Assessment of Lukacs’ contribution:

Some commentators (among them Eagleton) think that perhaps he does not escape what he wants to combat , that is economism and reductionism: he reduces all the problems of bourgeois society, and among them all the problems related to ideology, to a single principle or cause, related to economy: the commodity fetishism.

There is also the criticism that Lukacs ‘ thought is rather speculative and abstract and a major problem it faces is that it cannot answer the question: how there takes place the turn from the all embracing reification to its overturning , or, alternatively, the leap from the empirical proletarian class consciousness to the “imputed” one.

The criticism that he sees a pure, neat correspondence between classes and ideologies

The criticism that one can detect in his thought the idealist view that the knowledge of reality in itself could transform this reality.

But, the great value of his thought consists, among other points, in the following: no matter the flaws that may characterize his arguing for the asymmetry between class standpoints, his argument is significant because it shows that one can find an alternative way to a false dilemma: either adopting a positivist idea of objectivity and truth, or falling to epistemological relativism (meaning roughly that all the partial viewpoints are equally true). Furthermore, what can be considered to have great value, especially for our own times, is his arguing for the inherently critical, radical potential of a totalizing view of social reality, and, reversely, for the suspect political function of the chopping down of social reality to isolated “facts”.

**ANTONIO GRAMSCI**

His connection to Lukacs: without really knowing the work of Lukacs, he follows the same path with him: the interest in the problem of ideology and the fight against the economistic understanding of Marxism. For him this understanding is above all a political problem, related to the practical failures of the revolutionary efforts.

With Gramsci we have, for the first time, the focusing on the problem of the definition of ideology and the idea that the changes in the meaning of the term are themselves a historical-political issue.

In the *Prison Notebooks* we have the term “ideology” used in different meanings, whereas significant for his thought around this term are also other terms as we shall see.

His attack on the evaluatively negative concept of ideology and his distinction between “historically organic” and “arbitrary” ideologies. His drawing from the Marxian “Introduction” to *the Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, where Marx speaks of the distinction between “base” and “superstructure”, and from the Marxian conception of ideas as “material forces” under certain circumstances. Gramsci’s idea that the distinction between “base” and “superstructure” is like that between “form” and “content” (in reality the two are inseparable) and his idea ideology is like a “cement”, a connective tissue, unifying a “historical bloc”.

Thus, his emphasis on the objectivity, necessity, universality of ideology.

Turning to a more specific understanding of ideology in Gramsci, we could see his more general effort to distinguish levels within what is called “consciousness”, and create a hierarchy of them. This has to do with the distinction, which very much interests him, between the systematic, the elaborated, the coherent, the official levels and what is opposed to them.

We could say that in certain respects, “ideology” for Gramsci does not exactly denote a level within this hierarchy, next to philosophy or religion, but it means that philosophy, religion or any worldview are transformed to sth like an educative movement, that is they penetrate many fields of society and embrace the people and their practice.

In this respect, it is significant that he makes a parallel between “ideology” and “religion”. Religion is also for him ,as for Marx, a model for the understanding of ideology, but for reasons that differ from those of Marx. “Religion” is important for the understanding of ideology, because it is the basic form of consciousness or worldview that, within the historical process, has tried consciously to constitute an educative movement, to penetrate all the social spheres and organize the lives of the people.

The interest of Gramsci- and here one could detect a difference from Lukacs- in analysing the “lower” levels in the hierarchy of forms of consciousness. The importance, in this respect, of his analyses around what he terms “common sense” and “good sense”. By the first term he means the “spontaneous philosophy of the non philosophers” (because he believes that philosophy has a universal character- “all men are philosophers”)

“Common sense”, which has been largely formed from the various sediments that philosophies and , for the most part, religion have left in history, for him has certain features: it is uncritical, without self-awareness, unsystematic, not elaborated, heterogeneous, contradictory. “Good sense” is that part of “common sense” which rather springs from “below”, from the practical life circumstances of the people.