The Problem with Ideology

The concept of ideology offers a real potential to analyze the how western society operates today, particularly with respect to the matter of cultural change. Yet, while this approach is often entertained by current approaches to cultural analysis, it has not been central, or at least significant for them. This chapter holds that a major problem with the concept of ideology is that because the notion is so rich and potentially powerful that it has been appropriated by these varying perspectives, but not in the same way. Consequently, the term and important concepts related to the term carry different meanings for these different approaches to the topic. For a good discussion of the evolution of the term see Thompson (1990).

Thus, before approaching the task of an ideological analysis, we need to disentangle the numerous meanings signified by the term so that we can establish a clear and unambiguous framework from which to start. This exercise should not be understood as definitive, in the sense that it hopes to develop a definition of ideology which excludes all others, but rather exploratory in the sense that it hopes to uncover the concepts and considerations that any analysis of ideology needs to work with.

This very task poses a number of problems which need to be addressed at the outset. I call these the problems of: limited signifiers; self-imbeddedness; nominalization; and power.

The Problem of Limited Signifiers

The concept of “ideology,” perhaps because it is so useful, is a much contested term, bearing an array of important and related concepts. However, because of this, there are not enough terms available to represent these related concepts. This is one of the reasons why the history of the word "ideology" has shown that the term “ideology” has taken on different meanings for different users. Without an exploration of these related concepts, we are likely to debate the true meaning of the words as opposed to undertake the analysis of ideology, which is, after all our goal. The problem of limited signifiers has the danger of drawing attention away from the analysis of the phenomenon itself by asking us to debate the meaning of specific terms.

The Problem of Self-Imbeddedness

The meanings of words like "ideology" are imbedded in a social-historical context (Thompson) with the effect that those who attempt to analyze such
meanings have a stake in the outcome\(^1\). In recognizing the problem of embeddedness (1.2), we recognize that the problem of limited signifiers (1.1) is not simply a neutral terminological issue. In the attempt to analyze, that is to represent social phenomena like the term "ideology," we recognize that the selection of one representation over another carries with it, not only analytical implications, but social implications for those people and institutions that use them. In fact, one area where ideological battles are often fought is over the selection of terms and their meanings.

**The Problem of Nominalization**

In this essay, I take the position, following Street (1993) that terms like ideology represent an ongoing process and not a state of being, even though we often find it more convenient to speak of them as nouns. This is because, when compared to nouns, we find the mental management of phrases and sentences more difficult, and so we resort to the nominalization of complex processes so that we can talk about them more easily. Nevertheless, nouns, regardless of their derivation, take on a static character and an essential quality. In our analysis of ideology, we will need to remind ourselves constantly of the dynamic nature of these processes.

**The Problem of Power**

Most current characterizations of ideology make reference, either directly or indirectly, to the concept of (social) power. Yet few of these actually take on this concept directly, preferring to leave it undefined, unanalyzed and unexplored. Because of this vagueness, power is sometimes understood as social control, regardless of who it benefits and is sometimes understood as a means of exploitation by one group or individual over another. Needless to say, this rather important difference needs to be resolved and even more importantly, the concept of power has to play a central role in ideology and this means not simply embracing the notion of power but using it in the analysis of ideological formations.

**The Problem of Privilege**

Privilege plays itself out in two parallel but distinct areas. In the first sense we use privilege as a way of characterizing the essence of oppression and exploitation. That is in the sense that some have access to rights opportunities that have been denied to others. In the second sense derives from our claim that the workings of ideology can obscure for some what is obvious for others. This means that with regard to ideological issues, some have a more privileged perspective than others and to understand the

\(^1\) Changes in meaning can also arise from the conscious attempt to represent things differently as when Napoleon was able to associate the meaning of the term “ideology” with the beliefs of anti-state intellectuals as opposed to the dominant philosophy of the state.
workings of ideology we need to achieve this privileged perspective. Furthermore in commenting on ideology from this perspective, we will appear to being arrogant, knowing more than others. In the analysis of ideology we need to explain what this privilege (second sense) is and how it is obtained, and how to discuss it without appearing arrogant.

