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Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground

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1. Introduction[1]

Are sagging pants cool? Are cows food? Are women more submissive than men? Are blacks more

criminal than whites? Taking the social world at face value, many people would be tempted to answer

these questions in the affirmative. And if challenged, they can point to facts that support their answers.

But there is something wrong about the affirmative answers. I deny that sagging pants are cool, cows are

food, women are more submissive than men, and blacks are more criminal than whites. And moreover, I

maintain that there is an objective basis for denying these claims even though the facts seem to support

the face value affirmative response. But how can that be? We all know that male urban youth can barely

walk with their pants belted around their thighs, that beef is a staple in the American diet, that blacks are

incarcerated in the United States at a much higher rate than any other race, and that women defer to men

in both work and family life. How could a denial of these facts be justified?

In this paper I will sketch a way to interpret claims such as the ones listed in the previous

paragraph that shows how they convey more than they seem. To do so, I will draw on recent ideas in the

philosophy of language and metaphysics to show how the assertion of a generic claim of the sort in

question ordinarily permits one to infer that the fact in question obtains by virtue of something

specifically about the subject so described, i.e., about women, or blacks, or sagging pants. In the examples

I've offered, however, this implication is unwarranted. The facts in question obtain by virtue of broad

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system of social relations within which the subjects are situated, and are not grounded in intrinsic or dispositional features of the subjects themselves. At least this is what social constructionists undertake to establish. The background relations are obscured, however, and as a result, the assertion is at least systematically misleading; a denial functions to block the problematic implication. Revealing such implications or presuppositions and blocking them is a crucial part of ideology critique.

2. Ideology

What is ideology and how does it pose a philosophical problem? There is much disagreement over the nature of ideology, yet in the most basic sense ideologies are representations of social life that serve in some way to undergird social practices.[2] There is an important sense in which social structures are not imposed upon us, for they are constituted by our everyday choices and behaviors. We are not simply cogs in structures of subordination, we enact them. And something about how we represent the world is both a constitutive part of that enactment and keeps it going.[3] Comparing the Foucauldian notion of *discourse* with the more traditional concept of *ideology*, Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt argue that

> …ideology and discourse refer to pretty much the same aspect of social life – the idea that human individuals participate in forms of understanding, comprehension or consciousness of the relations and activities in which they are involved...This consciousness is borne through language and other systems of signs, it is transmitted between people and institutions and, perhaps most important of all, it makes a difference; that is, the way in which people comprehend and make sense of the social world has consequences for the direction and character of their action and inaction. Both 'discourse' and 'ideology' refer to these aspects of social life. (474; see also McCarthy 440)

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[2] Especially useful discussions of the notion of ideology include Geuss, Fields, McCarthy, Purvis and Hunt, and Shelby.

[3] Although there is much controversy over the question whether "ideology" or the Foucauldian notion of "discourse" is better suited to the role described here, the controversies are not directly relevant to my purposes. Moreover, there seems to be a core notion shared by both. See Purvis and Hunt.

Ideology in this broad sense—sometimes referred to as the descriptive sense—is pervasive and unavoidable.   The term 'ideology' is also sometimes used in a narrower and pejorative sense to refer to representations of the relevant sort that are somehow misguided, e.g., by being contrary to the real interests of an agent or group of agents.[4]   As I will be using the term, however, ideology is the background cognitive and affective frame that gives actions and reactions meaning within a social system and contributes to its survival.

I have argued elsewhere that it is not useful to think of ideology as a set of beliefs, understood as discrete and determinate propositional attitudes, though an ideology may include such attitudes ("But Mom"). In addition to beliefs, the ideology that undergirds social practices must include more primitive dispositions, habits, and a broader range of attitudes than just belief. (See also Langton, "Beyond Belief".) The less belief-like form of ideology is sometimes referred to as 'hegemony':

> Ideology and hegemony are opposite ends of a continuum…At one end…'ideology' is used to
> refer to struggles to establish dominant meanings and to make justice claims on the basis of
> alternative ideologies…At the other end…the term 'hegemony' is used to refer to situations
> where meanings are so embedded that representational and institutionalized power is invisible.
> (Silbey 276)

Although Silbey's quote is a bit unclear on this point, the idea is that ideologies can be more or less contested, more or less hegemonic. The more hegemonic, the less conscious and less articulate they are.

