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Political Epistemology and Social Critique

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1. Introduction

My recent work defends a practice-based account of ideology. Social practices and social structures depend on a collection of social meanings—I call this a *cultural technē*—that provides a "stage-setting" for action and is a constituent part of the local social-regulation system (e.g., Haslanger 2018, 2017a, 2017b). These cultural technēs enable us to coordinate by providing the paths and signals of our practices. An ideology is a cultural technē "gone wrong." It prevents us from recognizing or creating forms of value and/or organizes us in unjust ways. This account of ideology is functionalist, pejorative, but not doxastic. It is functionalist because the evaluation of a technē as ideological depends on how it functions in a context; it is pejorative because, in being ideological, it functions to create or sustain injustice; and it is not doxastic because a cultural technē is not a set of beliefs, but is, rather, a set of public meanings (though some parts of it may be internalized as beliefs and other attitudes).[1] The cultural technē both provides resources to interpret and shapes the material world.

Throughout this work I have relied on the idea that some (but not all) cultural technēs are ideological. My task here is to say more about the

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[1] I am an externalist about linguistic meaning (meanings aren't in the head), and although a model of social meanings of the sort I have in mind would have to be more complicated than standard models of linguistic meaning, some of the basic tools from externalist philosophy of language can be applied more broadly. I also consider signs and symbols to be part of the technē (just as letters and words are part of our linguistic technē). See also (Haslanger 2020a).

basis for such normative evaluation of social meanings and the practices they enable. Ideology critique is an important part of efforts to promote social justice, but how is critique possible and how is it warranted?[2]

In what follows, I will sketch three problems for ideology critique, drawing on the work of Robin Celikates (2016): the normative challenge, the epistemological challenge, and the explanatory challenge. Before attempting to address these challenges, I will situate the inquiry as a form of non-ideal social theory. My project, however, is not to define or develop non-ideal theory generally, but to sketch a form of critical theory that has emerged in the context of social justice movements—broad movements that include participation from activists, academics, artists, and ordinary folk attempting to live their lives with integrity and hope.[3] Members of such movements engage in critique as agents *within* a set of unjust social practices. Critique of a practice is aimed at others who are engaged in the practice with us; the question is how we should go on together from here.

I argue that under conditions of ideology a standard model of normative political epistemology—using a domain-specific reflective equilibrium—is insufficient. (See also Haslanger Forthcoming.) Moreover, simply including diverse knowers as sources of situated knowledge, taken at face value, is also insufficient. A *critical* standpoint is necessary. One way of achieving a critical standpoint is through consciousness raising (CR); consciousness raising offers a paradigm shift that cannot simply be derived from our existing moral framework. However, not all epistemic practices that appear to "raise" consciousness are warranted.[4] Nevertheless, under

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[2] In this text, I will speak, generally, of "social justice." However, it is reasonable to question whether 'justice' is the right term for what emancipatory movements seek. (Thanks to Lorna Finlayson for raising this issue.) As I understand the phrase 'social justice,' it does not presuppose that what's at stake is captured, or even aimed at, by contemporary theories of justice. I will not enter explicitly into this debate here, and will leave the notion open-ended.

[3] The term 'critical theory' has multiple uses, and sometimes functions as a proper name for a particular method, e.g., Frankfurt School Critical Theory, or Critical Race Theory. I use the term 'critical theory' (lower case) for an activity within social justice movements that resist oppression on the basis of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexuality, nationality or immigrant status, disability, size, etc. I am not attempting to regiment or define a method, but to illuminate aspects of an approach that I believe has been neglected in mainstream political philosophy.

[4] One might use the term 'consciousness raising' as a success term—one's consciousness isn't raised unless the result is a warranted critique—or simply as a fallible process or procedure. Sarachild (1978) gives an example of the latter: "A recent *New York Times* article referred to a meeting called by Henry Kissinger to talk to the executives of the major television networks

certain conditions that I aim to specify, consciousness raising produces a warranted critical standpoint and a *pro tanto* claim against others through a process of inquiry.[5] Even so, the political work remains: under conditions of collective self-governance, there is no guarantee that all warranted claims can be met simultaneously. There will be winners and losers even after legitimate democratic processes have been followed (Allen 2004). A warranted critique of society may not be politically successful; there are no guarantees. The political basis for conflict resolution between *pro tanto* claims is not my topic here.

2. Ideology and Subjection

To motivate the problem, it is important to say more about the epistemic impact of ideology.[6] Althusser (1971) distinguishes *repressive state apparatuses* (RSAs) and *ideological state apparatuses* (ISAs). RSAs include the "government, administration, army, courts, prisons" that "function by violence" or "massively and predominantly by repression." ISAs include religion, education, the family, the legal system, the political system, trade unions, communications/media, and culture ("literature, the arts, sports, etc.") that "function massively and predominantly by

about the content of their programs as a 'curious "consciousness-raising" session' with a Secretary of State" (147). (Note: the article (Brown 1974) actually says the meeting "was described by one who attended as a 'consciousness-raising session' on certain world issues that Mr. Kissinger believed deserved studious attention.") If one opts for using it as a success term, then some practices that look a lot like consciousness raising are not genuine cases because consciousness isn't actually "raised." Sarachild (1978) and others insist that what defines CR is not a precise procedure, but results (147). As will become clearer as I proceed, I will use the term 'consciousness raising' to refer to a variety of practices that give rise to a paradigm shift in understanding one's social circumstances; the new paradigm provides participants an "oppositional consciousness." However, not all paradigm shifts are warranted and not all forms of oppositional consciousness provide us insight into justice. I will follow the feminist tradition, however, in assuming that consciousness raising is successful only if it yields a warranted critique.

[5] There is a substantial literature in epistemology on the relationship between warrant, justification, and entitlement and there are substantive differences in how the terms are used. I am not going to delve into that discussion in this chapter. I will mostly use the term 'warrant' rather than 'justification' because I want to distance myself from the internalist and doxastic assumptions that tend to be associated with justification (Pollock and Cruz 1999). I do not, however, have a theory of warrant.

[6] This section draws on (Haslanger 2019a), which also expands some of the points I make here.

ideology." (No state apparatus is purely one or the other, and each depends crucially on the other, though in modern society, the ISAs are the dominant mode of social management.) A crucial difference between an ISA and an RSA is that individuals are hailed into a subject position by an ISA (Althusser calls this a process of "interpellation"), rather than violently forced into it. It is characteristic of those "good subjects" who respond to the hailing that they take up the norms as binding on themselves, so they don't need to be coercively managed. For example, to maintain a division of labor, instilling literacy, numeracy, and other kinds of technical "know how" is not sufficient:

> besides these techniques and knowledges, and in learning them, children at school also learn the 'rules' of good behaviour, i.e. the attitude that should be observed by every agent in the division of labour, according to the job he is 'destined' for: rules of morality, civic and professional conscience, which actually means rules of respect for the socio-technical division of labour and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination. They also learn to 'speak proper French', to 'handle' the workers correctly, i.e. actually (for the future capitalists and their servants) to 'order them about' properly, i.e. (ideally) to 'speak to them' in the right way, etc.
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> (Althusser 2014/1971, 235–236)

The local ISAs interpellate subjects so that they perform the practices of their social milieu freely: this is how things are; this is what we do; this is who we are. As Althusser emphasizes, the good subjects "work all by themselves"! This conception of ideology (though not in these terms) is also a theme in Foucault's work (e.g., 1979, esp. ch. 5, and for a feminist application see (Bartky 1990)).

My conception of ideology is Althusserian. We participate in social practices guided by a set of public meanings, scripts, etc. Particular practices are signaled and structured by features of the material conditions. A blackboard and desk or podium marks the front of a classroom. We organize ourselves in such a space depending on our role in that setting. The front of the classroom has a meaning that both students and teachers understand, and guides them in the activity of learning together.

