

Ideology, Critique, and Social Structures

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On Jaeggi's reading, the immanent and progressive features of ideology critique are rooted in the connection between its explanatory and its normative tasks. I argue that this claim can be cashed out in terms of the mechanisms involved in a functional explanation of ideology and that stability plays a crucial role in this connection. On this reading, beliefs can be said to be ideological if (a) they have the function of supporting existing social practices, (b) they are the output of systematically distorted processes of belief formation, (c) the conditions under which distorting mechanisms trigger can be traced back to structural causal factors shaped by the social practice their outputs are designed to support. Functional problems thus turn out to be interlocked with normative problems because ideology fails to provide principles to regulate cooperation that would be accepted under conditions of non-domination, hence failing to anchor a stable cooperative scheme. By explaining ideology as parasitic on domination, ideology critique points to the conditions under which cooperation stabilizes as those of a practice whose principles are accepted without coercion. Thus, it entails a conception of justice whose principles are articulated as part of a theory of social cooperation.

1. Jaeggi on Ideology

Rachel Jaeggi has advanced a conception of ideology and ideology critique according to which the normative task of critique must be properly connected with its explanatory task in order for critique to be immanent and promote change. In what follows I discuss Jaeggi's view in the light of a moderately cognitivist conception of ideology. I maintain that the explanatory task places three connected demands on a theory of ideology that relate to the functional, the epistemic, and the genetic dimension of ideology. In this context, I try to outline how these demands impact on the normative and progressive dimensions of ideology critique. In the present section I review Jaeggi's main claims concerning the connection between the analytical and the critical tasks of a theory of ideology, focusing in particular on the interlocking of

functional and normative issues they involve. In the second and the third sections I consider in some detail what it takes to carry out the explanatory task of ideology critique. I argue that beliefs can be said to be ideological if and only if they have the function of supporting existing social practices, if they are the output of a systematically distorted process of belief formation, and if the triggering of the relevant distorting mechanisms can be traced back to causal factors shaped by the social practices their outputs are designed to support. In the second section I draw on an etiological reading of functional explanations to account for the existence of ideological formations and suggest that the epistemology of delusions and irrational beliefs can be fruitfully recruited to locate the distorting mechanisms at work. In the third section I employ Haslanger's conception of social structural explanations to sketch an account of how social practices may shape the conditions under which these mechanisms are triggered. In the final section I contend that functional problems turn out to be interlocked with normative problems in this context because ideologies are bound to fail to set up principles to regulate social cooperation that would be accepted under conditions of non-domination, thus failing to anchor a cooperative scheme that is stable over time. In this sense, by explaining ideology as parasitic on domination, critique both debunks the purported reasons the former allegedly provides for accepting existing social practices and points to the conditions under which social cooperation stabilize as those of a practice whose principles would be accepted without ideological coercion. I conclude by suggesting that, on this reading, ideology critique entails a normative theory that comes close to a theory of justice designed to articulate such principles as part of a theory of social cooperation.

Let me say first that I broadly agree with Jaeggi's view on the persistent relevance of a theory of ideology for social critique. Here I will focus on what I think are the main claims advanced by Jaeggi, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Ideology critique includes both an analytical, explanatory, and a critical, normative component.
2. The explanatory and the normative component are essentially connected.
3. Therefore, the critique of ideology is both immanent and transformative.¹

As I read the argument, (2) is grounded in the connection between the social function and the (purported) normative content of ideology, which in turn support (3). The connection

underpins the interlocking between the explanatory and the critical moment of ideology critique, accounting for its immanent and transformative power. It seems fair to convey this claim by saying that what is specific to ideology is the function it performs in supporting a social practice by providing agents with reasons to comply with relevant social norms.² The social function and normative content of ideology are thus connected because ideologies perform their function in virtue of the authority they have over agents, so that their normative shortfalls are bound to result in legitimation crises that unsettle social cooperation.³ What licenses the idea of a critique of ideology is the view that functional problems are interlocked with normative problems. Not only is ideology both morally and functionally “bad” – wrong and not working – but also the moral and functional shortcomings of ideology are mutually connected. On the one hand, its failure to provide normative grounds for complying with social norms results in functional crises. In this sense, ideology is functionally bad because it is morally bad. On the other hand, its moral wrongness turns out to be *ultimately* rooted in its failure to provide a suitable basis for social practices. In this sense, ideology is morally bad because it is functionally bad. I fully agree with Jaeggi that the latter claim is as attractive as it is controversial, and I will only be able to hint to a possible rationale for it in last section. The point seems to be that it must be at least part of the explanation for why ideology is wrong that it fails to provide principles to regulate social cooperation which would be accepted under conditions of non-domination, thus failing to anchor a cooperative scheme that can be stable over time.