There are at least two sets of philosophical challenges posed by the phenomenon of ideology. The first concerns how ideology, usually without our awareness, constitutes the social background of our action. This is partly an empirical question that requires work in psychology and sociology to answer. But an adequate theory of ideology must also explicate how individuals know the collectively constituted

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[4] Sometimes ideologies are taken to be sets of beliefs, sometimes forms of "practical consciousness," that reside in the minds of individual agents; sometimes they are cultural phenomena presupposed somehow in collective social life; sometimes they are explicit theories articulated by politicians, philosophers and religious figures, among others. The causal or explanatory role of ideology within a broader social theory is also unclear (Geuss, Elster 468-9, Marx 36-7, Althusser).

framework for action, how actions draw on that framework to give them meaning, and how the framework can be contested and resisted. The second set of challenges concerns the normative evaluation of ideology. As mentioned, not all ideologies are pernicious, and ideology, as I'm using the term, is necessary for there to be any social coordination, both just and unjust. Because some ideologies constitute and sustain unjust social structures, there are normative questions about how to evaluate them. Some of these questions will be epistemic: How do we evaluate the adequacy of an ideology in relation to how the world actually is? Some questions will be moral and political: Are the social structures that a given ideology constitutes and sustains just?

This paper engages the first set of challenges. It considers what the relationship is between ideology and social structures, and how an ideology can become hegemonic and so invisible to those who employ it as they collectively constitute their social milieu. There are serious epistemic problems in asking how ideology critique is even possible, for once we constitute our social world, descriptions of it not only appear true, but are true. For example, if laws concerning marriage require that the parties to the marriage be one man and one woman, then it is true that marriage cannot occur between two men or two women, and virtually anyone living within that the social milieu is justified in believing this: it constitutes important social knowledge. When heteronormative ideology is hegemonic, the 'cannot' in this claim not only describes the boundaries of our legal system and the world as we know it, but also most of our imaginations. Similarly, under conditions of male dominance, women are, in fact, more submissive than men. This is a true generalization and those who live under male dominance are justified in believing it. But again, if male dominance is hegemonic, this seems not only to describe how women happen to be, but more than this: how women *are*. Again, our imaginations are foreclosed. But the issue isn't just one of imagination: it concerns the adequacy of our frameworks for interpreting and constituting the social world.

When ideologies become hegemonic, their effects blend into and, in an important sense, become part of, the natural world, so we no longer see them as social. Hegemonic ideology and the structures it constitutes are extremely hard to change. Social scientists and psychologists offer important resources for

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revealing the workings of hegemony. But the work of philosophers and linguists is also necessary, for the

primary medium of social life is language: it forms the basis for intentional action, shared meaning, and

collective organization. Attention to the ambiguities and slippages between different linguistic forms is

useful in explaining how ideas become entrenched and social practices seem natural and inevitable. Or at

least this is what I will argue in what follows.

3. Generics, Semantics and Pragmatics

Let us return now to the statements with which we began. What is being claimed when someone says,

'women are more submissive (nurturing, cooperative, sensitive…) than men'? Surely not *all* women are

more submissive than *all*, or even *most*, men. Is the claim intentionally vague? Is it elliptical for a

different claim? In fact, generalizations that omit quantifiers such as 'some,' 'all,' or 'many' fall into the

linguistic category of generics, and generics call for a quite different analysis than ordinary quantified

statements. Plausibly, "generic sentences are not about some specific instances of the category mentioned

in the [subject], but rather about the category in general" (Leslie, "Generics" 21).[5] We are not

abbreviating an enumeration of cases, but are saying something about the group as an open-ended class.

In considering generics, we might ask: what is the *meaning* of a generic? Or, we might ask, what

are generics typically used to say? The study of meaning is semantics. The study of what we say is

pragmatics: "Pragmatics is the study of linguistic acts and the contexts in which they are performed.

There are two major types of problem to be solved within pragmatics: first, to define interesting types of

speech acts and speech products; second, to characterize the features of the speech context which help

determine which proposition is expressed by a given sentence" (Stalnaker, "Pragmatics" 275). I propose

that attention to the pragmatics of typical generics will illuminate ways in which politically salient ones

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[5] Note that this is a different claim from one saying that the generic is about the kind, e.g., dodos are extinct. See Leslie, "Generics" 5, fn3. Generics seem to be concerned with open-ended generalizations. Enumerative generalizations and open-ended generalizations differ in ways that matter for confirmation and induction: 'this coin in my pocket is silver' doesn't inductively confirm 'all coins in my pocket are silver' because it doesn't lend credibility to the untested cases. In addition, there are a number of issues concerning the use of bare plurals that deserve consideration (Carlson). In some cases, bare plurals seem to have existential rather than generalizing force, e.g., 'he grew tomatoes in that plot,' or 'flour moths have invaded my kitchen.' I will only be considering the generic bare plural.