The network of meanings that play a role in interconnected practices form a *cultural technē*.[7] The boundaries of a cultural technē are not precise. The cultural technē of a philosophy classroom tends to be quite different from a gender studies classroom; the cultural technē of Harvard is quite different from the cultural technē of MIT. Those who are socially fluent in a particular setting have internalized its cultural technē—they are its "good subjects."

We are "hailed" into practices in a variety of ways, e.g., we are hailed into speaking English by having English spoken to us; we are hailed into the role of student by being sent to school and finding ourselves responding to the teacher as an authority (nudged by coercion); we are hailed into adulthood by having to pay the rent (with threat of coercion in the background). We then develop ways of being and thinking so that we are (more or less) fluent English speakers, fluent students, fluent rent-paying adults. Ideology is not a set of beliefs, though it may produce belief about what is apt or inapt, right or wrong, and related desires, emotions, and other attitudes. As Althusser says, "Ideology always exists in an apparatus and its practice or practices. Its existence is material" (Althusser 1971, 259). The world around us is structured so that we typically embody a practice before we even know we are engaged in it (McGeer 2007; Zawidzki 2013).

Social practices organize us around things taken to have more or less value; let's call these (assumed or constructed) *sources* of value and disvalue.[8] Some sources are material (such as medicine, traffic, toxic waste), and others not (such as time, knowledge, boredom). For example, the practice of attending an academic lecture organizes us around a presumptive source of knowledge. The cultural technē of academia,

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[7] In the past I have used the term 'schemas' both for public *cultural* schemas and internalization of them as *psychological* schemas. This has caused confusion, so I now use the term 'social meaning,' and for webs of meanings, 'cultural technē.' 'Social meanings' include narratives, patterns of inference, default assumptions, symbols, and other cultural memes that one might not normally consider "meanings" in a narrow sense. See also (Haslanger 2018).

[8] Following Giddens and Sewell, I originally employed the term 'resources' in this context. The term 'resource,' however, has a positive connotation and I've been urged to find another way of speaking of resources that more easily includes things taken to have negative value. (Thanks for this nudge to Jeffrey Stout.) Until I find something better, I will use 'sources' with the understanding that sources come in many different forms. Note that because we are not assuming that what we "take to be" of value or disvalue is correctly valued, we should not assume that a 'source' *actually has* the value or disvalue attributed to it.

overall, has value, though some parts of it, or its manifestation in some settings, may be ideological. A cultural technē can go wrong in different ways. It may distort our capacity to value, i.e., to recognize what is truly valuable and what not (Anderson 1993, ch. 1); it may organize us in response to presumed value in unjust ways. For example, recent work on epistemic injustice argues that academic practices place unwarranted restrictions on who counts as a knower, what form knowledge must take, and the legitimate sources of knowledge. (See Tuana 2017 for a useful overview.)

Under conditions of ideology there is, by hypothesis, a range of unjust social practices that oppress a group; however, not everyone experiences the oppression as such. Those who are fluent in the practices may not even recognize them as social practices, e.g., a practice may be naturalized or taken for granted. The working class may not recognize their exploitation as such; women may not agree on what practices are sexist. And even a problematic practice may be experienced as valuable and produce something of value. At the very least, practices enable coordination; coordination, even on non-optimal terms, is valuable because coordination on any terms is important and can be difficult to achieve.

The epistemic position of the "good subject" is complicated. As just mentioned, some subjects embedded in unjust practices do not experience them as unjust; others may have a vague dissatisfaction; and others may have an articulated critique.[9] Even being deeply critical of a practice does not prevent one from being fluent in it, and because resistance is often punished, many will have reason to comply with practices they abhor. Moreover, there may be no better live option. Because we depend on coordination with others, we are often just stuck with enacting an unjust system we are embedded in, for lack of better alternatives.

The term 'standpoint epistemology' emerged as an effort to address the problem of ideology: Where does one stand to critique ideology?

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[9] There is an important set of questions about the kind of knowledge gained by those who occupy a subordinated position and its relationship to critique. Patricia Hill Collins argues that "Black Feminist thought rearticulates a consciousness that already exists [among Black women]" (1989, 750). I am not denying that often the resources for critique already exist in the experience of the subordinate; my claim is that sometimes, for some groups or in relation to some practices, complicity in unjust practices is deeper than this suggests. See also Khader (2011).

Because ideology, when successful, recruits us into fluent participation in an unjust structure, some of those who are subject to subordination will not develop or accept a critique of it. This has two important consequences. First, "situated knowledge"—knowledge gained by virtue of occupying a particular social position—need not itself be sufficient to generate critique. So, some broadly empiricist claims that "all knowledge is situated," although true, will not necessarily be enough to develop a critical perspective; an effort to include diverse knowers in inquiry, although important, will not be enough to disrupt ideological practices. (See also Intemann 2010.) Situated knowledge may just provide knowledge of the practice, without knowledge of what makes it problematic or what would be better. Second, there will not be an easy consensus among the subordinated to challenge the status quo. Further, critique may take aim at deeply held identities that both enable one to coordinate with others and provide a basis for self-esteem.

How does a critic proceed? In principle, if we know what is just and unjust, then the proper target of ideology critique simply follows: we should disrupt the cultural technē that prevents us from valuing things aptly and disrupt those social structures that produce injustice. However, because knowledge is situated, and so distributed (I assume that this includes knowledge of value and other sorts of normative knowledge), individual acts of reflection, or reflection by a group of similarly situated knowers, is not enough. And because ideology masks injustice and blocks us from an understanding of our social milieu, how can we develop a warranted critique? Robin Celikates (2016, 3–4) elaborates three challenges an account of ideology critique must address.

   (i) *Normative challenge:* What makes an ideology problematic? Are there objective moral truths by reference to which we can judge a social arrangement defective or unjust? If so, how do we gain knowledge of those truths? If not, then on what basis do we undertake critique?
   (ii) *Methodological or epistemological challenge:* From what standpoint does the critic speak? Traditionally critical theory is embedded in a social movement and aims to articulate the interests and demands of the oppressed. But then the question is "which

insights of which agents—given that they usually do not constitute a homogeneous category—the critical theorist articulates."

(iii) *Explanatory challenge:* If an ideology functions at the level of a system, "what exactly holds the rather broad conglomeration of partly psychological, partly social mechanisms—from implicit biases via stereotypes to looping effects—together and makes them into elements of one ideology"? And how does critique disrupt the systematic injustice sustained by the ideology?

To address these challenges, it would appear that we must provide a full-blown social theory, moral metaphysics, and moral epistemology. Fortunately, there is a narrower task that we can begin with.

3. Methodological Preliminaries: Narrowing the Task

a. Moral Truths

We are not starting the normative inquiry from scratch. Those engaged in justified political resistance cannot avoid the claim that there are *some* moral truths. So it is not my task to argue for an objective basis for moral judgment.[10] Moreover, ideology critique *is critical*; it does not make a claim about the nature of justice. What counts as ideology is a matter of the injustice of its effects and the (bad) values it promotes/embodies, so it focuses on identifying injustice and harm.

This move to focus on injustice is a strategy common to many forms of non-ideal theory. The form of critical theory I am developing here, however, goes further than simply a *focus* on injustice; it resists the call to provide a theory of justice by reference to which we can judge cases to be just or unjust. We do not need to *know what justice is* or have a complete moral theory to engage in social critique. We can know, in some cases, when a practice is unjust, without knowing why it is; in fact, the standard form of normative theorizing depends on the validity of such pre-theoretical judgments, e.g., we do not need a moral theory to tell us

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[10] I leave open the meta-ethical view about the nature of moral facts.

that slavery or rape is wrong and standard justifications of our moral theories depend on the adequacy of such judgments. Moreover, modal knowledge of what makes something just or unjust (which presumably is what a theory of the nature of justice provides) is not required to remedy instances of it. And finally, injustice may not be a proper kind, so attempting to construct a theory of justice may lead us astray, causing us to neglect forms of injustice that don't fit our theory (Young 1990, ch. 2).