Summary

These problems serve as warnings which can guide us in constructing a framework for ideological analysis. The problem of limited signifiers reminds us to identify all the essential concepts, and not just the terms, related to the topic of ideology. The problem of self-embeddedness asks us to seek the ideological dimensions of the categories we choose. The problem of nominalization asks us to examine the terms in our framework that have been rendered as nouns to see whether they might be better understood as active processes and relationships. And the problem of power asks us to take seriously the role of power and privilege in ideological formations.

Building a Framework

Before addressing the issue of ideology, I offer (following 1.1) a set of fundamental concepts that are essential to its understanding. In this developmental section, I do make use of the term “ideology” in a very general way in order to show how the developing framework relates to the concept. Once the framework is constructed, I return to the notion of ideology and suggest a tentative definition.

Knowledge

Fundamental to any ideological framework is the concept of knowledge. This is because ideology passes as knowledge. Following Berger and Luckmann (1966), I define knowledge as that which individuals take to be true. This stance avoids the very interesting, but distracting epistemological question of "what is truth?" Nevertheless, it is an important aspect of human nature to evaluate knowledge on a truth scale, even though we do not agree on what is true and what isn’t. When we consider something to be true, it means that we have to take it seriously. Conversely, things taken to be untrue can be ignored.

Knowledge used in this sense is synonymous with the term "meaning" for it includes all uses of signs which give sense to the phenomena that we experience in our daily lives. Thus, in addition to "ideas" the term knowledge includes: symbols (multi valued signs); categories, and explanations. Important to the study of ideology is the distinction between procedural and declarative knowledge. This distinction will help to explain why ideological knowledge is so effective. Practically and evolutionarily, procedural knowledge represents the more fundamental type of knowledge.
Declarative Knowledge

In contrast to procedural knowledge, declarative (or theoretical) knowledge is discursive, meaning that it is available to the user in a form that can be articulated and transmitted verbally to others. The verbal transmission of knowledge is almost exclusively the mechanism by which we develop shared (intersubjective) knowledge, in other words, culture.

2.12 Procedural Knowledge

Procedural (or practical) knowledge consists of the knowledge about how to carry out practical activities such as speaking, driving the car or getting something to eat. Procedural knowledge (although it can be intersubjective) need not be acquired through verbal interaction. Far more commonly, procedural knowledge is acquired through participating in the same events as others or through personal trial and error problem solving.\(^2\)

2.2 Reality

Again, following Berger and Luckmann, I adopt their term "reality" as "something that can not be wished away." The term reality in this formulation recognizes that knowledge is constructed, as part of the social process of human interaction, and to the extent that it is collectively shared by the members of a social group, it takes on a characterization not unlike that of physical phenomena in that it cannot be wished away. The reality that is given to (socially constructed) knowledge derives from the concept of social power. Because the knowledge is collectively (intersubjectively) held, one can not dismiss it as one can personal knowledge. Furthermore, it is often the case that social knowledge, through a process of known as "naturalization," sheds its sense of artificiality all together and takes on the appearance of belonging to the natural world. When this happens we find it difficult to separate what is part of the natural world from what is the product of human social activity with the result that social phenomena are seen as real and as immutable as physical phenomena.\(^3\)

2.3 Intersubjectivity. This term, which means literally “between individuals,” refers to the degree that knowledge is distributed in a society. Some forms of knowledge are unevenly distributed, such as that held by a physician about health, or the military about where it keeps its missiles, or by left (or the right for that matter) about what the government is up to. Other forms of knowledge are more widely distributed in a community and can be characterized as "common sense" with the literal meaning that it is sense

\(^2\) Even individual development of procedural knowledge has its intersubjective dimensions because it involves solving the same problems other members of the society encounter and the same institutions they encounter.

\(^3\) From this perspective, we see the phrase “let's be realistic.” as being a social as opposed to an intellectual request.
(knowledge) that is held (intersubjectively) in common. More typically, we find that knowledge falls in between: not everyone living in the U.S. knows the details of baseball. Intersubjectivity raises the important question of how knowledge is distributed in a society and to what degree it is common sense.

2.31 Degree of Hegemony. As pointed out by Gramsci (1971), in western, capitalist societies (and increasingly in the global community), we find a specifically identifiable collection of widely held knowledge produced by and supporting the interests of what is often called the dominant block, a term that refers to the controlling interests in a capitalist society. However, this block is rarely specified in any detail, nor is how they operate. An analysis of ideology in a capitalist society needs to explore the identity and operations of this block.

