NATURE

Base

Social cons.

Leg. + pol. superst.

Forces
Wealth held by … | Perception | Reality
---|---|---
Top 20% | 59% | 84%
Bottom 40% | 9% | 0.3%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% of pop. that is ...</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of pop. that is immigrant</td>
<td>Perception</td>
<td>Reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview

1. What is ideology?
2. What do we want from a theory of ideology?
3. Ideology pre-Capital
4. Ideology in Capital (I): fetishism in general
5. Ideology in Capital (II): three particular forms
6. Questions
7. Looking ahead
What ideology is not

“Ideology” in the ...

1. ... conventional sense
   ➢ e.g. socialism, conservatism, etc.

2. ... epistemic sense
   ➢ e.g. error, “bullshit”, etc.

3. ... conspiratorial sense
   ➢ e.g. propaganda, manipulation, advertising, etc.
What ideology is

Two senses

1. Descriptive
   ➢ “Consciousness of social reality”

2. Pejorative
   ➢ “False consciousness [of reality]”
   ➢ “Consciousness of ‘false’ reality”

Three dimensions

a) Content
b) Cause
c) Function
What ideology is

Two questions

1. Normative
   - Which interests are “true”? Which reality “false”?

2. Epistemic
   - How can external observers avoid being subject to the same falsehood?
Overview

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What do we want?

1. **Explanatory mechanism**
   - How do ideological beliefs come about?

2. **Critical analysis**
   - How, if at all, can one critique such beliefs?
‘people are motivated to preserve the belief that existing social arrangements are fair, legitimate, justifiable, and necessary. … [P]eople who are most disadvantaged by the status quo … have the greatest psychological need to reduce ideological dissonance and … [are] most likely to support, defend, and justify existing social systems, authorities, and outcomes. … [P]eople who suffer the most from a given state of affairs are paradoxically the least likely to question, challenge, reject, or change it.’

System justification theory

1. Failure to recognise cases of **injustice**
   - (a) Belief in “just world” maintains sense of safety/control; (b) focus on procedures, not outcomes; (c) downward social comparison

2. Failure to recognise **causes** of injustice
   - (a) Self-blame; (b) other-blame

3. Failure to **resist**
   - (a) “Fatalistic pessimism”; (b) “pluralistic ignorance” leads to fear of individual embarrassment

4. **Justification** of status quo
   - (a) Stereotyping; (b) identification with oppressor; (c) “naturalization”
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Models of ideology

1. ‘Inversion’
   ➢ Is the inverted consciousness of an inverted world still an inversion?

2. ‘Means of mental production’
   ➢ Too close to the conspiratorial model?

3. ‘Being determines consciousness’
   ➢ Determines how? Through which mechanisms?

4. ‘Essence and appearance’
‘If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, these phenomenon arises as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process … We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.’

– Marx and Engels, The German Ideology (1845-46)
‘This state, this society, produces religion which is an inverted world consciousness, because they are an inverted world.’

– Marx, ‘Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right’ (1843)
‘That in their appearance things are often presented in an inverted way is something fairly familiar in every science, apart from political economy’

– Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 677
Mental Production

‘The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas ... The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production ... Division of labour only becomes truly such ... when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness can really flatter itself that it is ... “pure” theory, [e.g.] theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.’

– Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* (1845-46)
Forces of production

Legal and political superstructure

Social consciousness

Relations of production

Forces of production
'Being determines consciousness.

‘The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis ... to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general. ... It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness.’

– Marx, 1859 Preface
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Fetishism in general

To treat a thing as:
1. possessing a certain property (in a certain way), when:
2. it does not possess that property (in that way)

NB: possible that the thing does indeed possess that property, but just not possess it in that way
- e.g. believed to be necessary or natural or intrinsic or permanent, when only contingent or artificial or extrinsic or temporary
1. Seventh grade girls who wear crop-tops to school are cute

2. Seventh grade girls who wear track suits to school are dorks

‘it is true that p so you should believe p; but believing p makes it true, and it would be better if p weren’t true; so you shouldn’t believe p.’