can seriously mislead. This, in turn, will give us resources to think further about the role of social

constructionist claims as part of ideology critique. My goal in this part of the paper is to lay out

components of one possible account of generics so that we see how they might mislead in a small range

of cases; we'll then turn in the second part to consider what social consequences it might have. The tools

we will need first are the notion of a generic, a generic essence, and the common ground of a

conversation.

a. Generics

The first hypothesis I'd like us to consider is that with generics of the form Ks are F ('tigers have

stripes'), or K_1s are more G than K_2s ('tigers are more dangerous than cheetahs') there is normally an

implication that the connection between the Ks and F or G holds primarily by virtue of some important

fact about the Ks *as such*.[6] This is a very broad claim that I will not be able to support because of the

complexity of cases; for simplicity I will focus on non-comparatives such as 'tigers have stripes,' 'women

are submissive (nurturing, cooperative),' 'blacks are criminal (violent, hostile),' and 'sagging pants are

cool,' rather than statements that explicitly compare kinds or groups.

As mentioned above, generics of the form Ks are F cannot be understood as elliptical

quantifications, for in contrast to quantifications,

> [Generics'] truth conditions seem to be enormously complex. Why, for example, is 'birds lay
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> eggs' true, while 'birds are female' is false? It is, after all, only the female birds that lay eggs.
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> And why is 'mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus' true, and 'books are paperbacks' false given
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> that less than one percent of mosquitoes carry the virus while over eighty percent of books are
>
> paperbacks? Such puzzling examples abound. (Leslie, "Original Sin" 2)

Although there is no consensus on the best account of generics, Sarah-Jane Leslie suggests convincingly

that generics are the expression of a very primitive "default mode of generalizing," that picks up on

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[6] I'm actually not sure whether it is better to consider it an implication or a presupposition. I'm willing to adjust my account to accommodate evidence for either. My goal in this paper is programmatic and I am aware that much more work needs to be done on the details.

significant or striking properties and links them to a psychologically salient kind. Very roughly, the idea

is that we have a very basic capacity to sort the world into kinds of things that seem to behave in similar

ways and generics highlight striking or important features that members of these kinds typically exhibit.

In exploring this idea, we must be sensitive to different kinds of generalizations. For example,

Prasada and Dillingham ("Principled" and "Representation") highlight two importantly different relations

between the kinds and the properties of concern in generics:

> Principled connections involve properties that are determined by the kind of thing something is
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> (e.g. having four legs for a dog). Statistical connections involve properties that are not determined
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> by the kind of thing something is, but that are highly prevalent connections to the kind, e.g., being
>
> red for a barn. Principled connections are proposed to support formal explanations (Fido has four
>
> legs because he is a dog), normative expectations (Fido should have four legs and has something
>
> wrong with him if he doesn't), and the expectation that the property will generally be highly
>
> prevalent (most dogs have four legs). (Leslie, et al, "Conceptual" 479)

Leslie notes that this distinction between principled and statistical connections, although important, is not

sufficient, by itself, to accommodate the range of different generics, for, as noted above, there are true

generics that do not ascribe (and are not presumed to ascribe) a prevalent property to the kind, e.g.,

'Ducks lay eggs'.

On Leslie's view, there are three kinds of cases ("Generics" 43):

- *Characteristic generics:* Cases such as "tigers have stripes" and "dogs have four legs" assert more

  than a statistical correlation between tigers and stripes. They purport to tell us what is characteristic

  of the kind, what a good example of the kind will exhibit.[7] But how, then, should we understand

  cases such as 'birds lay eggs' or even 'bees lay eggs' even if the majority of the kind don't lay eggs,

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[7] In ("Generics" 43), Leslie suggests that if the attributed property is true of almost all of the kind (almost all tigers have stripes), and there are no positive counterinstances (it is not the case that the tigers who don't have stripes have bold pink spots), then the characteristic generic is true. However, the role of positive counterinstances is more complex, for there may be abnormal counterinstances (albino tigers) that do not defeat the generalization (Leslie, private communication), so the better account will need to rely on some notion of what's a good example of the kind.