The knowledge produced by this block is often, but not necessarily, widely distributed through the community to the point that it becomes common sense or hegemonic such as: individuals have the right to hold and amass property; nuclear weapons have prevented nuclear war; God is just. Hegemonic knowledge is challenged only by a very small portion of the population.

One view of the ideology of the dominant block holds that, if produced by the dominant block, it is automatically hegemonic; so that other representations of knowledge are summarily excluded. My point here is that while this is often the case, the representation of knowledge by the dominant block this hegemony is not a given. This is because whatever degree of hegemony the dominant block currently possesses, it has been gained through the expending of effort and resources. This expenditure is a clear indicator of its importance. The fact of struggle means not only that hegemony can be gained and maintained, but by the same token, this hegemony can be lost through the same process. Hegemony raises two important questions for the study of ideology: a) how does knowledge become hegemonic and b) who or what is the dominant block?

2.4 Power. Power, as it is used here, is a social phenomenon built up on the metaphor of physical power, which is the capacity to get work done. The human analog of power is a force which gets humans to do things. Broadly speaking, power is what causes the shaping of human activities into specific modes of activities as opposed to others and more narrowly speaking, power

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4 At least this seemed to be a common tenet, but a recently released poll by (xxx) revealed that 85% of Americans think they would be better off if the world had no nuclear weapons.

5 In fact, using the notion of reality, as defined above, we can say that antinuclear activists are being “unrealistic.” By this we do not mean that they are silly and naive, but they wish to change the current common sense “reality” which in addition to being dangerous, is ideological.
causes individuals to act in specific ways and not others. Power is personally experienced by individual members of a society by the observation if I do that, something bad will happen (usually to me).

The application of cultural power may be either physical, social or in the area of meaning. Physical power involves the use or more importantly, the threat of use, of physical force to cause injury or death (If I do that, I will be shot). Social power is invested in social institutions that offer to the individual both resources and obstacles (such as in the operation of social conventions). Meaning also provides resources, (such as knowing how to do something) and evaluations (If I do that, people will think I'm a fool). Furthermore, these forms of power tend to function as composites so that when looking at a resulting "force" such as obeying the law, we see that physical power, social power and meaning all converge to produce the force. For example the law has associated with it social institutions, laws, courts, judges and jails. At the level of meaning we have understandings and legitimations: the importance of honesty and the wrongness of stealing. And we have the physical force of the police to call on when necessary. Thus when analyzing a force, it is important to look at all three dimensions of power.

Because social power is intersubjective, it is often something that is understood, even if it can not be expressed clearly. Even so, we often sense this power when alternatives are put to us like: homosexuality; women's liberation; and communism, because these alternatives make some of us feel uncomfortable or even angry (I wouldn't feel right doing that). We consider social power to be coercive when we are aware of its working against our interest, even if that coercive knowledge is not discursively available. If we are unaware of its presence and go along with it, this power is considered consensual, though the discovery of consensual power does require a position of privilege. We note in passing that there are a large number of terms in our language to capture its presence and operation such as: control; coercion; intimidation on one side and honor, ethics and righteousness on the other.

Social power, as it is characterized here, can be detected as a result of control and constraint. As such, it is not a unitary element that can be extracted from the social matrix and set aside for study. Rather, when studying power, it is necessary to look at social situations and ask how power is reflected. Thus, it makes more sense to speak of a dimension of power which is part of every social situation than to speak of power as an isolatable entity that can be extracted from it.

2.41 Power and Institutions. While we have characterized power as being physical, social and ideational, we propose that the focus of the study of
power must begin at the social level and within the social level, at the level of institutions. Specifically I propose that associated with each institution is a demarcation of social power beginning with the identification of the roles of the agents involved and what they are permitted to do and say. This is institutional power. Associated with institutional power is physical and ideational powers which also serve to enforce these institutional power relationships.