– Haslanger, Resisting Reality, p. 410
Fetishism in particular

1. **Mystification** – distorts reality
   a) **Reification** – relational properties of agents viewed as intrinsic properties of things
      ➢ e.g. fetishism of commodity; fetishism of capital
   b) **Naturalization** – social reality viewed as natural reality
      ➢ e.g. capitalism as ‘natural’

2. **Pure illusion** – conceals reality
   ➢ e.g. wages conceal unpaid labour
   ➢ e.g. labour contracts conceal unfree labour
Reification

‘The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labour themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. … [T]he definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here, for them, the fantastic form of a relation between things.’

– Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 164-65
Naturalization

‘The law of capitalist accumulation [is] mystified by the economists into a supposed law of nature ... The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws. ... The silent compulsion of economic relations sets the seal on the domination of the capitalist over the worker. Direct extra-economic force is still of course used, but only in exceptional cases.’

– Marx, Capital, vol. 1, pp. 771, 899
'The wage-form ... extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid labour and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour. Under the corvée system it is different. There the labour of the serf for himself, and his compulsory labour for the lord ... are demarcated very clearly ... In wage-labour ... the money relation conceals the uncompensated labour ... All the notions of justice held by both the worker and the capitalist, all the mystifications of the capitalist mode of production, all capitalism's illusions about freedom, all the apologetic tricks of vulgar economics, have as their basis [this] form of appearance ..., which makes the actual relation invisible, and indeed presents to the eye the precise opposite of that relation.'

– Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 680
‘In the market, as owner of the commodity “labour-power”, [the worker] stood fact to face with other owners of commodities, one owner against another owner. The contract by which he sold his labour-power to the capitalist proved in black and white … that he was free to dispose of himself. But when the transaction was concluded, it was discovered that he was no “free agent”, that the period of time for which he is free to sell his labour-power is the period of time for which he is forced to sell it … The Roman slave was held by chains; the wage-labourer is bound to his owner by invisible threads. The appearance of independence is maintained by a constant change in the person of the individual employer, and by the legal fiction of a contract.’

– Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, pp. 415, 719
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Questions

1. Explanatory mechanisms
   - How do distorted beliefs come about?
   - Do we need controversial notions like ideology to explain oppression?

2. Epistemological concerns
   - How can social scientists avoid succumbing to the distortions they diagnose?
   - If distortions can be diagnosed, why can’t they be immediately and permanently dissolved?

3. Metaphysical concerns
   - How can reality itself be ‘illusory’ or ‘false’?
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Summing-up

What is ideology?
- Descriptive and pejorative

How does ideology work?
- Mechanisms of ideological transmission
- How can reality itself be ‘illusory’?

How does fetishism work?
- Reification, naturalization, illusion (wages/contracts)
- How can observers penetrate these illusions?
Looking ahead

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Chapters in Capital, vol. 1</th>
<th>Pages (in Penguin edn.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 2: History</td>
<td>Part 8 (chs. 26-33)</td>
<td>873-943 (= 70pp.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 3: Ideology</td>
<td>Chs. 1-2</td>
<td>125-188 (= 63pp.)</td>
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<td><strong>Week 4: Alienation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chs. 2-7</strong></td>
<td><strong>188-307 (= 119pp.)</strong></td>
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<td>Week 5: Exploitation</td>
<td>Chs. 8-12</td>
<td>307-429 (= 122pp.)</td>
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<td>Week 6: Domination</td>
<td>Chs. 13-15</td>
<td>429-643 (= 214pp.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7: Liberalism</td>
<td>Chs. 16-24</td>
<td>643-762 (= 119pp.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8: Feminism</td>
<td>Ch. 25</td>
<td>762-873 (= 121pp.)</td>
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References

- Sally Haslanger, ‘“But Mom, Crop Tops Are Cute!” Social Knowledge, Social Structure, and Ideology Critique’, *Philosophical Issues* 17 (2007) and in her *Resisting Reality* (OUP, 2012)