as a tool for creating the future as well as a reading of past and contemporary texts.

Conclusions

'Identity', as a florescent critical and theoretical concern, proves powerful and liberating in film and television study. Still, critics must be aware of both faddishness and complexity/ambiguity. Identity is constantly caught between production and reading, mediated through text. Moreover, processes off-screen are not necessarily coincident with development of filmic practices or goals. Theorists and critics have recognized that collective constructions of and actions about identity often incorporate social contradictions. These may be concealed by nostalgia, projection or rejection of some 'other', but media may also provide arenas in which contradictions are recognized and grappled with. Hence, the use of this concept also demands careful analysis of who reads movies and television as well as what they do with these readings. Moreover, one must be careful not to reify the term either as a critical discovery or as a political attribute that reinforces polarization: such a powerful analytic tool must be viewed through its consequences as well as its insights.

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CINDY WONG AND GARY McDONOGH

ideological state apparatuses

In Louis **Althusser**'s (1971) conceptual approach to the role of ideology within capitalist society, he first examines what he calls the 'Repressive State Apparatuses', or RSAs. These RSAs, as organizations of physical force centralized within the state itself, include the armed forces, police, courts and prisons – all of which operate through the use, real or implied, of violence. He then proceeds to identify, after Antonio **Gramsci** (1971), the 'Ideological State Apparatuses', ISAs, which operate primarily by *ideology*. Here, the media system, like the educational, familial, religious, trade union and political systems, acts 'massively and predominantly' by ideology to reproduce the structural inequalities of capitalist society. In contending that 'no class can hold state power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the [ISAs]', Althusser (1971: 146–7) regards the ISAs as both the *stake* of the larger class struggle as well as the *site* where the dominant class encounters the expressed resistance of the exploited or subaltern classes.

See also: dominant ideology; ideology and hegemony

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STUART ALLAN

ideology and hegemony

Ideology is one of the most hotly contested concepts in film and televisual theory. Long-standing debates continue to be waged over how to extend its typical dictionary rendering, namely as 'a system of ideas, opinions or viewpoints', so as to theorize the lived materiality of the social relations of meaning production.

In tracing the etymological lineage of 'ideology',

Williams (1983: 153–4) contends that the term 'first appeared in English in 1796, as a direct translation of the new French word *idéologie* which had been proposed in that year by the rationalist philosopher Destutt de Tracy'. According to Tracy's formulation, ideology was to be recognized as 'the philosophy of mind' and, as such, constitutive of a new 'science of ideas' to be distinguished from 'ancient metaphysics'. This scientific conception of ideology would be eventually challenged, in turn, by an explicitly pejorative treatment, one which would enjoy much wider currency in the nineteenth century. Here Williams points to Napoleon Bonaparte's popularization of the term 'ideology' as a means to describe the deliberate falsification of what might otherwise be accepted (in Bonaparte's opinion, at least) as a truthful declaration about the world. To invoke the word 'ideological' to characterize a particular statement was to condemn it to the realm of suspicion, if not outright derision. Not surprisingly, then, to call one's opponent an 'ideologue' was to accuse them of promoting deceitfully abstract ideas, a rhetorical strategy still used today.

The conceptual tensions emergent in these early formulations of how best to define 'ideology' would preoccupy an increasing number of theorists throughout the nineteenth century. Significantly, however, the competing inflections of the term provisionally set down by writers like Tracy, among others, register a profound resonance in the writings of Karl **Marx**. If in Marx's view the approach adopted by Tracy was worthy of close scrutiny, it was none the less deeply misguided in its failure to grasp the structuring influence of economic factors on the ideas of a given period. Indeed, he attacked Tracy as a 'vulgar economist' and, even worse, a 'cold-blooded bourgeois-doctrinaire' (cited in Eagleton 1991: 69). Before turning to Marx's own attempts to shed light on the attendant issues at stake, though, it is important to note that he never actually proffered a formal definition of ideology itself (nor, for that matter, even coined the phrase 'false consciousness'). This observation stands in marked contrast to those claims sometimes made within film and television studies that an analytically coherent or totalized conception of ideology can be attributed to Marxism as a mode of enquiry. Hence the usual qualifications about distinguishing Marx's own writings from Marxism are particularly pertinent where the concept of 'ideology' is concerned.