The resistance to articulating an "ideal theory" of justice is methodologically deeper than this, however.[11] In the case of some kinds worthy of our attention, there are pre-existing and projectible regularities that we have reason to identify and investigate (water is H_2O; the highest poverty rate in the US by race occurs among Native Americans (in 2018 = 25.4%)).[12] But in the social world, the adequacy of our conceptual framework should not simply be judged by the facts it captures, but by *what it does*: the resources it provides for organizing and understanding ourselves. For example, how should we define *refugee*? Our chosen definition matters for people's lives. In the social domain, the direction of fit goes both ways: we aim to capture facts about the world, and our doing so can contribute to producing facts—sometimes facts we are trying to capture and sometimes new ones (Hacking 2002; Haslanger 2012). The social effects of a proposed definition (or theory, more broadly) is a consideration that tells for or against it; there is a sense in which a definition can be unjust.

There are situations when we can simply stipulate a new word to do the conceptual or linguistic work we need done: 'super-spreader' or 'coronnials.'[13] But in philosophically interesting cases, there is something we are aiming to understand that is not simply constituted by what we decide—by stipulation of meaning—yet at the same time is not completely free of the discursive tradition that provides the tools to identify it. We are seeking an understanding of practices in which we are currently engaged as participants. The practices are not fully understood,

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[11] I discuss this also in (Haslanger 2019b) in relation to understanding what race is and in (Haslanger 2020c) in considering conceptual engineering more generally. See also (Moi 2015; Mills 2005).

[12] https://www.povertyusa.org/facts.

[13] https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2020-04-11/coronavirus-covid19-pandemic-changes-how-we-talk.

however; and they are open-ended, revisable, possibly self-defeating. In making sense of them, we are making judgments about how to better understand what we are doing, and how then to go on; this affects what the practice is. This process involves an evaluation and extension of claims we make about, and within, the practice and the vocabulary we use to do so. However, it is not primarily a linguistic exercise: we aren't just deciding how to use existing terminology, but how to collectively orient ourselves toward the world and each other. In other words, we are situated inquirers, and the question is how we should go on from here (see also Walker 2007). Because of the influence of ideology, in particular, we should be cautious about dominant ideas about where we have been, where we are now, and how or whether we should continue. There may be some practices, e.g., medicine or mathematics, in which we can rely mainly on experts to decide the best way to go on. But in the social domain, we should figure this out collectively.

b. Anti-Utopianism

Resistance to ideal theory is also supported by the fact that there are many ways to organize social life, so the goal is not to ask what practices are the *best* way. For example, the production and distribution of food is part of social life, and there are better and worse ways to do it. It would be misguided to argue that three square meals a day is the best way to organize food consumption and all others should be judged by reference to this ideal; but some ways of producing and distributing food are unhealthy, some exploit workers, some destroy ecosystems, some cause suffering and/or death of sentient beings. We need not assume that there is a *best* way to organize food production, consumption, and disposal in order to engage in critique. A normative social theory provides tools to identify ways in which our current practices are inadequate so we can do better. What counts as better will depend hugely on local factors, e.g., the geography, economy, cultural traditions, and human biology.[14] In

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[14] This is why relying on the state to manage social practices is often counter-productive. See Ostrom (1990) and Agarwal (1992, 2009).

existing societies, injustice is already rampant. Rectification is a priority. For this reason, a normative social theory is *anti-utopian* (though it does require imagination and a kind of hope (Solnit 2016)).

Moreover, because the focus is on the inadequacy of current practices in a particular context, we must be sensitive to the fact that practices occur within cultural traditions that are a source of value. This is not just to say that people value their ways of life. Practices are valuable and produce goods that are internal to the practice. For example, in a division of labor, there will be a division of expertise. Even if the division of labor is unjust, individuals marked for a particular set of tasks may develop a set of skills, a sensibility, solidarity with each other, by virtue of participation in a particular position in the structured set of practices. Goods may accrue to the participants, even if overall the structure is problematic and should be changed. In such cases, sacrifice is inevitable.

One may be concerned that once we recognize that there are many acceptable ways to organize social life and that our critique is always situated, we must give up on the objectivity of value. However, objective values need not be ahistorical or acontextual; they may be path-dependent. What's valuable depends, *inter alia*, on what is available to value. Jack Balkin makes this point:

> Values are not so much what humans have as what they do and feel. Human beings possess an inexhaustible drive to evaluate, to pronounce what is good and bad, beautiful and ugly, advantageous and disadvantageous. Without culture, human values are inchoate and indeterminate; through culture they become differentiated, articulated, and refined.   (1998, 27–28)

In developing this point, Balkin relies on examples of aesthetic value: the creation of different sorts of musical instruments and the different configurations of sound they produce enables us to cultivate different ways of hearing and attaching aesthetic value to music (1998, 28). It would not be possible aesthetically appreciate rock and roll without the invention of electric guitars; our aesthetic sensibility evolves in response to the creation of new sounds. Balkin extends this to moral sensibility and moral value:

We concretize our indeterminate value of justice by creating human institutions and practices that attempt to enforce it and exemplify it, even (and especially) if we recognize that all of these institutions are imperfectly just. Of course, because justice is an indeterminate standard, there is no necessary way to exemplify it. The value of justice does not tell us, for example, whether a democratic legislature should have one, two, or three houses. Hence the institutions that people construct to exemplify justice may be different in different eras and different lands.   (1998, 30)

I take it that Balkin's point is not just that there may be different ways of exemplifying well-defined abstract rules or procedures (be they aesthetic or political), but that our ultimate values are indeterminate and any attempt to render them determinate will be specific to cultural and material conditions, so may not be transposable to other conditions. (See also Khader 2019.) It is compatible with this, however, that given the socio-historical conditions, there are objective truths about what is beautiful or just in the context in question.

The considerations just sketched suggest two dimensions of indeterminacy, one diachronic and the other synchronic, that pull against the impulse to produce an ideal theory of justice. Synchronically, any "sense of justice" or appreciation of the "value of reciprocity" (etc.) that might provide a basis for moral theorizing across social and cultural differences is indeterminate (Kymlicka 2002, 2–4; Dworkin 1977, 179–183); and our efforts to articulate it in a way that renders it determinate will inevitably incorporate particular socio-historical elements that make it apt for some contexts, or some communities, but not others.[15] Diachronically, even if

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[15] I have argued elsewhere (Haslanger 2020c) that the standard model of domain-specific reflective equilibrium of the sort recommended by Rawls and Scanlon suffers from a kind of status-quo bias that makes it unsuitable for ideology critique. I grant that reflective equilibrium of the broadest sort—including all of our beliefs (empirical, logical, metaphysical, normative, etc.)—is the best we can aim for in inquiry, but I reject the idea that moral inquiry should be pursued by aiming for a narrower reflective equilibrium between normative judgments and principles and "uncontroversial" non-normative claims (Scanlon 2003). I also resist the idea that moral theory should be treated as if it is undertaken by an individual deliberating about what is right or what to do (which is what Scanlon (2003) recommends). Moral inquiry, like scientific inquiry, is a collective project and conclusions that may be warranted for an individual may not be warranted as part of the collective effort to decide how we should live together.

we are able to specify a conception of justice that is fully determinate and applies generally (for current purposes), we are not in a position to grasp the full range of possibilities that we might face and decide in advance what would be appropriate under radically different conditions. The world poses challenges that our previous (or existing) understandings and sensibilities do not solve. Who could have imagined, even a century ago, the morally significant possibilities created by the biological sciences (assisted reproductive technology, cloning) and engineering (automobiles, space travel, cellphones, robotics)?[16] Our sensibilities evolve in response to new conditions, and the evolving sensibilities—and critique of those sensibilities—is part of a process of determining what is just here and now. It may be that we should attempt to develop theories that are apt for our current conditions based on our current knowledge. But the point I am making is not just that we are fallible, i.e., that there is a truth about the nature of justice (for all times, all conditions) out there waiting to be found and we have only fallible access to it; the claim is that what is just or unjust does not float free of our sensibilities and our practices, and the relevant practices are, like other practices, open-ended and revisable (in the aims, procedures, and results), and depend on our collective and critical efforts to go on, together, from here.