and cases such as 'police officers fight crime' even if there is no crime in their district? Leslie

proposes that we have background knowledge that

> provides an outline of information to be gathered about a new kind; characteristic
>
> dimensions provide a learner with an informational template. When a value is found for
>
> a characteristic dimension of a kind, it is hereby generalized to the kind by the basic
>
> generalization mechanism, and so the generic that predicates that property of the kind is
>
> accepted. Ducks, being an animal kind, has reproduction as a characteristic dimension,
>
> so the inductive learner looks for a value to fill the dimension; even limited experience
>
> will deliver *laying eggs* as the appropriate value*,* and so the property is generalized to the
>
> kind and 'ducks lay eggs' is accepted as true. ("Generics" 32-3)

In the case of artifacts, institutions, and social kinds, the template has us look for information

about the function or purpose of the kind and this explains the truth of statements such as 'police

officers fight crime' ("Generics" 43).

- *Striking property generics:* How can we accommodate such cases as 'mosquitoes carry the West Nile

    virus,' even though only a small fraction do, and those that do are not plausibly characteristic of their

    kind? In such cases, she maintains, "The sentence attributes harmful, dangerous, or appalling

    properties to the kind. More generally, if the property in question is the sort of property of which one

    would be well served to be forewarned, even if there were only a small chance of encountering it,

    then generic attributions of the property are intuitively true" ("Generics" 15).

    Leslie goes on to suggest that in order for these generics to be true, being a member of the kind

    must be a reasonably good predictor of the striking property, and members that don't have the

    property must be disposed, under the right circumstances, to have it[8] ("Generics" 41).

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[8] A different hypothesis worth considering is that the striking property generics are picking out a feature that is
remarkable or important in the context. This differs from Leslie's proposal in two ways: the feature may not be
dangerous or harmful, and what properties are eligible vary from context to context. For example, Cohen ("Think

- *Majority generics:* Speakers are also willing to assent to weaker generics such as "cars have radios" or "barns are red" that only capture statistical or enumerative generalizations. However, speakers find these less natural than characteristic generics ("Conceptual" 480), and resist alternative syntactic forms for the generic, e.g., 'a tiger has stripes' is considered more natural than 'a barn is red' ("Conceptual" 482, 484).

Leslie's account of generics is controversial (and also more complicated than I have suggested here[9]), but for my purposes, it is not necessary to accept her account in full detail, for my emphasis will be on pragmatics; rather than asking what generics *mean,* or under what conditions they are *true*, we are asking: what do we use generic statements to say? The point to take from Leslie is that generics are a distinctive kind of statement that should not be treated as ordinary quantified statements, and that they draw heavily on background knowledge and patterns of inference to highlight a significant property (either characteristic, striking, or common) of a kind.

b. Essences, Natures, and Coincidences

The notion of essence has a complicated and sometimes problematic history. Within the Aristotelian tradition, each member of a genuine kind has an essence or nature which consists of a set of intrinsic qualities that explains the characteristic behavior of things of that kind. An individual tiger has a nature without which that tiger could not be the individual it is. All full members of the kind have the essence though they may fail to fully exhibit it due to interfering circumstances, e.g., an injured or deformed tiger

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Generic!") provides a contrastive account on which (roughly) generics are true just in case they attribute a property to a kind that is more likely to hold of members of that kind than the alternative that is salient in the context. Leslie argues against Cohen's account in ("Generics" 10-12), though others defend versions of it (Carr, "Generics").

[9] For example, Leslie rightly points out that there is an asymmetry in how generics are responsive to counterinstances. Recall that 'birds lay eggs' is true, even though there are a substantial number of counterexamples (the male and non-fertile female birds). 'Birds are female,' however, is false, even though there are almost as many counterexamples. Leslie proposes that in the case of 'birds are female,' the non-female birds manifest a positive alternative, viz., being male, whereas in the 'birds lay eggs' case, it is not the case that there is another form of reproduction in place of laying eggs. If some birds gave birth to live young, then 'birds lay eggs' would be false. "There is an intuitive difference between simply lacking a feature and lacking it in virtue of having another, equally memorable, feature instead" ("Generics" 35). She draws the conclusion that generics are highly sensitive to whether the counterinstances to the claim are *positive* or *negative* (33-37).

or a tiger in a zoo may not exhibit all of the characteristic traits of healthy tigers in the wild, but it is still part of their nature to do so – they would have if they had been in the right circumstances.[10]

However, the fundamental notion of essence within this tradition is of a definable type or kind.[11] When we ask what it is to be a human being, or an artichoke, we are looking for the essence of the kind *human being* or *artichoke*. This notion of essence has been called *generic essence* to distinguish it from *objectual* essence. So there are two ways of "having" an essence. Kinds "have$_g$" an essence that constitutes what it is to be of that kind; individuals are instantiations of this kind-essence and "have$_o$" the kind-essence as their individual essence.