Many students and researchers in film and television studies have engaged with Marx's writings on ideology to great advantage. Marx used a variety of expressions and metaphors, often in conjunction with Engels, to describe the combination of **class** forces with ideological processes. Examples drawn from their work include those which appear to signify, first, a form of distortion, such as 'mist', 'camera obscura', 'phantoms', 'inversions on the retina', 'abstractions', 'illusions', 'blocks' or an '*idée fixe*'. A further set of terms suggests some form of reflection, such as 'reflexes', 'echoes' or 'sublimates'. If Marx did not employ the term 'false', he did rely on adjectives such as 'incorrect', 'twisted' and 'dream-like'. Engels, in contrast, wrote: 'Ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, it is true, but with a false consciousness. The real motive forces impelling him [*sic*] remain unknown to him; otherwise it simply would not be an ideological process. Hence he imagines false or seeming motive forces' (Engels 1959: 408).

An important starting point is a celebrated passage which Marx co-wrote with Engels in *The German Ideology* around 1845:

> The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.... In so far, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an epoch, it is self-evident that they... among other things... regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch.
>
> (Marx 1970: 64–5)

Different readings of this and related passages in *The German Ideology* tend to be marked by the relative degree of emphasis each places on the underlying problem of **determination**. For instance, in some readings this text is held up as an example *par excellence* of an economistic reading of ideology, one where references are made to ideology as a negative, restrictive force arising from (and reflective of) a fixed correspondence to the economic realm (see **economism**). For others, a more flexible understanding of ideology as a series of dependent effects (there is no essence of ideology), or as an incoherent 'system of beliefs characteristic of a certain class', is to be reached.

In general, however, of primary interest today is the exposition of ideology as a material practice whereby relations of domination are 'figured out' by the human subject. To this end, attention has tended to focus on the effectivity of dominant ideas so as to discern how the means by which the world is made sense of under capitalism ultimately work to serve ruling interests. As a result, Marx and Engels' declaration that 'the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas' (*ibid.*: 64) has sparked considerable debate over the class-specificity of ideology. The broad thesis, as highlighted in the quotation above, is deceptively straightforward. Ruling ideas become the ideal expression of dominant material relationships, thus individual members of the ruling class, to the degree that they rule as a class, will then *determine* (produce, regulate and distribute) the ideas of their age: 'their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch'.

By accentuating the conditions of production of ruling or dominant ideas, Marx and Engels intended to dissolve any idealist dichotomy between the autonomous (see **autonomy, relative**), independent ideas of the ruling class and the ruling class itself (*ibid.*: 65). How, then, to characterize the effectivity of ruling ideas? The representations of the dominant ideology are not forced on the exploited class, nor are they to be reduced to 'useful fictions'. Rather, the ruling class must work to advance its particular interests by depicting its ideas within the terms of *universality*. Ruling interests, like the symbolic processes through which they are spoken, are represented as the common interests of subordinate classes, the only correct, rational ones available (*ibid.*: 65–6). In this way, then, ideological ideas or symbols conceal their dependence on social structures, as well as their relation to determinate forms of politics (as defined by class interests).

This it would appear that Marx and Engels are content to relegate those social practices through which consciousness is organized to a subordinate position *vis-à-vis* the economic realm. Certainly, evidence to support such an assertion appears in Marx's 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, a short overview of the Marxist position written almost fifteen years after *The German Ideology*. There Marx writes: 'The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men [*sic*] that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (Marx 1970: 20–1). For Marx, it is during the social production of their existence that individuals *inevitably* enter into *definite relations of production*. Independently of the individual's conscious will, these relations are tied to the material development of the material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production, in turn, 'constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness' (*ibid.*: 20).

However, a critical question remains unclear: does the mode of production of material life *determine* or simply *condition* the general process of social, political and intellectual life? The point has been contested in terms of the *proper* translation from the German original, to the *real* test of Marx's historical studies. In any case, how this issue is decided for each particular reader will obviously have serious implications for the resultant form of Marxist theorizing.

Should analysis accept a mode of production which *conditions* life processes, for example, then it may accord a degree of relative autonomy to the various superstructural forms from the economic base (see **base and superstructure**). Any model of linear causality where the contradictions of capitalism as an economic system may be resolved and released only with its overthrow, may be also understood to suggest that the same is correct for its dominant social, political and intellectual practices. Evidently, this implicit assumption could also eventually result in the subjection of ideological analyses to economic analyses. Marxist research would then be reduced to looking to objectively

defined class interests, if not class origins, to uncover prefigured ideological relations at work to conceal those contradictions. After all, according to Marx, changes in the economic foundation or base will ultimately lead, 'sooner or later', to the transformation of the *whole immense superstructure* (*ibid.*: 21). The social determination of a *dominated* ideology or, for that matter, the truth and falsity of those ideas to be internalized by subordinate classes through the **dominant ideology**, remains strictly tied to class interests.