A cultural technē is an evolving specification of our "inchoate and indeterminate" drive to evaluate in response to our material (biological, geographical, economic) conditions. To suppose that we can articulate an ideal that is not conditioned by our cultural technē and, even if we could, that it could speak to us is implausible. This does not leave critique without normative resources. Social critique can, at the very least, draw on our inchoate and indeterminate sense of justice and its articulation in other contexts to construct and demand a better alternative to the current practices. The fragmentation of our social practices and relative (but incomplete) autonomy of social systems generate tensions and contradictions that can prompt reflection and reconfiguration of our normative resources.[17]

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[16] For an excellent discussion of the impact of the invention of the car on our legal and moral judgments, see, e.g., Seo (2019).

[17] There is an ongoing and important literature on intersecting systems of oppression that lies behind my discussion. What are the relationships between racism, sexism, capitalism (etc.)

c. The Social Domain

As mentioned before, the site of ideology critique is *the social domain.* It is difficult to draw a clear line between the social domain and the political domain—and I won't attempt to do so here. But one mark of the political domain is its relationship to the distinctive coercive power of the state, a power that is leveraged in repressive state apparatuses, especially law and its enforcement. The social domain is characteristically structured by norms, expectations, and identities—developed within the ideological state apparatuses and the internalization of the cultural technē—with law serving, in many cases, only as a fallback. So the primary questions for social critique are not the appropriate structure and limits of the state, but rather what practices we should engage in, what social norms we should embrace, and how we should go on, from here, together.

As a result, the normative questions are not primarily whether an agent acts rightly or wrongly, or whether an agent is blameworthy. Nor are the normative questions about what is permissible for the state to regulate and enforce. Rather, the question is whether we (collectively) are warranted in creating, maintaining, or changing a practice or structure. An individual can be treated unjustly *qua* individual by others, or by the state. But within the social domain individuals are vulnerable to perpetrating or suffering injustice by virtue of their social positions. The aim is to improve our social practices and social structures to eliminate this *positional vulnerability.*

A standard strategy for deciding whether a social practice is acceptable is to argue that the practice is in all participants' long-term self-interest, and proposals for change should be evaluated through a kind of collective cost-benefit analysis. In some cases, this answer is straightforward: some practices clearly and systematically deprive individuals of what's necessary for a minimally decent life, or the development of basic capabilities, and these should be changed for the familiar reasons. But there are several reasons why ideology complicates this answer.

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in the contemporary social order? See, e.g., Carastathis 2014; Dawson and Katzenstein 2019; Haslanger 2020d; Sewell 2005. The tensions and contradictions between systems are relevant to my response to Celikates' explanatory challenge, as will become clearer below.

First, we cannot judge what is a minimally decent life in the abstract, as Adam Smith's classic comment about linen shirts makes clear.

> By necessaries I understand not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without. A linen shirt, for example, is, strictly speaking, not a necessary of life...in the present times, through the greater part of Europe, a creditable day-labourer would be ashamed to appear in public without a linen shirt, the want of which would be supposed to denote that disgraceful degree of poverty which, it is presumed, nobody can well fall into without extreme bad conduct. Custom, in the same manner, has rendered leather shoes a necessary of life in England. The poorest creditable person of either sex would be ashamed to appear in public without them. In Scotland, custom has rendered them a necessary of life to the lowest order of men; but not to the same order of women, who may, without any discredit, walk about barefooted...Under necessaries, therefore, I comprehend not only those things which nature, but those things which the established rules of decency have rendered necessary to the lowest rank of people.
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> (Smith 1776/1977, 1168)

Smith's criterion by which to judge what is socially necessary—what is necessary in order to appear in public without shame—is important for its recognition of the social bases of self-respect; but it also reveals the potential for ideological distortion. Why do men need shoes in Scotland, but not women? And similar concerns might be raised about capabilities. Martha Nussbaum includes on her list of basic capabilities, for example, "bodily health" (Nussbaum 2001). But there is much controversy among disability rights activists about the medicalization of disability and the ableism embedded in the dominant contemporary conception of health (Tremain 2001; Barnes 2016). Necessities—not just what we take to be necessities—are ideologically mediated (Fraser 1989a, 1989b).

Second, who, exactly, is the self whose interests are at issue? If human development is shaped to produce socially fluent individuals—the "good citizens" who "work all by themselves"—and if our identities are formed

by reference to a framework of social positions, then are the relevant interests we are aiming to protect the interests of a socially situated self?[18] It would be hard to deny that I—a white cis-woman—have an interest in identifying with and fluently occupying the position of white woman. Failing to do so brings with it substantial costs. But I also have an interest in overturning the local unjust race/gender regime so that race and gender as we know them are no longer imperatives. The problem, more generally, is that the very practices that shape us as social individuals are the ones that function ideologically and so are the targets of critique. But it would also be a mistake to think that the interests in question are those of an unsocialized human being, or a bare self not already embedded in a society and culture.

d. Critique as Emancipatory

Within critical theory, especially Frankfurt School Critical Theory, there is a tradition that insists that a successful ideology critique will be, itself, emancipatory. In his classic work on the Frankfurt School, Raymond Geuss (1981) claims that one of the three "essential distinguishing features of a 'critical theory'" is that:

> 1. Critical theories have special standing as guides for human action in that:
>
> (a) they are aimed at producing enlightenment in the agents who hold them, i.e. at enabling those agents to determine what their true interests are;
>
> (b) they are inherently emancipatory, i.e. they free agents from a kind of coercion which is at least partly self-imposed, from self-frustration of conscious human action.   (1–2)

Although I agree that a successful ideology critique should aim to provide the resources for individuals in the grip of an ideology to better

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[18]   I articulate this concern in the language of 'interests'; if one opts instead for the language of 'preferences,' then the problem is even worse.

understand their situation, not all agents will take up these resources or accept the proposed reconceptualization of their social milieu. And of course, thinking alone—or accepting a critical theory—does not free us from coercion, even self-imposed coercion (it may actually increase the need for coercion as we no longer acquiesce to our conditions once we see them for what they are).

As social critics, we should distinguish the *illumination problem*—how we can get others, especially those who are subordinated or oppressed through the working of ideology, to recognize their position and work for social justice—from the *justification problem*. A critique may be justified without providing illumination or emancipation to everyone who encounters it or even understands it.[19] There are multiple determinants of belief other than being given good reasons supporting the claims in question.