This notion of generic essence can then be extended beyond genuine kinds, i.e., kinds that constitute the being of their members, to properties and ways of being more generally. We can ask not only what it is to be a human being, but what it is to be a mother, to be a citizen of the United States, or to be just. For example, when Plato raises the issue in *The Republic* (Bk II) whether justice benefits the just person, he is careful to distinguish the claim that justice accidentally benefits the just person in cases where society rewards justice, and the claim that justice by its very nature benefits, and would do so even if being just accrued no social rewards. The suggestion is that justice has a (generic) essence, even if nothing is (objectually) essentially just.

Following Kit Fine and Fabrice Correia, it is useful to consider essentialist statements as making a claim about the ground of certain facts in natures. On this approach, if G is part of the generic essence of F, just in case:

Fs are G by virtue of the nature of F-ing.

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[10] In contemporary metaphysics, this notion of *objectual* essence (the essence of objects) has been reframed in terms of an object's essential or necessary properties. An object's essential properties are all and only those it could not exist without; its accidental properties are those that it has but might not have had. So, I am essentially a living being, but only accidentally a mother. I am interested in notions of essence that are *not* best understood as a set of necessary properties but are closer to the idea of natures that may be realized more or less fully (Fine, Correia).

[11] In Aristotle's terms, the substantial form *is* the essence, the matter *has* the essence, and the matter together with the essence constitutes the material object. The species is the matter and form "taken generally." I'm using the term 'kind' in the first part of this paragraph as roughly equivalent to 'substantial form,' but I quickly revert to a more ordinary notion of 'kind.'

G-ing is something Fs do by virtue of what it is to be an F.

It is true in virtue of what it is to F, that Fs are G.

It is important to emphasize that in the sense intended here, the generic essence of F is not to be understood simply in terms of what is entailed by being F, for essences are invoked as part of an explanatory project that assumes that some properties are prior (metaphysically, epistemically) to others (Fine). Moreover, if we grant that natures may not always be fully realized (remember the injured tiger), statements of generic essence may not even support true universal generalizations, much less necessary generalizations. Even if Fs are by nature G, it may not be that every case of F is a case of G, for there may be interfering conditions; Fs, however, are typically G, due to what it is to be F.

Ordinary English speakers don't often use the term 'essence,' and although the term 'nature,' as in 'a dog's nature,' is more common, we seem to find other ways of speaking about natures. Consider, claims such as, 'fish swim' or 'lilacs bloom in May.' A speaker uttering the former would seem to be suggesting that there is an important connection between being a fish and being able to swim, that the ability is somehow grounded in what it is to be a fish; similarly for lilacs and their blooming season. It appears, now, that there is a close connection between the kind of generalization we find in at least some generics (F-ing is a characteristic dimension of Ks; F-ing is striking and Ks are disposed to F; being a K is a good predictor for being F) and claims concerning generic essence. We will return to consider this connection shortly.

c. Common Ground

In order for us to communicate, we must take certain things for granted as background to our conversation, i.e., we must presuppose certain things as *common ground* (Stalnaker, "Common Ground" 701; see also Stalnaker, "Context", and Lewis). Stalnaker suggests that "to presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to assume that others involved in the context do the same….Presuppositions are propositions implicitly *supposed* before the relevant linguistic business is transacted" ("Common Ground" 279-80). In the simplest case the common ground consists of the shared

beliefs of the parties to the conversation; the belief may be wholly tacit, however, "presuppositions are probably best viewed as complex dispositions which are manifested in linguistic behavior," ("Pragmatics" 279) and in the more complex cases involve something less than full belief, e.g., assumption, pretense, presumption ("Common Ground" 704).[12]

The common ground of a conversation is constantly changing, for as one party to the conversation speaks, the other(s) will at least adjust their beliefs to include the fact that the first party spoke. Typically other beliefs will change as well. For example, if I say to you "I'm sorry I can't make it to the 5:00pm meeting because I need to pick up my son at the campus daycare," you will probably come to believe not only that I will be absent from the meeting but also that I have a preschool aged son attending the daycare (understanding 'preschool' to cover ages prior to kindergarten). Conversation conveys information by means other than by what is explicitly stated.