A “practical contradiction” is [...] characterized by the fact that the obstacles or crises that are part of it are normatively problematic in both senses: something does not work (well), and the way it works is not good. This odd linking of normative (in a stricter sense, or, ethical-normative) and functional considerations takes into account that in the social sphere nothing can function in a way that is completely independent from the good. Conversely and controversially, the good is rooted in the working or functioning of society, or in the functional requirements of society.⁴

The rationale for this claim, I think, is that social practices are backed by the reasons driving acceptance. Ideological beliefs fail to provide genuine reasons to this effect because they can be traced back to the power relations they are designed to support. These beliefs work in fact by “instilling domination in the mind”, as they provide a framework of interpretation within which the power relations they originate from are represented as legitimate.⁵ I will

elaborate on this in a moment. What is important here is that ideological beliefs supply at best an unstable solution to the functional problem they are designed to solve, since they only support the relevant social practices so long as their ideological character is disguised. This is why social systems that rest on ideology are prone to legitimation crises that may be fostered by ideology critique. This is also why ideology may be said to be “simultaneously true and false”.⁶ It is true to the facts because it represents existing power relations. It is false because it represents the latter as natural, rational, universal, and thus beyond contestation.⁷

As I understand it, this means that ideological beliefs causally depend on the power relations they support because they result from systematic distortions in the process of belief formation that can be traced back to existing power relations. Not only does their content mirror the power relations they support, but also (a) they are contingent on them – they would not exist if the latter did not exist – and (b) the causal process from which they result does not count as a rational process of belief formation. In a sense, then, they rationalize domination by “forcing” acceptance, as they arise from manipulating the rationale for accepting the social practice they are designed to support. This yields a contradiction that makes ideological beliefs inconsistent with their function: what are claimed to be reasons for accepting certain social practices turn out to be part of the power relations the latter incorporate.

Here are the sources of the connection between the explanatory and the normative task of ideology critique.⁸ By *explaining* ideological beliefs as a by-product of power relations, ideology critique both unveils that existing social practices lack normative support and points to what a social practice free from domination would look like, namely a practice whose principles would be accepted in conditions of non-domination. In what follows I will sketch out in some detail how in my view such a conception of ideology may work and suggest that stability may play a crucial role in connecting the epistemic, the functional and the genetic dimensions associated with ideology critique.⁹

Ideological beliefs are bound to yield a “practical contradiction” because they raise a claim that would not be vindicated under conditions of non-domination and therefore they fail to support a stable pattern of cooperation. These beliefs only persist because of a systematic distortion in the process of belief formation that is socially induced. Therefore, they are bound to lose grip as soon as their epistemically spurious causal history is unveiled and their delusional nature exposed.¹⁰ As we will see, this is also the source of the immanent and the

transformative character of ideology critique – its normative standards emerge from social crises and unveiling practical contradictions fosters social change.

2. Ideology and functional explanations

Let us begin with the social function of ideology and the explanatory task of critique. Jaeggi is correct in stressing that ideology is different from cognitive mistakes or random false beliefs.¹¹ For a set of beliefs to qualify as an ideology, it must be such that it both supports a certain “praxis” and that it is causally connected with the praxis it supports. What distinguishes ideological beliefs from ordinary cognitive mistakes, however systematic, is that ideological beliefs concern practices that are part of the causal process that brought them about and that therefore contribute to accounting for how they exist. This responds to the explanatory requirement for ideology critique. The latter stands apart from ordinary moral and political critique because it does not just argue that some beliefs are wrong. It accounts for their wrongness as resulting from a process of belief formation that is more than epistemically flawed. In order for a set of beliefs to qualify as ideological, its epistemic flaws must be the output of a systematic distortion in the process of belief formation, which is causally dependent on the social reality underpinned by those beliefs. This means that ideology critique must locate both the distorting mechanisms operating at the cognitive level and the social causal factors that are responsible for their being triggered.