We should also distinguish the *justification problem* from the *political problem*. The justification problem concerns whether the critic has a justified complaint against the current social order, i.e., that some practice or set of practices is harmful or unjust. The political problem is what we, collectively, should do about the warranted complaint (and how to decide). As mentioned above, the social critic's role is primarily negative—to identify and analyze forms of injustice that are masked by ideology. It is a further question to determine how the injustices should be remedied. Rarely can all *pro tanto* political complaints be adequately addressed; in general, solutions to collective action problems distribute, but do not eliminate, benefits and burdens. Danielle Allen (2001, 859) argues that "sacrifice makes collective democratic action possible." She develops this further in her book on citizenship, democracy, and the Civil Rights Movement (2004):

> Democracy is not a static end state that achieves the common good by assuring the same benefits or the same level of benefits to everyone, but rather a political practice by which the diverse negative effects of collective political action, and even of just decisions, can be distributed equally, and constantly redistributed over time, on the basis of

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[19] This is a point that Shelby (2003, 2014) has made convincingly.

consensual interactions. The hard truth of democracy is that some citizens are always giving things up for others.   (29)

In unjust societies, the problem is not that some groups lose out, are outvoted, or suffer substantial costs; this happens in just democracies. Rather, the system is set up so that the pattern of redistribution of costs and benefits over time is skewed: one group makes the sacrifice, another group gets the benefits, over and over and over. For example,

> For a long time, in this country, the solution to this paradoxical fact that most democratic citizens are, at the end of the day, relatively powerless sovereigns was the two-pronged citizenship of domination and acqui-escence. These old bad habits dealt with the inevitable fact of loss in political life by assigning to one group [White folk] all the work of being sovereign, and to another group [Black folk] most of the work of accepting the significant losses that kept the polity stable.   (2004, 41)

I distinguish these various problems—justification, illumination, politics—to set some of them aside. I will not assume that the social critic will be able to convince all others who understand their critique that their critique is warranted, or that critical theory is, in itself, emancipatory. I will not assume that the social critic will have, or must provide, a solution to the problem identified that results in greater justice. My goal is more modest: to sketch one way to produce warranted social critique under conditions of ideology.

4. Methodological/Epistemic Challenge

Celikates' methodological challenge situates us at a skeptical moment: If we, ourselves, may be in the grip of an ideology, how can we judge what is emancipatory? The basic problem of ideology critique is often stated by those in the tradition of the Frankfurt School as what I will call the "critical dilemma." Because Critical Theory aims to motivate and guide social change, it cannot rely on a set of "external" imported values: "any 'strong,' context-transcending form of social criticism necessarily brings

the risk of paternalism or even despotism" (Honneth 2009, 44). Of course, the correlative problem is that if one can only rely on the locally entrenched value horizon, then it is unclear that one will have the resources to break through the grip of ideology (Honneth 2017, 2). One solution—that is designed to disrupt adherence to the existing practices and also avoid paternalism and vanguardism—is to challenge the formal or epistemic workings of the ideology, rather than imposing substantive values from "outside." So, properly speaking, critique demonstrates that the ideology has epistemic flaws (e.g., is "self-contradictory") and provides other epistemic resources (and practices) to unmask it, without taking a moral stand (Stahl 2017; Jaeggi 2018). This solution to the critical dilemma is often referred to as "immanent critique."

Celikates addresses the critical dilemma by casting immanent critique as a "second-order" project that takes the form of "reconstructive critique" (2018, part III). Because ideologies "block the development and/or exercise of the reflexive and critical capacities" of the agents in question,

> ideology critique can be understood as second-order critique: If ideologies hide the possibility of criticizing (and transforming) these very ideologies and the problematic first-order phenomena they mask, then the first aim of the critique of ideology has to be to identify these blockades of critique and to work towards their dissolution. In this respect, ideology critique can be seen as taking a procedural turn: Its task is not so much to replace a mistaken or distorted view of social reality with one that is correct (as Althusser implies), or to develop a substantial vision of how society should be organized (as mainstream political philosophy does); rather, its task is to make it possible for agents to ask these questions and collectively look for answers to them themselves.   (Celikates 2016, 17)

The critic's primary goal should be to open space for resistant voices to be heard and allow the community to determine its own collective values and the social practices to further them.

I am sympathetic to Celikates' proceduralism, and to the fallibility of any such process. I agree that one crucial aim of ideology critique is to

identify and remove the epistemic barriers ideology creates. However, I don't agree that ideology critique should be primarily or exclusively "second-order." There are methods for undertaking ideology critique that yield first-order moral claims. I will sketch some of these methods in the next section, but before doing so, it is worth considering a bit further the set-up for the critical dilemma framed as a choice between internal and external critique.

As I understand the critical dilemma, it rests on assuming a divide between the critical theorist and those directly affected. On the one hand, there are those who are "in the grip" of the ideology and participate in the practice on terms that mask its injustice; on the other hand, there are those who know how ideology works to hide or distort the social conditions but who are not sufficiently embedded in the practice to formulate the moral critique. As Celikates suggests, a crucial commitment of critical theory is to listen to first-person (and first-person plural) knowledge claims of the oppressed. This commitment is partly grounded in epistemic humility: we should listen to those directly affected by the practices in question because they are likely to have better access to morally relevant facts. However, the commitment to listen to those directly affected is sometimes a claim of epistemic *entitlement* by those who are members of such oppositional groups. Why suppose that the critical theorists are not those directly affected? Who are the critical theorists anyway?

One might argue that the task of ideology critique is to address those who are complicit in the unjust practices. The critic may be directly affected but, *qua* critic, is not complicit, and *qua* complicit is not critical. So at the very least, there are two moments in the critical project. The *critic in me* may address my complicit self; and *my complicit self* may respond by rejecting the critique on terms provided by the practice I'm engaged in. In effect, this is to embed the critical dilemma within the psychology of the individual.

I find this move implausible and unhelpful. It presupposes the existence of a critical perspective (the critic "in me") that is part of what we need to explain: How does the critical perspective arise, even within an agent; and how, or under what conditions, is it warranted? Moreover, the supposed tension between the critical and complicit perspectives within

an agent does not do justice to the phenomenology of consciousness raising. Rather, in the process of developing a critical consciousness, the agent undergoes a paradigm shift. This is compatible with being able to "see" the world through both paradigms, but the new paradigm illuminates social reality and brings with it a new sensibility. In doing so, it seems to carry authority. The questions I am asking are: Under what conditions should we trust this shift? When does the new paradigm legitimately carry authority? And can we make warranted claims against others based on the new paradigm, even if they have not embraced it? I'll return to Celikates' three challenges below.

5. The Epistemology of Consciousness Raising

a. Case Studies

Under ideological oppression, critique happens in a million ways every day (Scott 1990; Ewick and Silbey 1995, 1999, 2003; Collins 2002; Khader 2011). Some of it is explicit, some not; some of it is warranted, some not; some of it is empowering, some not. And sometimes it builds into a movement. Not all social movements begin in consciousness raising. Especially when repression is regular and obvious, there is often a broad consensus on the injustice and other moral violations; and when there is a longstanding tradition of critique, one can be brought up with a critical consciousness, even as one participates in ideologically shaped practices. However, as discussed above, critical consensus is more difficult to achieve under conditions of ideology.

In what follows, I will consider a particular form of critique that arises in and through a practice that is sometimes called "consciousness raising."[20]

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[20] I am aware that the term 'consciousness raising' or 'CR' is dated. In my courses, students have teased me that "nowadays we call that 'raising awareness'." I want to hold on to the terminology of consciousness raising, however, at least for the time being, because I think there is an epistemic phenomenon worth considering that has been seriously neglected, and the term 'consciousness'—understood as an oppositional consciousness—has a history that can help us track it. Note that in this tradition (and the related Marxian one), the term 'consciousness' is not just a cognitive awareness, but an orientation, a sensibility that brings with it more than just beliefs.

Consciousness raising is a collective activity—done with others—and prompts a paradigm shift in one's orientation to the world. (See, e.g., Mackinnon 1989, ch. 5; Bartky 1975; Redstockings 1978; Frye 1990; Crow 2000; McWeeny 2016; Crary 2015; Toole 2019.) This includes a shift in what facts become accessible, our interpretation of them, and what responses are called for. It is not easily reversed. The experience of such a paradigm shift is powerful, but its adequacy or warrant is not guaranteed. If a movement is to be built on such a paradigm shift, and if movements are to make warranted claims against others, then we need to think more about the conditions under which consciousness raising provides knowledge, and what sort of knowledge it provides. In the next sections, I will provide a sketch of some of the main features of an epistemology of consciousness raising, as I see it.[21] There is much that needs further discussion and elaboration. I start with a brief description of two examples.