Accordingly, analyses need to maintain a distinction between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, on the one hand, and the 'legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men [*sic*] become conscious of this conflict and fight it out' (*ibid.*: 21), on the other. **Consciousness**, it follows, is to be explained 'from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production' (*ibid.*). However, should this conflict ever cease to exist, then the bourgeois mode of production itself will be made to collapse (*ibid.*). Therefore, once the transformation of the capitalist social formation has been achieved, the prehistory of human society will be brought to a close (*ibid.*: 21–2). The conceptual constraints of such a teleological presupposition, for some just wishful thinking, were clear: if we are to avoid attributing to ideology a rigidly functional purpose (so that contradictions must at all times be concealed), a new line of enquiry would have to be introduced.

The concept of commodity **fetishism**, outlined by Marx (1984) in the first volume of *Capital*, signals the final movement away from a notion of ideology as a practice located *above* the processes of production. This concept brings to bear a new emphasis on the fetishized forms *immanent to these very processes* (the term ideology appears to have been abandoned). In tracing how it is that the mechanisms of commoditization are deployed throughout the class structure, the entire range of social relations (ruling and non-ruling) are brought to the fore for analysis. An important question then becomes: how is it that the capitalist system itself succeeds in concealing its own social relations? In advancing beyond explanations linked to conscious efforts to *deceive the masses*, the nature of the commodity itself is problematized by Marx. Specifically, given the transformation of social products into those commodities exchanged on the market, he argues that the actual commodity may be recognized as a *mysterious thing*.

For Marx, the mystical character of the commodity exists 'because in it the social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour' (*ibid.*: 77). In this way, the qualities of commodities (as products of labour) are rendered both perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. The example of light and the human eye is used by Marx with great effect: 'light from an object is perceived by us not as the subjective excitation of our optic nerve, but as the objective form of something outside the eye itself' (*ibid.*). Hence the appropriateness of Marx's observation that what is in fact a definite social relation between workers assumes, 'in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things' (*ibid.*).

Fetishism is thereby regarded as being inseparable from the production of commodities: producers do not come into social contact with each other until the act of exchange (of their products) is realized (*ibid.*: 77–8). Those characteristics inferred from the products of labour through fetishistic processes are then made to appear *endowed with life* and *natural*. Subsequent to the **reification** of social phenomena, inanimate things are treated as if they had the qualities of the social (material relations between persons) while, concomitantly, definite relations between individuals are formulated as representing characteristics of material objects (social relations between things). Capital is thus made to possess an appearance of productivity which is actually that of the producer, thereby ensuring that the very lived relations of capitalist society work to conceal class antagonisms.

Today, those who are committed to retaining the concept of 'ideology' within a critical context continue to resist this displacement of its features to the realm of commodity fetishism. At the same time, many have argued that the question of class reductionism in ideology must be reconfigured so as to avoid the limitations of a mode of analysis which treats all subjects as class subjects or, in the same vein, holds that each ideological element has a *necessary* class belonging. As a result, the notion of 'hegemony' – derived, in part, from the Greek for 'leader' or 'ruler' enjoying political predominance – has been employed as a means to circumvent economistic readings of ideological imperatives by accentuating their *hegemonic* embodiment in the very process of the subject's discursive constitution. **Laclau** and Mouffe, among other post-Marxists, have highlighted the dangers of reifying a particular approach to theorizing ideological struggle in accordance with an *objective* relation (hence the *necessary* class belonging) between ideological elements. All too often, they insist, this type of conflict is reduced to a 'confrontation between two closed ideological systems completely opposed one to the other, in which victory consists in the total destruction of "bourgeois ideology"' (Laclau and Mouffe 1982: 94).