2.42 The role of agency. We are accustomed to thinking of the construction of cultural phenomena as a consequence of agency. That is, everything gets done, including the construction of social institutions by human agency. Here, it is important to bear in mind that humans do not typically manufacture social institutions consciously, but by drawing on, and sometimes modifying, existing institutions including ways of doing things individual agents construct their social reality as a byproduct. Most tasks are mundane (buying groceries, taking the bus, chatting with friends) by which I mean that they are common and non-problematic and that I can achieve them with existing performative knowledge.

We also note in this connection the concept of individual power. Individual social power is power vested in an individual by an institution. For example the head of a business has the right to hire and fire people (*If I do that, I will be fired*).

Motivating the individual agent to act are two types of potentially conflicted forces: an egocentric force representing the demands of the self and a sociocentric force representing the demands of the society. We often forget that social institutions are the by product of human agency particularly when they have been produced by agents long since dead or in another domain of society where the agents are unknown to us. As a result of this anonymity, we often see the social constructs around us as an immutable part of our given reality.

In many cases these forces coincide and in such cases no conflict arises. However when social and individual demands are at odds, a conflict results, because here, a decision has to be made about whether to side with society at the expense of self (like going off to war or needing a loaf of bread) or to respond to the demands of self and behave antisocially. To be sure, when these types of conflicts arise, individuals expend a good deal of creative energy in trying to accommodate such conflicts by developing a plan of action which is not seen as antisocial and achieves, to some degree at least, the individual goal. Likewise other sectors of society may seek to find ways of curbing antisocial behavior like war resisting or bread stealing). And this is where power comes in, either physical power, like forced imprisonment or
social power (one must fight for one’s country or it is wrong to steal even if you are hungry).

2.42 Resources and Inhibitions: Coercion and Consent. From the agent’s perspective, the planning of a task involves two things, resources and inhibitions.

2.43 Social v. individual power.

Power can be exercised through individual agency and this is what I have termed “individual social power.” Within individual social power, we can distinguish between two types, that exercised to achieve individual ends and that exercised to achieve institutional ends. Because in the process of achieving personal ends the agent draws on social institutions including knowledge and ways of doing things the individual is also a social product. Although all forms of power play themselves out through individual agency, we note that a) this inevitably involves the use of social institutions, such as social roles (because I am a teacher, I can tell you to do your homework), social entities (laws and customs).... The ultimate result of power ends in getting to get an individual to do something that he/she might not otherwise do, we find that the source of power may be individual, social, or ideological. The apparent paradox: that while social power is exercised by individual agents, social power resides in social institutions, dissolves when we recognize that social institutions are the product of human activity, or in other words there is a dialectical relationship between human activity and social institutions and that power, albeit in different forms, resides on both sides of this dialectic. Because of this, the distinction between social and individual power needs to be clarified.

The identification of power in a social situation does not require that the individual be aware of its workings. Rather, it requires that individuals feel a sense of negativity toward alternatives (procedural knowledge). Thus in the analysis of power, what is required is that other alternatives from which the individual has been deterred be identified, even though they do not appear overtly in cultural texts. One test of the degree of power at work in a given situation is to show the degree to which the action taken is not in the direct interest of the individual (something more easily said than done).

2.44 The Distribution of power. Some types of power may be evenly distributed throughout a society and consequently they apply to all members in the same way:

Everyone should drive on the right side of the road;
Everyone has the right to a good education;
Everyone has the right to say what they want;
Nobody should go hungry;
Everybody should be Christian.

2.45 The Benefits of power.

Power relationships, of course, may be either mutually beneficial, or unilaterally beneficial, as the last example points out. However, all societies have developed numerous operating conventions for get things done or for because collective understandings work to everyone’s benefit, as is the practice of driving on one side of the road. Here, the use of power which establishes and maintains this institution can also be viewed positively. Because of this, we cannot say that egalitarian power is essentially bad.

2.46 Exploitation. In practice, social relationships are rarely purely positive or purely negative, in fact in a social relationship, one may find dimensions of dominance on both sides of the relationships as well as positive aspects of the relationship as well. For example, in a teacher/student relationship, the teacher, by virtue of her institutional capacity of certification, has the power to prescribe activities for the student. The student may voluntarily enter into such an arrangement because of the anticipated benefits of such an arrangement. Furthermore, the student has certain powers as well, such as the capacity to evaluate the teacher both formally and informally. Thus, even relationships of dominance do not have to be exploitative, even if they are asymmetrical. Consequently an analysis of social relationships, which underlies the analysis of power, requires an analysis of the types of dominance that exist in a social relationship or situation and further within such relationships, it seeks to identify dimensions of exploitation.