Combahee River Collective (1983) ("A Black Feminist Statement")

In 1974 a group of Black women started meeting in response to their experiences in everyday life and in the Civil Rights Movement (CRM) and the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM).[22] Their frustration had roots in their situation: "the political realization that comes from the seemingly personal experiences of individual Black women's lives" (266), and also the failures of both the CRM and the WLM to give them the tools to develop an adequate response: "there was no way of conceptualizing what was so apparent to us, what we *knew* was really happening" (266). Through a process of consciousness raising, they explored the cultural and political dimensions of their experience, and developed new terms and concepts. For example,

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[21]   It has been difficult to find literature in philosophy on the epistemology of consciousness raising, which, I suppose, is not surprising. I am anxious in writing this section because the phenomenon is huge and multi-faceted, and has a meaningful history, with both strengths and pitfalls. I am vividly aware that my research has not been thorough, but in an effort to draw attention to the phenomenon and encourage others to work on it, I am offering what I have managed to put together thus far.

[22]   To find the published statement along with important interviews with some of the authors, see Taylor (2017).

> We discovered that all of us, because we were "smart," had also been considered "ugly," i.e., "smart-ugly." "Smart-ugly" crystalized the way in which most of us had been forced to develop our intellects at great cost to our "social" lives.   (268)

Through CR, they reached the "shared belief that Black Women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity not as an adjunct to somebody else's but because of our need as human persons for autonomy" (33) and "to be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough" (267).

The group that persisted through 1977—when the statement was written—decided that CR was not enough. They developed a study group, and decided to promote their cause through writing, publishing, lecturing, and other activist organizing. They conclude,

> We believe in collective process and a non-hierarchical distribution of power within our own group and in our vision of a revolutionary society. We are committed to a continual examination of our politics as they develop through criticism and self-criticism as an essential aspect of our practice.   (273)

"The Girls Fought Back."
On March 26, 2019, the *Washington Post* published an article about a group of girls at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School who learned that their male peers had created a "list" that "ranked and rated [them] based on their looks from 5.5–9.4, with decimal points to the hundredth place."[23] This kind of activity is not new at the particular high school and occurs virtually everywhere in some form or another. But a subset of the girls on the list, inspired by what they had learned through the #MeToo movement, were upset and complained to the principal. One male student was given detention and that was supposed to be the end of it.

But one of the girls, Nicky Schmidt, texted with her friends after the disciplinary action was announced and they called on others in the International Baccalaureate (IB) program to meet at the main office the

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[23] https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2019/03/26/teen-boys-rated-their-female-classmates-based-looks-girls-fought-back.

next day to protest the inadequacy of the school's response. Forty girls showed up. As a result, the school hosted a 2.5-hour discussion with all students, including those who produced the list. At this meeting, "Several girls delivered personal and impassioned speeches describing not only their presence on the list but also their previous experiences with sexual abuse, harassment and objectification, both inside the school and outside of it." After this meeting, the boy responsible for the list said, "When you have a culture where it's just normal to talk about that, I guess making a list about it doesn't seem like such a terrible thing to do... It's easy for me to lose sight of the consequences of my actions and kind of feel like I'm above something... [But] It's just a different time and things really do need to change." Collective action was then planned to implement policies and practices aimed to reduce similar behavior in the future.

b. Sources of Oppositional Consciousness

Jane Mansbridge uses the term 'oppositional consciousness' to capture a particular kind of response to oppression. She suggests (drawing on Foucault) that oppositional consciousness *in liberation movements* (cf. social responsibility movements such as environmentalism or the peace movement) requires:

> a gut refusal to be subordinated rooted somewhere in every human being... To form an effective basis for collective action, gut refusals need cognitive and emotional organizing. They need an injustice frame ... They need an apparatus involving both reason and emotion.
>
> (2001, 4)

Iris Young suggests that resistance begins with a "desiring negation" (1990, 6–7):

> Desire... creates the distance, the negation, that opens the space for criticism of what is. This critical distance does not occur on the basis of some previously discovered rational ideas of the good and the just. On

the contrary, the ideas of the good and the just arise from the desiring negation that action brings to what is given.

Each social reality presents its own unrealized possibilities, experienced as lacks and desires. Norms and ideals arise from the yearning that is an expression of freedom: it does not have to be this way, it could be otherwise.

Many feminist and anti-racist theorists have argued that a critical perspective emerges from participation in multiple social "worlds" that are not in sync. For example, Du Bois coined the phrase "double consciousness" (1997/1903); Patricia Hill Collins describes the position of the "outsider within" (1989); Gloria Anzaldúa points to the experience of the *mestizaje* (1987); Maria Lugones describes "world traveling" (1987; also Fanon (1967/1952); Ellison (1972/1952); hooks (1995); Scheman (1997); and many others). These authors provide vivid and profound examples, but it is important to note that we are all positioned in multiple social worlds and are asked to navigate between them, e.g., the worlds of work and of home, the worlds of family of origin and of family of choice, the worlds of adults and of children (as a parent or teacher), the worlds of the market and of personal, family, or religious life. Transitions between these worlds can happen seamlessly, but often prompt a sense of dislocation, demand adjustment, and provide opportunities for critical reflection (or at least a "desiring negation").

Drawing on empirical case studies, Mansbridge and Morris (2001, 5) argue that certain tools are valuable in moving from an impulse to resist to an "injustice frame."

An existing *oppositional culture* provides ideas, rituals, and long-standing patterns of interaction that overt political struggle can refine and develop to create a more mature oppositional consciousness . . . a history of *segregation* with some autonomy, providing "free spaces" for the elaboration and testing of ideas; *borrowing* from previous successful movements; the *synthesis* of more than one oppositional strand, creating more than the sum of its parts; mutually supportive

interaction, bridging divides in emotional commitments; and *consensus creativity* by activists, drawing on the traditions and practices of everyday life.   (Mansbridge and Morris 2001, 7–8)

Note that the tools Mansbridge provides are social resources and practices that enable one to move beyond one's own individual frustrations to a collective and historically rooted understanding of the situation. Oppositional consciousness transforms into a movement when those in the group "demand changes in the polity, economy or society to rectify those injustices" (Mansbridge and Morris 2001, 1).

c. Epistemic Credentials

As argued above, a primary task of social critique under conditions of ideology is to articulate a warranted moral claim *in the name of a subordinate group or groups*. The claim is made against those with whom one coordinates—in a classroom, a family, an institution (workplace, civic organization), a nation—and makes a demand that the terms of coordination be changed. I assume that one need not be a member of the subordinate group in order to demand justice with them (Pohlhaus 2002). For example, as a White person, I can have a "gut refusal" to participate in racist practices, and my own experience of dislocation between racist and anti-racist contexts enables me to envision more just possibilities and create opportunities for change. In the example of Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, the process enabled (some of) the boys who made the list to gain consciousness of a sexist culture. But in a liberation movement, the process of articulating a claim through consciousness raising typically begins with those directly affected.[24]

Oppositional consciousness arises and can be justified in a variety of ways; I am focusing on what I take to be hard cases where there isn't a critical paradigm in place, where ideological oppression has interpellated

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[24] Much more should be said here about the different forms of consciousness raising and the different kinds of participants. In the description that follows, I'm assuming that we are starting with those "in the grip" of ideology, not guided by a "theorist" who already has escaped the grip.

individuals to be "good subjects" in a variety of practices. The process I am exploring involves a resistant reaction that can evolve into a complaint, and may result in a *pro tanto* moral claim.[25] I use bullets rather than numbers below because the sequence of steps may not always occur in the order presented.