Most attempts to define the concept of 'hegemony' attribute its development to **Gramsci**, a radical Italian philosopher who died in 1937 after more than a decade in Mussolini's prisons. Briefly, in his critique of power dynamics in modern societies, Gramsci describes hegemony as a relation of:

> 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.
>
> (Gramsci 1971: 12)

It is this implied distinction between consent and its opposite, coercion, which Gramsci recognizes to be crucial. In the case of the coercive force of ruling groups, he underlines the point that it is the 'apparatus of state coercive power which "legally" enforces discipline on those groups who do not "consent" either actively or passively' (*ibid.*). The exercise of this coercive force may involve, for example, the armed forces of the military or the police, courts and prison system to maintain 'law and order'.

This type of coercive control in modern societies is the exception rather than the rule, however, when it comes to organizing public consent. Power, Gramsci argues, is much more commonly exercised over subordinate groups by means of persuasion through 'political and ideological leadership'. It follows that a ruling group is hegemonic only to the degree that it acquires the consent of other groups within its preferred definitions of reality through this type of leadership. In Gramsci's words:

> A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well.
>
> (*ibid.*: 57–8)

Subordinate groups are encouraged by the ruling group to negotiate reality within what are ostensibly the limits of '**common sense**' when, in actuality, this 'common sense' is consistent with dominant norms, values and beliefs. Hegemony is to be conceptualized, therefore, as a site of ideological struggle over this 'common sense'.

Gramsci's writings on hegemony have proven to be extraordinarily influential for examining the operation of the media in modern societies. Three particularly significant (and interrelated) aspects of the cultural dynamics of hegemony are the following:

1 *Hegemony is a lived process.* Hegemonic ideas do not circulate freely in the air above people's heads; rather, according to Gramsci, they have a material existence in the cultural practices, activities and rituals of individuals striving to make sense of the world around them. That is, hegemony is a process embodied in what Williams (1977: 110) aptly describes as 'a lived system of meanings and values', that is, as 'a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world'. It follows that hegemony

constitutes 'a sense of reality for most people in the society' and, as such, is the contradictory terrain on which the 'lived dominance and subordination' of particular groups is struggled over in day-to-day cultural practices.

2 *Hegemony is a matter of 'common sense'.* A much broader category than ideology, common sense signifies the uncritical and largely unconscious way of perceiving and understanding the social world as it organizes habitual daily experience. Gramsci stresses that common sense, despite the extent to which it is 'inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed', may be theorized as a complex and disjointed 'infinity of traces', and as such never simply identical with a class-based ideology. 'Common sensical' beliefs, far from being fixed or immobile, are in a constant state of renewal: 'new ideas', as he notes, are always entering daily life and encountering the 'sedimentation' left behind by this contradictory, ambiguous, 'chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions' (Gramsci 1971: 422). In critiquing what passes for common sense as 'the residue of absolutely basic and commonly-agreed, consensual wisdoms', Hall (1977: 325) further elaborates on this point: 'You cannot learn, through common sense, *how things are*: you can only discover *where they fit* into the existing scheme of things.'

3 *Hegemony is always contested.* Far from being a totally monolithic system or structure imposed from above, then, lived hegemony is an active process of negotiation; it can never be taken for granted by the ruling group. In Gramsci's words (1971: 348), at stake is 'a cultural battle to transform the popular "mentality" and to diffuse the philosophical innovations which will demonstrate themselves to be "historically true" to the extent that they become concretely – i.e. historically and socially – universal'. Consequently, no one group can maintain its hegemony without adapting to changing conditions, a dynamic which will likely entail making certain strategic compromises with the forces which oppose its ideological authority. Hegemony as a form of dominance is neither invoked nor accepted in a passive manner: as Williams (1977: 112) points out: 'It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified [in relation to] pressures not at all its own'. Hence Gramsci's contention that common sense be theorized as the site on which the hegemonic rules of practical conduct and norms of moral behaviour are reproduced and, crucially, also challenged and resisted.

Significantly, then, this shift to address the cultural dynamics of hegemony displaces a range of different formulations of '**dominant ideology**', most of which hold that media discourse be theorized as 'concealing' or 'masking' the 'true' origins of economic antagonisms, that is, their essential basis in the class struggle. At the same time, this emphasis on the hegemonic imperatives of media discourse allows us to avoid the suggestion that the 'effects' of media discourse on its audience be understood simply as a matter of 'false consciousness'. Instead, this alternative line of enquiry provides important new insights into how media discourses naturalize – to varying degrees – the social divisions and hierarchies of modern society as being *rational, reasonable* and *appropriate*, and, in this way, potentially *hegemonic*.

See also: praxis

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