One way inexplicit communication occurs is through *implicature,* another through *presupposition accommodation*. The idea is that in ordinary conversations in which we judge each other to be competent and cooperative, we aim to achieve and maintain equilibrium in the common ground, to share presuppositions at least for the purposes of the conversation.[13] For example, if it is clear from my utterance that I am presupposing something, then unless you have reason to suspect my sincerity or credibility, you can legitimately infer the proposition I presuppose, and I can assume that the common ground has adjusted to include my presupposition, unless you indicate otherwise. In conversation, we rely on general maxims that govern the common ground, but what constitutes the common ground is also always up for constant renegotiation. For example, if, after hearing my excuse for not being at the meeting, you reply, "I thought your children were teenagers," this indicates hesitation to accept the

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[12] Rae Langton has argued that presupposition accommodation may also require accommodation of desire and other attitudes. See Langton, "Beyond Belief".

[13] It is a difficult and contested matter how to distinguish what enters the common ground through implicature and what enters through presupposition. For my purposes, little hinges on this; what matters is that the common ground can be updated in ways that are not explicit and need not even be noticed by the audience or speaker. I will use the model of implicature to account for the examples we're looking at, but it may be that they are better handled differently.

proposition 'Sally has a preschool aged son,' into the common ground. We need to backtrack and repair the common ground. In response, I might confirm that I do in fact have a preschooler, or clarify, "You're right, he is volunteering at the daycare during spring break." At that point, the common ground may be further updated with new beliefs about my teenaged son. Similarly, updating and correction of common ground happens through implicature. If I write a letter of recommendation to graduate school for a student in my class and spend most of the letter expressing enthusiasm about his handwriting, you may infer that I do not think well of him as a philosopher (Grice). Often we say more by what we don't say than by what we do.

Whenever something said in conversation introduces a new element into the common ground, the interlocutor has the option of blocking the move. Lewis uses the metaphor of "scorekeeping in a language game" to capture the dynamic process of updating. Negation is one device for blocking. Even if a statement made in conversation is literally true, one can deny the statement as a way to block what the statement conveys (either the implicature, or the presupposition); this is known as metalinguistic negation (Horn).[14] A standard example is, "He's not meeting a woman, he's meeting his wife!" As I will explain more fully as we proceed, my point in saying that we should deny the generics with which we began (Are sagging pants cool? Are cows food? Are women more submissive than men? Are blacks more criminal than whites?) is that an assertion of them pragmatically implicates a falsehood, and our metalinguistic denial blocks that falsehood from entering the common ground.

It is worth emphasizing that the updating of the common ground is not a matter of what is *semantically* presupposed or implied by the proposition expressed by the speaker. Rather, common ground is a *pragmatic* notion that concerns what is presupposed by the speaker and what is implicated, given certain conversational maxims, by her utterance. Updating of the common ground is a dynamic process that depends on the particular conversation; however, there is considerable social pressure on

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[14] I recommend Horn (esp. §2) for a full discussion of metalinguistic negation with examples of some interest to feminists, e.g., "She's not a lady, she's a woman!" or "She's not an uppity broad, she's a strong, vibrant woman!"

those who want to communicate smoothly with others to conform to the common ground of those around them.

d. Generics and Implication

We are now in a position to begin putting the pieces together. In uttering a generalization, one has several options. One can express the generalization using a quantified statement such as

All [most/some] Fs are G.

One can also use a generic:

Fs are G.

In choosing a generic, it appears that one is saying *of a kind of thing,* specified in the statement, that its members are, or are disposed to be G (or to G) *by virtue of being of that kind.*[15] The speaker conveys that being G is somehow rooted in what it is to be an F: G-ing is what Fs do (or are disposed to do) by virtue of being F. This locates the source of the Gness in being (an) F.[16]

One might develop the pragmatics in a number of ways. I propose the following. It seems that in the case of at least some generics, the semantics requires that there is some non-accidental or non-coincidental connection between the Fs and being G (recall the truth conditions for both characteristic generics and striking generics). The details may plausibly be spelled out along the lines Leslie suggests.[17] However, given the usefulness and universality of the default mode of generalizing that Leslie describes, if one asserts that Fs are G, then it is implicated that under "normal" circumstances it is something about

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[15] This seems a quite straightforward claim for template generics and striking generics; it is less clear for ordinary generics. It is more plausible if the subject of the ordinary generic is a basic-level kind (Leslie, "Generics"), and referred to by a term that makes the kind explicit. In such cases the correlation between the kind and the selected property seems to call for explanation in terms of the kind's nature.

[16] More needs to be said about what it is to be a "source" of truth. I'm drawing on Fine.