- There is a moral "gut refusal" to comply with or accept a practice, a "desiring negation" that yearns for and imagines other possibilities. Such a refusal may simply be a personal indication of displeasure, a whine, but does not rise to the level of a complaint against others. How do we transform whining or displeasure into a proper complaint?

I am assuming, for the purposes of the discussion, that whining just expresses a negative preference, a preference against something. Whining, in the sense I mean, is not characterized by tone of voice, but is characterized by failing to even provide a *prima facie* reason for others to act differently.[26] A child may whine when asked to go to bed, but this is not, even on the face of it, a reason for a parent to adjust bedtime.

Moreover, individual displeasure is not usually, by itself, sufficient evidence that there is a positional vulnerability. The wrong or harm may be personal: it may be that the individual has been selected for mistreatment, but not on the basis of group membership. From the point of view of members of subordinate groups, this can be a moment of ambiguity:[27] Is it something about me (as an individual), or is this person really a sexist/racist/...? Am I in the wrong, or are they in the wrong? For those in the grip of ideology, it can be tempting to resolve the ambiguity by concluding that they have failed to live up to a set of presumed standards. A crucial moment in consciousness raising occurs when one gains evidence that the negative behavior is systematic,

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[25] In this section, I draw significantly on Anderson's pragmatism (2014, forthcoming).

[26] I mean *prima facie* and not *pro tanto*. The issue is whether, on the face of it, there is reason to think that the preference is one that should override the default. Some *prima facie* reasons do not, after further consideration, rise to the level of *pro tanto* reasons.

[27] Walton and Brady (2017) discuss several related phenomena, including attributional ambiguity, social-identity threat, and belonging uncertainty, all of which are subject to intensification because of a kind of looping effect (which they call 'recursion').

group-based, and unwarranted and, most importantly, realizes that they are not the problem.

Another explanation of the mistreatment may be that one is dealing with a bad actor rather than a systematic phenomenon. A bad actor may have problematic, but idiosyncratic, responses to individuals in a particular group; but this is not the phenomenon social critique seeks to address. For example, if an individual fails to take seriously people who wear baseball caps—due, perhaps, to a personal association formed long ago—it is important to become aware of this. This individual's bias may become apparent in the context of consciousness raising, but the goal of consciousness raising is to identify systematic and structural vulnerability and provide a critique of social practices rather than individuals. There are, of course, cases in which an individual bias is caused by broader structural phenomena—perhaps the clothing in question is a marker of social (racial, ethnic, class) status—and the individual's behavior is a symptom of a systematic problem. These are the sorts of examples that social critique can build on.

Because the inquiry is into social—structurally produced—injustices, and because it is difficult as an individual to determine what the social patterns are and how to interpret them (note that being a target of negative behavior can give rise to shame and reluctance to share the experience with others), the process from here forward is collective. This is not to say that an individual cannot, working alone, identify systematic injustice and articulate a warranted critique. But the method employed by such an individual would not be, strictly speaking, consciousness raising; and in order to move forward as part of a movement, the critique would have to give rise somehow to a broader, shared, paradigm shift. So an essential part of consciousness raising is group participation.

- Articulate the concern to others within the same (affected) social group; test the reaction against the experience of others. Consider: Is the problem individual or social? Am I over-reacting? Are others treating me this way because I am acting badly? Is the agent simply a bad actor? Is this occurring because of a *positional vulnerability*?
  o To achieve this, it is often important to create counter-publics where the subordinated can complain to each other without

being "corrected" by members of the dominant group, where they can be heard. (Mansbridge and Morris 2001, 7–8; Fraser 1990; Dotson 2011; Dotson 2014.)

o The "testing" process—both articulating the concern and responding to it—should involve forms of *bias reduction* and *consideration of epistemic injustice* of all sorts. Testimonial injustice and gaslighting are serious risks. As Elizabeth Anderson (forthcoming, 7) notes, there is compelling empirical evidence of systematic power biases: "Standing in a position of superior power over others tends to bias the moral sentiments of the powerful, in at least three ways: it reduces their compassion, activates their arrogance, and leads them to objectify subordinates." Because of the diversity and power differentials within subordinated groups, one may need to narrow one's community in order to adequately resolve whether there is a positional vulnerability and to identify the particular social position that renders one vulnerable to the harm or wrong in question.

o The process allows for, even encourages, hermeneutical invention. Individuals within the group can sometimes rely on existing identities, but in other cases new "identities" are called for (Mansbridge and Morris 2001, 9). Shared identities (Black feminist, queer) allow for a cultivation of trust, new language, shared interests, etc. Patterns can then become more visible and new hermeneutic resources developed ('smart-ugly,' 'White fragility,' 'mansplaining,' 'himpathy' (Manne 2017)).

A distinction feature of consciousness raising is that it involves trying on different perspectives, vocabularies, sensibilities, to notice facts that have been occluded—empirical facts, morally relevant facts, facts about possibilities. Shifts in orientation can be prompted by historical inquiry, the idiosyncratic and creative suggestions by individuals, existing oppositional cultures (#MeToo), local narrative traditions, or comparisons made possible by participation in different practical domains, e.g., work/home. One of the most effective tools of ideology is the systematic maintenance of ignorance (Mills 2007). Serene Khader makes this point in relation to Western normative hubris:

the idea that some people are uniquely situated to bring about moral progress draws on a certain way of construing the non-normative facts about the world. Indeed, one of the major contributions of decolonial, postcolonial, and transnational feminist theories has been to excavate the nonnormative (or not directly normative) ways of seeing that make imperialism seem legitimate, and even necessary. Missionary feminists take the West to be an agent of morality, and they preserve the deep psychological and ideological association between the West and morality by filtering away information that might reflect poorly on the West or its values.   (2019, 31)

o Develop and experiment with a new paradigm. This includes a new way of thinking, but is broader than a cognitive shift (Railton 2014). It includes new practices that call for different ways of interacting, different relationships, different affective responses. Counter-publics are another site for such experiments in living (Anderson 1991).

• *Develop a hypothesis* about the forms and causes of structural injustice—the particular practices that entrench subordination and block change. (See also Mansbridge and Morris 2001, 5.) This may involve targeting injustices in various domains: epistemic, material, legal, cultural.

For example, the feminist movement has challenged legal responses to marital rape and domestic violence, the material demands of women's "second shift," the wage gap, rape culture, and multiple forms of testimonial injustice. I hope there is no need to list the impressive and ongoing movement work calling attention to unjust practices that create positional vulnerability on the basis of class, race, sex/gender, disability, LGBTQ+ status, immigration, etc.

However, not all paradigm shifts lead to greater justice, and not all hypotheses about the causes of injustice are warranted. For example, Anti-Vaxxers believe that vaccines harm their children; Neo-Nazis believe that Jews (and other minority groups, including LGBTQ+) are

inferior "by nature" and responsible for degrading European culture. Consciousness-raising groups are, by design, focused on the experiences and interpretations of those who participate in the group. But the evidence available to them is limited and efforts must be made to draw on whatever empirical knowledge is obtainable.

- *Test the hypothesis.* Is the hypothesis generated from within the new paradigm empirically adequate? Is the hypothesis the best explanation of the injustices? Draw on critical social science. Revise the hypothesis, as needed.

Eric Olin Wright describes an emancipatory, or critical, social science:

It is not enough to show that people suffer in the world in which we live or that there are enormous inequalities in the extent to which people live flourishing lives. A scientific emancipatory theory must show that the explanation for this suffering and inequality lies in specific properties of institutions and social structures. The first task of emancipatory social science, therefore, is the diagnosis and critique of the causal processes that generate these harms.   (Wright 2010, 11)

This is a moment when the distinction between the project of illumination and the project of justification plays a crucial role. It is unlikely that Neo-Nazis or Anti-Vaxxers are going to be convinced by the empirical evidence that their hypotheses are false. This does not mean, however, that it is inappropriate for us to regard their challenges as misguided. Of course, in order to maintain political order and protect certain speech rights, we may be required to tolerate the expression of their views. But a demand that a practice be changed based on empirically refutable claims, or claims with false presuppositions, is not one that needs to be honored.

