



Mapping Ideology

Slavoj Žižek (Editor)

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Not so long ago, the term “ideology” was in considerable disrepute. Its use had become associated with a claim to know a truth beyond ideology, a radically unfashionable position. What then explains the sudden revival of interest in grappling with the questions that “ideology” poses to social and cultural theory, as well as to political practice?

Mapping Ideology presents a comprehensive sampling of the most important contemporary writing on the subject. Slavoj Žižek’s introductory essay surveys the development of the concept from Marx to the present. Terry Eagleton, Peter Dews and Seyla Benhabib assess the decisive contributions of Lukács and the Frankfurt School. A different tradition is revealed in an essay by the French post-structuralist Michel Pêcheux, while the study of ideology is exemplified in classic texts by Theodor Adorno, Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser. An intersection of Gramscian and Althusserian motifs appears in a now famous debate over “the dominant ideology thesis,” reprinted here. Pierre Bourdieu succinctly formulates his departure from this tradition in an interview with Eagleton. Further readings of the ideological are explored by Richard Rorty and Michèle Barrett. Finally Fredric Jameson supplies an authoritative statement of the nature and position of the ideological in late capitalist society. *Mapping Ideology* is an invaluable guide to what is now the most dynamic field of cultural theory.

Mapping Ideology Details

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James F says

March 15

25. Slavoj Žižek, ed., *Mapping Ideology* [2012] 353 pages [Kindle]

An anthology of writings on the theory of ideology, this book was one of the required readings for one of my friend's courses, although they only read the selection by Althusser, which is probably the one selection that would be understandable without quite a bit of background. The book consists of a rather obscure introduction by the editor -- who seems to always write obscurely, perhaps by choice -- and fourteen selections by various writers, some of which are classic texts by authors such as Theodor Adorno, Jacques Lacan, Louis Althusser, etc. while others are highly polemical and assume a knowledge of the writers they are polemicizing against. This is definitely a book for specialists and not general readers; although I have a degree in Philosophy and a strong interest in Marxist theory, much of this polemic concerned writers I have not read and some I had never heard of. The introduction alone alluded without explanation to more than twenty authors, of whom I had read five and heard of about half.

The three selections I found the most useful were "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" by Althusser; "Ideology and its Vicissitudes in Western Marxism", an excerpt from Terry Eagleton's book *Ideology*, which traces the history of the concept and which I would suggest reading first, in place of the opaque introduction by Žižek; and "Postmodernism and the Market", an excerpt from Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. By the end of the book, and particularly after reading the selection by Eagleton, I had some idea who most of the writers the book was dealing with were, and some of the disputes were interesting, while others were less so.

Mainly what I came away with was a somewhat different priority for my future readings in the subject -- I now have more interest in reading more of Lukacs, Gramsci, and Jameson, and far less in reading more of Adorno and the Frankfurt School; I won't say anything of Lacan, Derrida and the postmodernists because I only read that tradition out of obligation to know something about them and not out of any sympathy for that school of thought.

Paul Adkin says

A good step up for those who want to think beyond the paradigm.

Pablo says

No se puede ver este libro como un todo, puesto que está compuesto de muchos artículos y capítulos de libros de distintos autores. Aunque Zizek los seleccionó y ordenó de una forma en que vayan "dialogando". Mis favoritos son los del propio Zizek, Althusser y Eagleton. También interesantes los relativos a la Escuela de Francfort. No creo que sea eso si una muy buena forma de introducirse a la ideología, la mayoría de los

textos son complejos, y están inmersos dentro de discusiones filosóficas de larga data, que si no se tiene un mínimo conocimiento de ellas, se puede mal interpretar o entender a medias todo.