2.47 Negativity. The issue of negativity has to do with the proposition that all power relationships are essentially exploitative. This view holds that power is by nature negative and as a result, there is little more to be said about it. The view taken here is that the potential exists in any power relation, be it symmetrical or asymmetrical, and consequently, the important point about such relationships, is not the labeling of them as negative or not but in determining how they are so, a task which is even more difficult when we recognize that it is embedded within the social matrix. That is, the degree of negativity is seen as a dimension of any power relation and a major task in the analysis of power is to determine the degree of negativity in any social relationship.

The Dominant Block and Hegemony

As mentioned above, we recognize that in the western world, a good deal of social power is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people and institutions. For this reason, we need to recognize and analyze this block and how it comes by its power. More importantly we need to identify
precisely what this block consists of, how it maintains power and how the rest of us go along with it.

**The Study of Power**

I shall reserve the term "critical" for the analysis of social power, especially that power which is negative. Hence the general term critical studies has to do with the analysis of all types of social power, though it should be clear that critical studies attempts to understand and expose how social power is used to exploit.

**Ideology**

With the elements of the framework in place, we can now discuss how ideology fits into it.

**3.1 Power**

First and foremost, ideology is a dimension of social power. Like other forms of power, ideology may be either mutually beneficial or negative. This means that one dimension of the analysis of ideology, a branch of critical studies, is to determine the nature of the power involved in the situation under analysis and to determine the nature of that power.

**3.2 Ideology and Knowledge**

Ideology is the branch of social power that deals with the use of knowledge (meaning) to sustain social power, whereas other branches of social power deal with institutional power and intimidation and the like. Often in real life, instances of the use of power involve several of these dimensions at the same time.

**3.21 Ideology and falseness**

Related to the presumption that ideology represents the exclusive domain of the dominant block, some views of ideology presume the inherent falseness of ideological knowledge and presumed that by exposing such knowledge as either false or ideological that such knowledge would be discredited. The view espoused here, following Thompson, takes (negative) ideology to be one dimension of knowledge and truth to be another. This means that truth does not guarantee a non-ideological knowledge, nor does falseness the reverse. Rather, this position allows a critical analysis to pursue the ideological dimension without the distracting of having to concern itself of the truth values of the knowledge being examined.

**3.22 Ideology and truth**

The source of strength for ideological power derives substantially from its ability to appear as true and practically useful, regardless of their truth value. This is why it is crucial not to equate ideology with falseness, for to
do so formally would isolate ideology from its source strength. A major
tactic in vitiating ideologies is to show that the ideology is apparently false or
useless because apparently false ideologies possess little power. Thus one
of the areas of critical studies will be the struggle to credit and discredit
ideological knowledge. This will necessarily involve understanding how the
ideology fits into the accepted body knowledge known as common sense.

3.3 Ideology and social activity

Because of the potential of ideology to establish and sustain relations of
dominance, ideology has been characterized as being an independent force
in its own right unconnected with social activity. This view contrasts with
the early Marxist view that ideology (in the negative/false sense) as being
merely an epiphenomenon of social activity. I suggest here that the
apparent paradox of this “chicken and egg type” dilemma of

a) material activity determining the shape of ideology and

b) social activity being shaped by ideological formations

can be resolved by viewing this relationship dialectically with a) and b) being
seen as the two moments of a dialectic. This allows us to accept the
empirically valid statements a) and b) while accepting their mutual
influence, though this will necessitate replacing the terms "determining" in
these statements with "influencing."

3.4 Ideology and the dominant block

Because the power, including ideology, of the dominant class is the most
pervasive and most serious (by definition) in Western society, some critical
views take ideology to be only that aspect of domination practiced by the
dominant block. To view ideology this way excludes other dimensions of
knowledge that work to sustain other significant types of power relations
such as gender, race, economics and ethnicity and the importance of the
interactions of these ideologies. Because these other dimensions of
knowledge work in exactly the same way, with the exception that they are
subordinate to the ideology of the dominant block, the distinction draws a
false dichotomy between these two categories of knowledge.