   One problem, of course, is that the project of empirical justification and refutation is more complicated than I have thus far suggested. Some of the claims made by misguided oppositional groups may not be empirically refutable. Existing social science may not be prepared to adopt the hermeneutical resources that arise through the process of consciousness raising (though this is part of the remit of critical social

science); and some of the claims may be irreducibly normative and constitute a fundamental moral disagreement (though see Moody-Adams 1997). But the process of epistemic validation is not foundation-alist. The best that any inquiry—empirical or not—can achieve is a holistic balancing of considerations. And scientific inquiry has managed to weather paradigm shifts before without giving up all standards (Kuhn 1962).

Part of what's at issue is the interpretation of reality: what matters and what doesn't, what is parallel to what, what narrative threads tie things together (Scheman 2017; Walker 2007; Crary 2009). Our modes of evaluation rely on a broad range of human capacities, not just the concepts that contemporary moral theory offers. Ideology can truncate these capacities; it can also teach us which to trust and which not. The aim of consciousness raising is not to reach certainty or to offer evidence that would be compelling to all who consider it. The task is to engage in epistemically responsible practices that push us beyond what is taken to be common sense, while also affording some degree of objectivity.[28] After testing and revisions of our hypothesis have reached a stable point, we—i.e., those undertaking consciousness raising—move to the moral claim.

- Articulate *a moral claim* challenging the practice, e.g., this (part of the) practice is unjust, oppressive, harmful, or wrongful.

On this view, an oppositional consciousness is warranted insofar as it moves from a "gut refusal" to a moral claim through a collective exam-ination of shared experience that is guided by sound epistemic norms. What norms are "sound" is not simply a matter of what the dominant culture recommends, but should be guided by best practices of social

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[28] Work on objectivity within critical theory (feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial) is extensive and challenges many of the traditional assumptions about what objectivity consists in. However, it does not, for the most part, reject the value of objectivity tout court. For example, the feminist empiricist literature, e.g., Longino 1990, recommends a procedural account whereby only communities that meet certain standards of diversity and critical engagement can count as objective. Generally, the goal is to provide a conception of objectivity that allows for values to play a legitimate role. Although my argument is seriously incomplete unless and until I provide some guidance on the criteria for objectivity, this gesture is the most I can accomplish in this chapter.

psychology, empirical investigation, critical epistemologies, and the lived experience of those in the subordinate group. The resulting claim is made on behalf of a social group and warranted through their collective efforts. Although, as Celikates argues, changes to the epistemic practices are required in order to loosen the grip of ideology, critique sometimes emerges in the collective response to one's situation through consciousness raising, and yields first-order normative claims.

An oppositional moral claim is not, simply by virtue of being the result of such a process, dispositive. It offers a *pro tanto* consideration for collective deliberation in a process of contentious politics. I take no stand here on the conditions for the legitimacy of the political process from this point forward.

6. Conclusion: The Normative Basis for Ideology Critique

Under conditions of ideology there is, by hypothesis, a range of social practices that oppress a group; however, some do not experience them as oppressive. Celikates raised three challenges for the possibility of ideology critique. We are now in a position to consider responses (I repeat the challenges from above).

(i) *Normative challenge:* What makes an ideology problematic? Are there objective moral truths by reference to which we can judge a social arrangement defective or unjust? If so, how do we gain knowledge of those truths?

There are moral truths about the injustice of particular historically specific practices and structures. The Atlantic slave trade was wrong. Nazi genocide was wrong. The current systematic violation of African-American civil rights is wrong. The global sex trade is wrong. These are not truths we learn from theory; theorizing is guided by these truths. And we know these things. These are not the controversial cases in which moral knowledge is at issue. More importantly for our purposes, these are not cases of ideological oppression; they are examples of grotesque repression. The challenge for ideology critique is not to demonstrate the obvious.

The difficult questions concern the critique of what we learn through being interpellated into practices, what becomes common sense to "good citizens." Think of the organization of capitalist society and assumptions concerning wage contracts, "right to work" slogans, the division of labor in the family, and such. In the process of consciousness raising, we develop an alternative description and explanation of a phenomenon that reveals morally relevant aspects that ideology masks. Once these aspects are revealed, or diagnosed, the phenomenon is no longer viewed as innocent or as commonly represented. For example, once one sees wage labor as the extraction of value from workers that is pocketed as profit by capitalists, i.e., once one sees capitalism as founded on exploit-ation, one cannot regard capitalism as a benign economic system. Our gaze shifts so that we find parallels between cases that horrify us and ones we take for granted, e.g., "wage slave," "private government" (Anderson 2017). Whether or not the parallels stand up to scrutiny is an open question. But if the parallels are sufficiently strong, or if we agree that the new interpretation better guides our practice, then we are entitled—epistemically and morally—to make a claim on its basis.

(ii) *Methodological or epistemological challenge:* From what stand-point does the critic speak?: "which insights of which agents—given that they usually do not constitute a homogeneous category—the critical theorist articulates" (2016, 4).

The critical theorist that I have described is embedded in a move-ment. She is not an "outsider" who is trying to convince the subordinate to rise up by providing them a theory. She is engaged with others in consciousness raising, and is articulating the insights that come from participation in it together. The claims that arise from the movement may not be ones that all members of the subordinated group support. But this does not show that the critique is misguided. It may be that the values the resistant rely on when making claims of being harmed or wronged are at odds with what others engaged in the practice value. But that does not delegitimize their claims. Social practices are cooperative enterprises, and if parties to the cooperation have reason to think that they are being treated unjustly, or their values are being undermined, there is a *pro tanto* reason for all parties involved to reconsider the practice.

(iii) *Explanatory challenge:* If an ideology functions at the level of a system, "what exactly holds the rather broad conglomeration of partly psychological, partly social mechanisms—from implicit biases via stereotypes to looping effects—together and makes them into elements of one ideology"? And how does critique disrupt the systematic injustice sustained by the ideology?

I don't agree with the assumption that "ideology functions at the level of a system." Although it is a common theme in Frankfurt School Critical Theory that the target of ideology critique is the socio-historical "totality," this is not actually true of many critiques that arise in the context of social movements. I do agree that social justice requires systematic change, but I see no reason to think that unjust systems are sustained by a single ideology that is the proper object of critique; on my view, ideologies are a collection of social meanings that may well materially or accidentally coincide to produce the problematic effects. This fragmentation is not a bug, but a feature of my view, since it also allows us to find fissures for leveraging critique.

Celikates asks a further question, however: How do the multiple mechanisms of systematic injustice work together to sustain it? This is an important question for deciding how to intervene in systems in order to change them. However, I don't believe that an account of ideology critique requires an answer to this question, or that requires us to provide identity conditions ideologies so that we can differentiate them.

I began the chapter by asking what entitles us to claim that a cultural technē—the set of social meanings that shape our practices—is ideological; in other words, how, under conditions of ideology, can we establish a basis for social critique? I've argued that given both the epistemic challenges posed by ideology and the historically situated task of challenging social practices, we should look for methods other developing an ideal theory of justice to undertake critique. I have suggested that there are multiple ways of pursuing critique, and have described the process of consciousness raising as a method that yields an alternative paradigm for understanding and engaging in social life. Although I have not given a full defense of CR as a basis for normative knowledge, I've pointed to some of its epistemic credentials that can warrant groups to make *pro tanto* claims on others concerning the

injustice of shared practices. Very broadly, I hope I have opened up some space within moral inquiry to consider the pernicious effects of ideology, not only on the social systems we embody but also on our theorizing, and also provided some resources from critical theory to think together about how we might go on.[29]

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