This is consistent with the idea that ideology can be given a functional explanation and makes for the first step towards connecting the explanatory and the normative dimensions of ideology critique. It is commonly held that functional explanations require that tokens of type X exist (or persist, or are replicated) because of the effects tokens of that type normally bring about: hearts can be said to have the function of pumping blood because hearts pump blood and pumping blood accounts for why hearts exists. Very roughly

1. x causes y
2. x exists/persists/is replicated because it causes y.¹²

In biology, natural selection is commonly taken to provide the feedback mechanism that underlies (2): hearts would not exist (persist, be replicated), if hearts did not normally pump blood – which admits for defective tokens. In social science feedback mechanisms may, yet need not be strictly analogous to natural selection – mimicking and cultural learning may for instance be among the mechanism by which social practices are replicated, and (2) may be thus underlay by a combination of intentional actions, unintended consequences, differential replication.¹³

Now, take *x* to stand for a set of beliefs and *y* for the support they provide to social institutions. Ideological beliefs may be said to have the function of supporting social institutions if they support them and exist/persist/are replicated because they do. The feedback mechanism may arguably be partly intentional – school systems might be intentionally planned to instill ideological beliefs – as well as non-intentional – “cultural industry” may be thought to select ideological beliefs by their effects.

What is specific to their being *ideological*, however, is that they are brought about by mechanisms that systematically distort belief formation and whose triggering can be traced back to social causal factors. Since the function of ideological beliefs rests on their purported normative content and beliefs are affected by reasons, we should expect that the processes that generate ideological beliefs include mechanisms designed to bypass evidence, bar information or however distort the rational process of belief formation. Elster has provided a wide repertoire of such mechanisms.¹⁴ Sen highlighted the role of positional objectivity and perspectivity.¹⁵ Arguably, much can be learned from works on biases, frame effects, and the epistemology of delusional beliefs.¹⁶ However, since these mechanisms are ordinary and operate pervasively throughout individual and (possibly) collective psychology, they may count as sources of ideology only if their triggering conditions obtain by virtue of social facts that depend (either causally or constitutively) on the relevant social practices, and if their output serves the function of supporting existing social practices or institutional arrangements. This is at least one possible way to characterize the connection between the epistemological, the functional, and the genetic task of ideology critique. Beliefs can be said to be ideological if (a) they are the output of a systematically distorted process of belief formation, (b) they have the function of supporting social practices or institutions, (c) the triggering of the mechanisms that distort belief formation can be traced back to causal factors shaped by the social practices or institutions supported by their output – i.e. by the beliefs brought about by their operations.

3. Ideology and social structures

In order for ideology to be a part of social domination, ideological beliefs must be a part of social structures. Let us say that a social structure is a complex entity “with parts whose behavior is constrained by their relations with the other parts”.¹⁷ Haslanger’s conception of social structures is relevant in two respects. On the one hand, social structures possess causal powers. Although they do not trigger action, they work as structuring causes by constraining rational choice. On the other hand, they originate in social practices defined as interdependent connections of resources – both human and non-human: people, tools, physical facts and so on – and interpretive schemas – shared concepts, beliefs and attitudes used to interpret information and to coordinate thought, action and affects. Social structures thus act as an “invisible foot” because they are generated by the way shared concepts, beliefs, and attitudes shape the way resources are employed to yield specific patterns of interaction and power relations. Here is Haslanger’s example:

Imagine a couple, Larry and Lisa, who, we suppose, are equally intelligent, talented, educated, and experienced in the workplace; they have equal power in their relationship, have no prejudices about gender roles, and are equally capable of all domestic tasks and childrearing tasks. Larry and Lisa decide to have children; baby Lulu arrives. They live in a community where decent childcare is beyond their means. Moreover, let’s suppose that in this community, as elsewhere, there is a wage gap: women, on average, make only 75% of what men make. Under these conditions, unless Larry and Lisa have special reasons to think that they are unusual in their earning capacities, it is reasonable for Larry to work full-time and for Lisa to make adjustments in her work, e.g., to work part-time, to take time off, to take a less demanding job. But, in our society, “wealth determines power, domestic work is unpaid, and divorce laws do not evenly divide wealth” (Cudd 2006, p. 149). So, Larry accrues greater human capital and ends up with more power in the relationship. Moreover, insofar as Larry and Lisa are typical, women on average will be poorer risks for employers who will “tend not to trust that women will stay with their careers or that if they do, they will not devote the kind of time and energy to them that men will” (Cudd 2006, p. 149). As a result, “women’s jobs,” which require less commitment, mobility, and experience will pay less, and women will have to prove themselves exceptional to be considered for higher paying “men’s jobs.” As a result, the pattern is reinforced (Cudd 2006, pp. 148–151).¹⁸