The view taken here is that the study of ideology includes all types of
knowledge/power relationships regardless of the social formation or
institution which uses them or the situations in which they are found.
Nevertheless, because of the degree of ideological power possessed by the
dominant block, and because other ideologies are either complementary to
or opposed to the dominant ideology, the study of the ideology of the
dominant block must occupy a prominent place in critical studies.

3.5 Ideology and Hegemony
Because of its association with the dominant class and because of the immense social power of the dominant class, ideology has been presumed by many views to be hegemonic. The problem here is that if ideology is accorded the potential to change or to sustain (3.5) then the claim of ideological hegemony means that as far as the dominant class is concerned, change cannot come from the ideological sector. Such a view is consistent with the Marxist view that ideology is merely an "epiphenomenon" and that real social change or inertia would not come from the domain of knowledge but from a change in the material conditions.

However, when one recognizes that ideology has the potential to change or maintain social practices (3.5) this means that there have to be changes in the degree of hegemony of knowledge which occur through struggle between those contesting for social power. Such a view would explain why, when the controlling block loses its ideological advantage it typically resorts to other types of social power, such as physical force. Furthermore, in balancing the costs of the use of difference types of social power, it becomes clear why a dominant block would put so much energy and resources in attempting to maintain a hegemonic ideology. But the most important point is that the establishment of and resistance to dominant and exploitative ideologies is an ongoing struggle that was gained through struggle with the exercise of social energy and resources. Accordingly it is capable of yielding to the actions of the numerically superior dominated. Finally, one of the dimensions of ideological study has to be the degree of hegemony of ideological knowledge and the processes by which this knowledge increases or decreases in his hegemony.

3.7 Negativity v. neutrality

The broadest dispute over the term ideology is whether it is neutral or exploitative. The exploitative view defines ideology as the use knowledge in the service of establishing and maintaining relations of domination (Thompson 56)” In contrast, the neutral view (Destutt de Tracy, Mannheim’s sociology of knowledge and general anthropology) denies this critical dimension and with respect to negativity, sees ideology as indistinct from knowledge as defined above.

The negative view sees two distinct kinds of knowledge at work in human society: common-sense knowledge which is non-exploitative and a subset of common-sense knowledge, termed "ideological" because it is in the service of "establishing and maintaining relations of domination which is the focus of study. The problem with this view is its separation of knowledge into two opposing types, that which is neutral and that which is exploitative. Such a view supposes that as a result of being exploitative that all types of such knowledge share other properties such as falseness or hegemony. However,
if we take the view that ideology need not be false (3.4), need not be connected with the dominant block (3.3), and need not be hegemonic (3.5), we have eliminated all properties presumed to characterize the uniqueness of ideological knowledge.

The view taken here is that ideology should study all types of knowledge/power relationships regardless of their negativity but with emphasis on the negative, exploitative dimension. Our interest in negativity stems from the socially responsible desire to expose and eliminate exploitation, and from the theoretical perspective that by definition socially exploitative relationships contain the potential at least for struggle; this is one of the important arenas where social change is likely to take place.

3.8 A working definition of ideology

From the above discussion, we can see that ideology is a form of social power that uses knowledge to maintain social relations. As such it both affects and is affected by human activity, and it can affect any social relationship. The study of ideology, often called "critical analysis", seeks to examine knowledge, often referred to as "meaning" for capacity to maintain power, particularly in its negative uses. Critical ideology operates with the awareness that we are all operating within the purview of the dominant, highly hegemonic ideology of world capitalism with its sub-domains. This means that other exploitative and even non-exploitative domains which are subservient to it, including the intellectual, must operate within its major tenets. Critical ideology seeks to understand how knowledge works to sustain power and how the battle to impose privilege works. As such, critical analysis is less interested in the truth of knowledge, though that is important, than it is of its ideological dimension.

4. How does ideology work?

Returning to the distinction between procedural and declarative knowledge, we see that the criterion for evaluating procedural knowledge is in its practicality. That is, to the degree that it works it is valuable. This heuristic value has nothing to do with truth or falsity, but only its practicality. From an evolutionary perspective, we may presume that humans possessed procedural knowledge before they acquired the ability to represent it discursively.