[17] The semantics of generics may be as complex as Leslie describes, or much simpler. I'm sympathetic with Leslie's view but I am not taking a stand on the semantics here. I believe that my claims about the pragmatics are compatible with several different accounts of the semantics.

being an F that makes an F a G, that Fs *as such* are disposed to be G.[18] This is a pragmatic implicature

and can normally be defeated or canceled. But if unchallenged, it licenses the inference from the generic

Fs are G to a claim of generic essence: Fs are G by virtue of what it is to be (an) F. In conversations

where we credit our interlocutor with the ability to recognize this default inference, we take their

utterance of, say, 'tigers are striped," to introduce into the common ground the further claim 'tigers are

striped by virtue of what it is to be a tiger.'

To avoid confusion, let's look at some other examples. Consider the claims:

a) Women have noses.[19]

This, it seems, is true. Most women have noses, it is not the case that those women who lack noses have

trunks or antennae instead, and it is not a mere accident that a woman has a nose. However, it is also a

very weird thing to say unless there is some doubt raised. It would be tempting, I think, if someone

offered (a) as an insight to reply, "Yes, well, humans have noses." Such a reply is apt because an

assertion of (a) implicates that there is something special about women *as such* that explains their having

noses. But this presumption is false. The reply corrects the implication without denying the truth of the

claim.

Consider another claim that seems to pose a challenge for my account:

b) Doberman's have pointy ears.[20]

As I hear (b), it would depend significantly on context whether it would prompt resistance. On one hand,

it seems apt to respond to (b), "They don't *really* have pointy ears. Their ears are cropped when they are

puppies." But it might be clear from context that the question is how they typically appear as adult dogs,

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[18] More should be said about why it is plausible that this presupposition or implicature is added to the common ground. Relevant support includes (i) further arguments for the value of the default mode of generalization and its connection to generics, (ii) further arguments concerning the relation between generics and inductive inference, (iii) the application of Gricean maxims of relevance and quantity, and (iv) the idea that the grammatically simpler a statement, the more paradigmatic the phenomenon described is implicated to be (Levinson).

[19] This example was raised and discussed in a graduate seminar devoted to this topic at MIT. My memory does not allow me to thank each individual for their particular contribution, so thanks to the group (all mentioned in the paper's acknowledgements) for help with this case.

[20] Thanks to Mahrad Almotahari for this example.

in which case there would be no reason to resist. In the latter case, (b) is assertable because it is not a coincidence when one comes across an adult Doberman that it will have pointy ears; it is to be expected because that is the standard for the breed. Given, however, that these days the standard is being challenged, it would also be reasonable for someone to reply, "As a matter of fact, Dobermans have all sizes and shapes of ears," suggesting not only that it is not universal, but that in fact a dog's being a Doberman is not a good basis for predicting that it will have pointy ears because the standard is contested. As I hear it, however, in ordinary cases, (b) seems at least confusing and demands clarification because the default implication is that Dobermans, by nature, have pointy ears.

Finally, let us consider:

c) Bachelors are unmarried.

Claim (c) is surely true. However, the assertion of (c) does not allow us to infer of John, who is a bachelor, that he is *by nature* unmarried. That would be to take the implication relevant to (c) to be a presumption of objectual essence, i.e., that the individuals of the kind have as part of their essence the property expressed by the predicate. The account I have proposed takes the presumption to concern the nature of the kind or type, what I've been calling the generic essence. The relevant inference is that bachelors, as such, i.e., insofar as they are bachelors, are unmarried; and this is true.

In light of this hypothesis about the pragmatic effect of generics, let's consider the statements we started with:

1) Sagging pants are cool.

2) Cows are food.

3) Women are submissive (nurturing, cooperative).

4) Blacks are violent (criminal, dangerous).

Case (1): We all know that sagging pants are only cool, insofar as they are, by virtue of being viewed as such by an in-group. But those who experience them as cool, experience *them* as cool. The

coolness seems to have its source in the particular cut, hang, whatever, of the pants. Fashion examples are useful because for those even the least bit sophisticated, the temptation to regard the coolness of the fashion as having its source in the objects is unstable; although we can find ourselves drawn into the idea, we can also easily resist it by recognizing that the coolness is a relational fact derived from the social context. When we see through the essentializing of fashion, we need not deny the claim that sagging pants are cool, for we can allow the implicature to enter the common ground without actually believing it or even believing that our interlocutor believes it (Stalnaker, "Common Ground" section 5). It may be a presupposition we are willing to pretend is true for the purposes of the conversation.