From this viewpoint, social practices are relevant to social structures because the latter depend on the fact that shared beliefs, concepts and attitudes will yield a framework of formal and informal institutions. Divorce laws and wage gaps are clearly connected with the legal system. The fact that decent childcare is beyond Larry and Lisa's means is likely to depend on a variety of factors concerning working hours and the welfare system. Even the fact that wealth determines power can be easily traced back to formal and informal institutions governing social relations. Hence, social structures enjoy structural causal powers: they work by setting the framework according to which deontic powers are assigned to individual and collective agents within them. The power to sell, to marry, to achieve a social position and so on. Thus, they contribute to answering the action-theoretical "why" question (in Anscombe's sense) by constraining the range of actions available to individuals and collectives.

Since the constraints set by structural relations are typically embodied and specified by social institutions – property, marriage, customary social norms, kinship and so on – they are suitably designed to embody domination. This may seem at first a rather lofty notion of social structure. Yet it appears to be consistent, for instance, with a broadly Marxian view. If social structures includes both productive forces and a mode of production that accounts for how productive forces are organized, then some social institutions must be part of social structures, because they shape the relevant modes of production, whether or not we take formalized legal or political institutions to be super-structural. Property is an obvious example, as well as class structures, so long as they depend on institutional arrangements like ownership and wage labor. So understood, institutions are the component of social structures that is in need of ideological support, while productive forces, as well as Haslanger's resources, are arguably not *per se* the proper object of ideology. Correspondingly, social critique may affect social structures by operating on interpretive schemas, as the latter are made of shared beliefs, concepts, and attitudes that develop and change through individual and collective processes of learning, reasoning, and deliberation. In other words, social structures may be subject to critique and revision because schemas are generated and transformed by folk psychological mechanisms and processes that are sensitive to reason. Consequently, the function of ideology in this context is arguably to make them unquestionable.

However they conceived, social institutions – at least basic institutions that regulate social cooperation – are commonly understood as being dependent on acceptance, because deontic powers only work as long as they are accepted. Acceptance may not be explicit, and it

needs not be conceived as a collective mental act.¹⁹ Also, it can be set up and reproduced by social practices that consist in no more than a regular pattern of behaviors and dispositions.²⁰ With this in mind, we may consider Searle's version for the sake of simplicity: social institutions are generated by accepting constitutive rules because constitutive rules attribute status functions and status functions carry deontic powers.²¹ By accepting the rules, agents create desire-independent reasons that constrain what they are allowed and/or prescribed to do.²² While the rules fix the relevant deontic powers, acceptance makes for their normative authority and accounts for their structural causal power in terms of the constraints they impose on action. Searle's intentionalism is notoriously controversial, but the framework holds even if rules are conceived broadly in terms of practices or conventions and acceptance requires less than a collective mental act. Following a practice or conforming to the relevant convention may be enough – as in Hart's conception of “secondary rules” and Rawls' views of “practice rules”.²³

The point is that acceptance is not free-floating. It may be taken to motivate and/or be expressed by behavior, yet it is itself motivated – and therefore explained – by considerations that count in favor or against the targeted rules. Apart from the nonspecific consideration that cooperation is beneficial and *some* institutional arrangement is better than no arrangement, there seem to be, roughly, two specific motivations for acceptance. One is believing that existing social institutions respond to normatively relevant truths, for instance that they mirror the natural order of things, that they promote the common good or that they are fair ways to organize social cooperation and so on. The other is the despair of not being able to change the relevant institutions and/or the feeling that there is no alternative.²⁴

Both are relevant in this context. The former provides agents with reasons that justify acceptance and thus answer Weber's problem of legitimation, yielding a specific commitment to comply with the relevant rules. The latter provides prudential reasons to accept institutional arrangements that fall short of being justified to those who are bound by them – say, slavery – and thus do not entail any commitments beyond ordinary rational commitments to means-end consistency, coherence, stability and the like. Still there is a point in noticing that acceptance can be motivated by feeling unable to change and/or that there is no alternative. Arguing that existing power relations are unalterable or that there is no other way to organize cooperation may count as considerations that indirectly support specific institutional arrangements. While these considerations do not provide direct justification, they bar normative considerations against them as irrelevant – because utopian or illusionary, for instance. In both cases, ideology

may support social institutions by providing a framework of interpretation that rationalizes acceptance from either a prudential or a normative point of view.