4.1 Declarative Skills. Prior to the emergence of language, by which I mean a verbal sign system, humans presumably communicated procedural knowledge through demonstration and imitation. With the emergence of language, which no doubt took place in stages, humans acquired the ability
to translate their procedural knowledge into declarative knowledge. This in turn permitted humans to share their procedural knowledge collectively. The conversion of practical knowledge into a discursive form, however, required a different skill, namely of analyzing the procedural skill into a series of declarative (recipe-like) statements so that it could be transmitted. This urge to transmit knowledge declaratively may well have placed increased pressure on the sign system to permit richer transmissions.

4.2 Descriptive Knowledge. As long as declarative knowledge stood as an analog of procedural knowledge, it would be evaluated by the same criterion of practicality. However, declarative knowledge takes on simultaneously a descriptive function, in that it can describe other types of experience, e.g., "this is what I see." This is because the language used to describe something other than practical knowledge is no different from that used to describe anything.

Descriptive knowledge goes beyond the limits of describing practical knowledge to the description of just about anything. As it moves beyond its original limits, the criterion of practicality dissolves making such observations open to the question of validity. Thus the question of "does it work" is replaced by "is this really what you see?"

To be sure it is true that as that knowledge is shared, i.e., that it becomes intersubjective, the authorship of the observation tends to be obscured and when that happens the knowledge is transformed from “this is what I see” to “this is what is seen (by all of us)." When the authorship is lost, two things happen. First, the statement loses its impeachability for if we all see it the same way, as opposed to one person, that must be the way it is. Secondly, as the author is lost, the source of the creation is lost and we come to accept these statements as givens of a non-mortal authorship, whether as the natural state of things or as god givens.

But there are also instances of conflicting observations which leave descriptive knowledge susceptible to the question of validity.

4.3 Theoretical Knowledge. The development of descriptive (declarative) knowledge enables explanations as to why something works. This is because the language used to describe something is no different from the language used to explain how something works. Presumably this develops from the procedural skill of analyzing how a particular type of procedural knowledge works and the verbalization of it. The evaluation of theoretical knowledge rests on the criterion of correctness (often confused with the criterion of truth). Thus the question is, is this the correct explanation or

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6The question of the emergence of language and when it took place is beyond the scope of this paper. Let it suffice to say that there was a time when humans were very limited in what they could express by symbolic language.
not. This in turn gives rise to another procedural skill of determining the correctness of theory and its discursive counterpart.

4.31 **Types of theoretical Knowledge.** Theoretical knowledge, too, can move beyond its pragmatic base, to address descriptive knowledge, for example from "I see the sun rise" to "this is why the sun rises." This sort of theoretical knowledge helps to organize and explain experience. And as descriptive knowledge applies equally to natural and artifactual knowledge, so can theoretical knowledge be used to explain these two types of experience. However, in the case of artifactual knowledge, which is a result of the socio-historical process, explanations have the added potential of legitimizing the construction because it purports to explain it. Put slightly differently, legitimations derive their force because they purport to be explanations.

Legitimations by themselves do not automatically privilege one group over another. The justifications for a certain type of table manners or the practice of driving on the right side of the road need not privilege one segment of society over another, but it could. And when it does, it becomes by definition ideological.

4.32 **Morality.** While not pretending to understand this topic in any depth (am I alone?), it is necessary to bring in a type of theoretical knowledge which is embodied in the term *morality*. As a first approximation, let us begin with the observation that we as humans, like other social species, have developed ways of getting along. For most species, the major mechanism for this is genetically coded behavior. We see in non human species genetically inherited types of behavior that govern social interaction: pecking orders, parental nurturing, courtship rituals, territorial identity, dominance and submission. Let us call this genetically based behavior “social instinct.” Needless to say that each species develops its own social instinct: female beetles eat their mates following copulation while mallard ducks mate for life, etc.

Humans, as cultural beings, retain vestiges of this social instinct, though, as is apparent in the diversity of social behavior among humans around the world, this social instinct has been largely overridden, or perhaps attenuated by culture. By the word “attenuated” I suggest that culturally learned behavior in humans is not totally free of social instinct, though like the

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7As a first approximation, we can take this notion as that expressed by the golden rule: “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Actually this maxim is the basis for law, whether formal or informal, national or international.

