

Karl Marx: Cultural hegemony – media and mind control

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Introduction: Marx: Base and Superstructure

- ▶ Marx's deterministic economic conception divides the society in two layers or levels: **base** and **superstructure**.
- ▶ The Base, upon which everything grows, is composed by the material production, money, objects, the relations of production and the stage of development of productive forces.
- ▶ The Superstructure is determined by the base, is where we can find the political and ideological institutions, our social relations, set of ideas; our cultures, hopes, dreams and spirit. The world of souls, souls shaped by capital.



Repressive Structures: Those that threaten to act with force if rules are not upheld.	Ideological Structures: Those that act to construct the values and ideologies which govern the way people behave.
THE ARMY 	SCHOOLS 
 THE POLICE	 RELIGION
THE LEGAL SYSTEM 	FAMILIES 



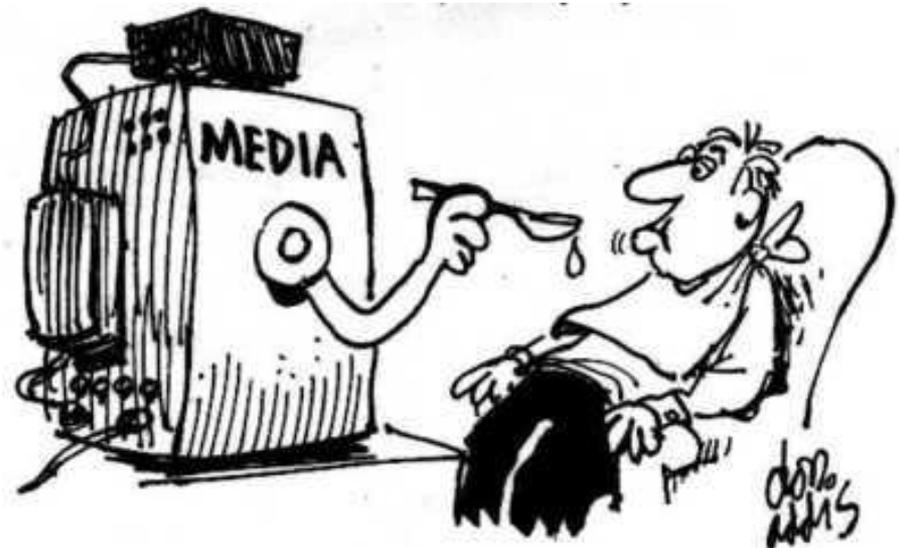
Media as means of production

- ▶ Mass media in classical Marxist terms, are a 'means of production' which in capitalist society are in the ownership of the ruling class.
- ▶ The mass media simply disseminate the ideas and world views of the ruling class, and deny or defuse alternative ideas.



False Consciousness

- ▶ Social institutions, like the mass media play a key role in ensuring that the working class remain happy with their situation
- ▶ “False consciousness”: Members of the subordinate classes cannot see that they are being duped.
- ▶ Ideology identify as lies, deceptions and misinformation given to the working classes in order to maintain the state of ‘false consciousness’.



What is hegemony?

- ▶ *"...Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups."*

(Strinati, 1995: 165)



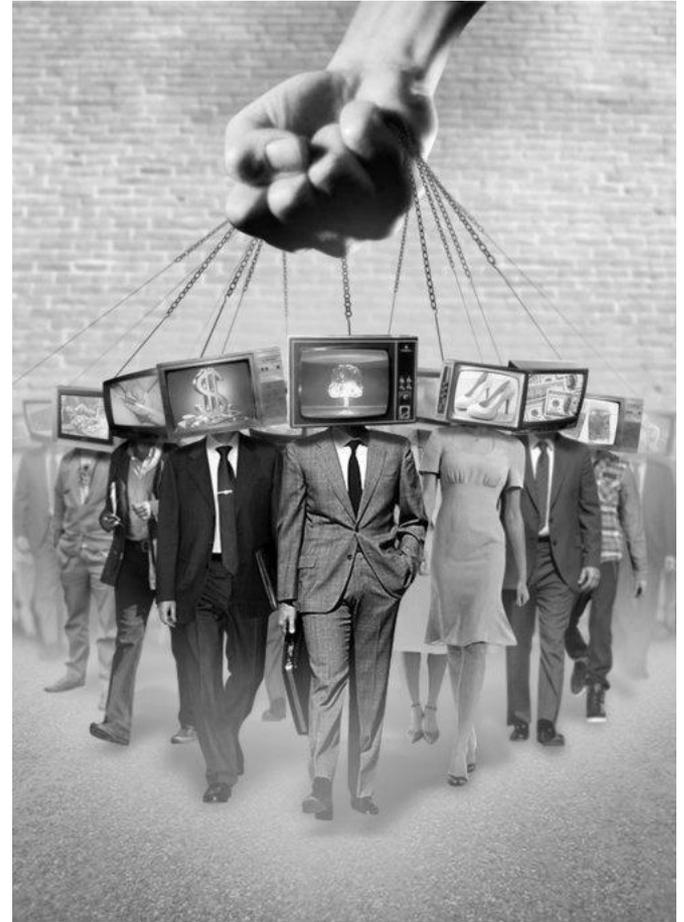
What is cultural hegemony?

- ▶ Antonio Gramsci
- ▶ A class had succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its own moral, political and cultural values;
- ▶ Consent given by the majority of a population to a certain direction suggested by those in power
- ▶ Use of physical force or coercion with intellectual, moral and cultural inducement;
- ▶ “Common sense”
- ▶ It is a set of ideas by means of which dominant groups strive to secure the consent of subordinate groups to their leadership;



Conclusion

- ▶ The institutions of the mass media are owned by the ruling classes
- ▶ These institutions are used to indoctrinate the masses into believing capitalism is good for all
- ▶ Media industry workers are exploited just as other workers



Conclusion

- ▶ Limitations of Marxist analysis
- ▶ Counter-hegemonic ideas
- ▶ Decreasing power of the mass media today: Internet, YouTube, blogs...



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