Either way, this requires manipulating the space of reasons to create “the impression that a social situation as well as a person’s relation to him- or herself cannot be challenged or questioned”.²⁵ Following Haslanger, we can take social structures to be networks of social relations within which power relations are specified in terms of the constraints social institutions impose on action – that is, in terms of their working as structuring causes. If we further take social structures to be constituted by social practices that “situate us as nodes in the network”,²⁶ we may say that ideology serves the function of preserving social structures by operating on interpretative schemes to the effect of making existing social relations accepted as unquestionably natural, right, or at least inescapable. Ideology makes domination invisible, if you like, by establishing orthodoxy in Bourdieu’s sense.

4. Higher order normativity: its social function and its empirical roots

The function of ideological beliefs is connected with their normative content because, in order for ideology to play a causal role in preserving social structures, the latter must be (taken to be) justified by those who are bound by them. Accordingly, the task of ideology critique is to unveil their mystifying character by showing that the space of reason has been deformed to rationalize existing social relations and that the relevant distorting factors can be traced back to the social reality they are designed to rationalize. The task is therefore twofold. With respect to the relevant beliefs, it must be shown that they are delusional because of their flawed etiology – ideological beliefs fail to respond to a rational process of belief formation. With respect to the mechanisms responsible for their delusional character, it must be shown that the conditions under which they are triggered obtain by virtue of facts that depend (either causally or constitutively) on social structures – they would not have been triggered in a different context. Accordingly, ideology critique involves a social structural explanation for ideological beliefs, which points to their being parasitic on the power relations they are designed to rationalize.

It is at this point that the explanatory task connects with the normative task of critique. By explaining ideological beliefs as the output of a causal process that is parasitic on power

relations, ideology critique questions their normative credentials. We need to distinguish here between their providing *prima facie* normative reasons to comply with social norms and the grounds for their normative properties.²⁷ Jaeggi accordingly distinguishes between first order and second order normative questions. As ideology critique debunks the first order normativity of ideological beliefs by “making the constructed and perspectival character of certain assumptions explicit”, it raises a second order normative question about the sources of normativity,²⁸

The answer, of course, cannot be external to the targeted social structures. Critique can only get a grip on social structures and promote change insofar as it detects a contradiction out of which both the normative standard and the practical output of criticism can be drawn.²⁹ Take for instance the connection between property rights and the libertarian views about self-ownership:³⁰ unveiling the ideological character of the latter is bound to change our understanding of freedom and to shake the institution of property. Arguably, this depends on the double-faced character of institutions. On the one hand, they provide a normative framework for social cooperation. On the other hand, their normative force relies on there being reasons to accept the relevant commitments.

If this is right, the contradiction seems to work as follows:

a) Ideological beliefs causally depend on structural power relations – their functional explanation being that (i) they cause the relevant institutions to be accepted and (ii) they *exist because of causing them to be accepted*, so that the social structures within which they occur are more likely to reproduce than others. As said, the mechanisms responsible for (ii) may be diverse: unintentional endogenous mechanisms like a drive to reduce cognitive dissonance can be at work here as well as unintentional exogenous mechanisms such as cultural industry and intentional mechanisms such as controlling the educational system and the media.

b) Ideological beliefs fulfill their function by representing specific social structures or institutions as universal, free, natural, or rational, and thus normatively unquestionable: things are how they should be – e.g. they maximize aggregate utility, express freedom and equality, conform with God’s plan or with behavioral patterns that are allegedly settled by natural selection, and so on.

c) As long as ideological beliefs are ultimately determined by power relations, there is a contradiction between the (putative) normative content and the social function of ideological beliefs. Ideological beliefs are designed to rationalize social practices, yet they turn out to be

part of the power relations the latter incorporate. This contradiction is “practical” because it results in a functional inconsistency that is bound to generate a social crisis along roughly the following path:

- i) Ideological beliefs have the function of representing power relations as legitimate
- ii) Ideological beliefs are caused by the power relations they represent
- iii) If (ii) is true, their normative claim is parasitic on the power relations they support
- iv) If (iii) is true, they fail to legitimate those power relations

The strongest claim raised by Jaeggi in this context concerns the interlocking between the functional and the moral dimension of critique. As I understand it, the rationale for this claim can be constructed as follows. On the one hand, ideological beliefs are functionally flawed because they are morally flawed – they are bound to fail in supporting social practices because they do not meet the moral demand for justification that is placed on social norms designed to regulate cooperation and thus fail to attract acceptance over time: this conveys the claim that “nothing can function in a way that is completely independent of the good”. On the other hand, their moral flaws ultimately depend on their functional flaws – they do not meet the relevant moral demand because the latter is ultimately grounded in the social demand for principles that may regulate cooperation over time and ideological beliefs are parasitic on contingent power relations: this conveys the claim that “the good is rooted in the working or functioning of society, or in the functional requirements of society”.³¹ In other words, the functional problem with ideological beliefs is in their failure to yield acceptance over time – which in turn depends on their being unable to convey genuine reasons for the relevant cooperative scheme. They are functionally needed, since no social system can be maintained by brute coercion. Yet their ideological character makes them as unstable as the social relations they are designed to support. Being part of social domination, ideological beliefs are prone to be shaken when power relations are shaken as well as being debunked by ideology critique. Conversely, the moral problem with ideological beliefs is in their failure to set up principles to regulate social cooperation which would be accepted under conditions of non-domination – which in turn depends on their being a by-product of existing power relations.

This is crucial to accounting for how the standards of social critique emerge as the outputs of a problem-solving task and can be therefore credited with a progressive character

rooted in the social reality under critique. Ideological beliefs are immanent in that they do not draw on moral truths that hold independently of how society works. Moreover, they are progressive in that they work out a functional problem. Given what we have been considering so far, the problem is arguably the following: how can a social system be normatively regulated in order to be stable over time? This is consistent with the view that

[the] validity claims of ideology critique [...] are based on the idea that the conclusion of the process of critique, or the result of the transformation it guides, is an adequate solution to a crisis that is simultaneously systematically necessary (i.e. already present in the conditions and properties of the situation) and productive (i.e. in possession of the means for its own solution).³²

The connection between moral validity and functional efficiency suggests that social institutions can only be stable where agents have no reason to withdraw their acceptance, turning against them or somehow defecting from the relevant cooperative schema. This hints at how solving the functional problem of stability contributes to answering the question about the normative standards for ideology critique. Social crises can be expected to occur – or at least be fostered – where agents have no reason to comply with social norms. Thus, by unveiling ideological beliefs, critical analysis detects a contradiction in the social structure that is bound to trigger a functional crisis. Given the nature of the contradiction it detects, however, it also points to the idea of a social structure that is free from domination as a proper solution for the relevant crisis. In other words, since the social function of ideology depends on its (purported) normative content, *explaining* ideological beliefs implicitly points to the conditions under which cooperation stabilize as those of a social practice whose principles can be accepted without ideological coercion. This is indeed where the utopian moment of ideology has been taken to lurk: ideology both disfigures and anticipates the idea of social relations that are free from domination.³³

Some truths about the psychological infrastructure of cooperation seem to be called for in this case, however, that are not historical in the sense Jaeggi seems to have in mind.³⁴ Different options are available to convey the conditions under which social practices can be expected to be accepted without coercion, yet all require assumptions about reciprocity, cooperative motives, rationality, social cognition, responsiveness to social norms and so on.³⁵ The relevant truths are not themselves normative. Yet they set the stage for articulating the problem of how a system of cooperation can be stable over time and thus supply the building

blocks for depicting the conditions out of which normative principles to regulate cooperation can be derived, namely the conditions under which social structures can be said to be free from domination. This suggests that ideology critique entails a normative theory that comes close to a theory of justice designed to articulate those principles as part of a theory of social cooperation. Rightness in this context turns out to be grounded in ordinary facts about the psychological infrastructure of cooperation, which may account for the connection between the functional requirement of stability and the content of moral beliefs.