8We should also add that whatever social instinct evolves, may from an evolutionary perspective be shown to be beneficially adaptive, but not a necessary ingredient for adaptation nor an inevitable consequence of the social given.
“Language Instinct (Pinker 1995) it guides but does not articulate specific cultural behavior.

As a second approximation, let us say that in humans, this social instinct raises in us feelings that urge us to act in certain ways, to care for and about our children for example. (As suggested above, his would make sense in the adaptational scheme of things). However, as social instincts, important to us as they are, they do not rise to the level of consciousness. However, as language gives rise to the declarative potential knowledge, we have the possibility to express feelings arising out of social instinct as well. What we see as our relationships with our children, observations that also require theoretical explanations, but these explanations will be tainted with a moral undertone... As these feelings become articulated through language, we see the emergence of what is called morality. From this perspective, then, morality is related to the discourse that is driven by social instinct.

This definition is clearly too broad, for social instinct is what drives us to be sociable, talk about the weather, and so forth. But morality is not concerned with all these things, but rather is a subset of this discourse which concerns right and wrong ways of interacting. As a third approximation, then, let us narrow the discourse to a discourse on what and why we feel about different types of social behavior. While I have made the claim that morality is socially driven, I have not claimed that this is all it is. Clearly, culturally practices can override these types of behavior and so we cannot make the claim that in humans, morality is the same everywhere, but it does seem reasonable to suppose that morality possesses an underlying commonality even if the specifics vary across cultures.

This third approximation, that morality has to do with discourse about how we feel about social behavior, then we see it as a very important type of theoretical declarative knowledge, for it offers explanations, and legitimizations, not as practical knowledge, but in terms of right and wrong.

5. The Mechanisms of Ideological Power

5.1 Process of Struggle. In recognizing that ideology is a process rather than a thing we need to understand how ideology is negotiated; to examine instances of struggle and resistance; and to explore why and knowledge becomes ideological). This will involve, among other things an analysis of the process of negotiation (using the self-other framework) and the specific mechanisms of negotiations.

5.11 The self-other relationship

5.12 The role of categories.
5.13 **Background knowledge.**
5.14 **The role of nominalization.**
5.15 **Thompson's categories.**

5.2 **Dominant Block Studies.** In the west, or rather in the capitalist world, we experience this particular ideology so massively that we are rarely aware of its existence even though we find ourselves coerced by its tenants. Because its presence is so massive and because lesser ideologies have to accommodate it within their own, that we term this ideology hegemonic. To be sure, this ideology is an ideology in the cultural sense used above, but in addition it has special properties which are worthy in their own right.

5.21 The claim that this ideology is hegemonic does not impute a static, unchanging nature to it. Understanding how the specific tenants of this ideology developed through negotiation, dialogue and struggle and how they came to be hegemonic is an important goal of this view.

5.22 Because of the massive presence of this ideology, we are usually unaware of its presence. This is why for example that literacy can be viewed as an autonomous element of society. It is only when we examine literacies in societies less dominated by this ideology that we see that the social properties of literacy can be otherwise.

5.23 At the same time, because this ideology is the air we breathe we feel that we know it well, and yet its characterization seems still vague and nebulous. Study of this ideology seeks to characterize it more explicitly.

5.24 The massiveness of this ideology causes subservient ideologies (e.g., gender dominance or Western cultural dominance) to accommodate the major tenants of the hegemonic ideology giving the ideology a pantheonic aura. This accommodation may give rise to struggles within the ideology. For example, when non-Western elites seek to consolidate their place in the pantheon, they may challenge the Eurocentric tenants only while leaving other more fundamental tenants, such as the economic basis for capitalism, not only untouched but reinforced in the process. This process of pantheonic accommodation helps to explain why a hegemonic ideology can be said to fully represent the interests of a very privileged few, but can draw so many others into its aegis.

5.25 Although this ideology has a Western (cultural) orientation, because of its capitalistic base, it is no longer western in scope. We can anticipate pressure from non-Western participants to challenge its Eurocentric tenants to facilitate the inclusion of a broader base of participants.