I assume that something along this line must be true if we are to vindicate the claim that “in the social sphere nothing can function in a way that is completely independent from the good” and that “the good is rooted in the working or functioning of society, or in the functional requirements of society”.³⁶ In addition, some conjecture about social evolution and cognitive development is required by the very idea of a learning process. What is learnt can be unlearned and we must be able to say whether a problem has actually been solved or merely ideologically removed. In other words, we need to figure out the expected output of a learning process in order to recognize progress, although it may well be that we come to *discover* it by detecting contradictions. Thus, more than historical truths seem required to tear progressive solutions apart from ideological clogs. Transcendent normative truth is far from being the only option, however, if rightness turns out to be rooted in ordinary social and psychological facts.

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¹ See Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 64-65, 74-77.

² *Ibid.*, 69, 78. For an analysis of social norms as (a kind of) social practices see Bicchieri, *Norms in the Wild*. On this view, a social practice is any pattern of collective behavior, conceived as behavioral regularities, shared among a group of individuals, grouped into customs, conventions, and social norms according to the reasons that drive the relevant behavioral regularities from the agent’s perspective. The same behavioral pattern may turn out to be

a custom, a convention, a social norm in different populations: the pattern's nature is determined by how agents relate to it. Social norms, according to this definition, are behavioral regularities driven by normative social expectations. The latter can be said to be backed by normative beliefs when the reasons to expect others to behave in certain ways depends on believing that (a) certain patterns of action are (believed to be) normatively justified and (b) it is common knowledge that they are (believed to be) normatively justified.

³ Jaeggi, "What is Wrong with Capitalism?", 52, 56, Habermas, *Legitimation Crises*, 68-75

⁴ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 78.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 65, 76.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁹ Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 13.

¹⁰ Geuss suggests that in this respect ideology critique may be liable to incur a genetic fallacy: why should the causal history of a belief system say anything about its epistemic status? See *Ibid.*, 20. A sensible answer may invoke the relevance of reliabilist epistemology for the explanatory task of ideology critique: causal histories are relevant to epistemic statuses because what counts for the justification of beliefs is their being the output of reliable processes of belief formation. See Goldman, *Reliabilism and Contemporary Epistemology*.

¹¹ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 76.

¹² Kincaid, "Functional Explanations in the Social Sciences", 344; Kincaid, *Philosophical Foundations of Social Sciences*, 111.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 112.

¹⁴ See Elster, *Sour Grapes*, 144-157.

¹⁵ Sen, *Freedom and Rationality*, 469 ff.

¹⁶ See Bortolotti, *Delusions and Other Irrational Beliefs*.

¹⁷ Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?", 118

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 122-123; references in the quoted passage are from Cudd, *Analysing Oppression*.

¹⁹ See Hindriks, *Institutions and Collective Intentionality*.

²⁰ See for instance Hart, *The Concept of Law*, 255, 258

²¹ Searle, *Making the Social World*, 10.

²² *Ibid.*, 82.

²³ Zalbert, Smith, "Varieties of Normativity": this is consistent with a pluralist framework for social ontology like the one provided by Epstein, *The Ant Trap*, 82-84, by distinguishing between the principles that fix the conditions to be fulfilled in order for something to count as a social entity and the mechanisms that "anchor" such principles: collective intentions here count as just one of the many possible mechanisms that may do, social practices and conventional behavioral patterns being obvious alternatives.

²⁴ Searle, *Making the Social World*, 107-108

²⁵ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 65.

²⁶ Haslanger, "What is a (Social) Structural Explanation?", 125.

²⁷ Rosati, *Secolarizzazione e Sacro*, 8-11.

²⁸ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 72.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁰ Cohen, *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality*, 116 ff.

³¹ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 78.

³² *Ibid.*, 77

³³ Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interest*, 280, Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, 88

³⁴ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 77; see also Jaeggi, *Kritik von Lebensformen*, 302 ff., 337 ff.

³⁵ In different ways reciprocity, cooperative motives, rationality, social recognition, responsiveness to social norms are widely taken to be crucial to the psychological infrastructure of cooperation, see for instance Tomasello, *Why We Cooperate*; Tomasello, *A Natural History of Human Thinking*, 38 ff., Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 286 ff. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Part Three.

³⁶ Jaeggi, *Rethinking Ideology*, 78.