An importantly similar, but more complicated, example[21] is:

1b) Women wear lipstick.

There are a number of options for reading (1b) based on context. In some cases it might be clear that the assertion of (1b) is simply a majority generic indicating that a significant number of women (or of the subgroup of women the speaker has in mind) wear lipstick. However, as a woman who never wears lipstick, it is not hard for me to imagine (1b) being used to implicate a kind of reproach: *good* women, *real* women, *normal* women wear lipstick. This may reflect a pretense that fashion and other cultural forms are linked to our natures: consider the belief that there is something unnatural about a man wearing a dress. Along these lines, in response to the question, "Why is that person wearing lipstick?" one might find it tempting to respond, "It is a woman!" The suggestion (or pretense) is that this is just what a good instance of womanhood does, that being a woman is sufficient to explain why she is wearing lipstick; the more pressing question is why Sally, for example, doesn't.

Case (2), 'cows are food,' is complicated. One reason is that it is not the sort of thing people tend to say. They are more likely to say that beef is food. Being a vegetarian, I believe that beef isn't food although it is wrongly considered to be food by many. Beef is the flesh of a dead cow; 'beef' is used to

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[21] Thanks to Jennifer Carr for this example and suggestions for how to handle it.

mask the reality of what is being ingested. Of course, humans can consume and digest dead cows. But

being edible is not the same as being food. There are many edible things, even nutritious things, that

don't count as food because they taste bad or smell bad; they are associated with disgusting things; they

are too intelligent; they are our pets or our children. Food, I submit, is a cultural and normative category.

However, if someone asserts that beef is food, understanding this as a generic, it is tempting to accept the

implication that there is something about the nature of beef (or cows) that makes it food.

To accept this implication, I believe, is a mistake similar to the mistake made about fashion, but

with a moral dimension. It is true that not just anything could count as food (an aluminum soda can is not

food), but just containing certain nutrients or having a certain chemical composition is not sufficient.

This, however, is obscured in saying that cows are food or beef is food. Creeping into the common

ground is the suggestion (pretense) that cows are *for* eating, that beef just is food.[22] Given that I believe

this to be a pernicious and morally damaging assumption, it is reasonable for me to block the implicature

by denying the claim: cows are *not* food. I would even be willing to say that beef is not food. This is

compatible, however, with someone reasserting the claim that cows are food as a majority generic and

canceling the implicature. People <u>do</u> eat cows; Beef <u>is</u> served as food. *But this is not what cows are for,*

it is the result of optional (and, I submit, immoral) human practices. Or more simply, "cows are food,

given existing social practices." This I would not deny.

Given the treatment of cases (1) and (2), it is likely predictable how the discussion of (3) and (4)

will go. The general strategy of argument is to show that there is a set of problematic generics that

introduce implicitly into the common ground a proposition about a generic essence, about how beef or

women or blacks *are* by nature or intrinsically. These cases are problematic because the introduced

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[22] This example is worth much more discussion than I will provide here. In particular, it is not clear how to
understand the term 'beef'. Is beef just a slab of dead cow flesh? Or does it include as part of its meaning that the
cow flesh is prepared (perhaps even just cut) in a way suitable for eating? Would a slab of cow flesh found on the
road after a cow's collision with a truck be rightly called "beef"? I am intending to be provocative here, though I
also have a more substantive point: within the Aristotelian tradition, some natures must be understood functionally.
Eyes are *for* seeing. I believe that it is characteristic of omnivores that they regard the slabs of flesh they consume
as food, which is to say that they just are *for eating.* This is, I submit, to be mistaken about what they really are.

proposition is false, so we have a reason to block it. But as we've seen already in the move from fashion to food, human convention picks up on the natural properties of things, and the line between the natural and the social can become blurred. So it will be useful to look more closely at the interaction between the natural and the social in constituting food, genders, races, and other social kinds.   I will then return to (3) and (4) and the idea of ideology critique.

4. Structures, Schemas, and Resources

What is a social structure? There is considerable interdisciplinary work on this topic by social historians, social psychologists, and sociologists interested in subordination and critical resistance. As I am using the term here, 'social structure' is a general category of social phenomena, including, e.g., social institutions, social practices and conventions, social roles, social hierarchies, social locations or geographies and the like.

William Sewell (a social historian), drawing on Anthony Giddens, argues for an account that takes structures to be "both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems" (4, quoting Giddens, "Critique" 27; see also Giddens' "Central Problems" and "Constitution"). Sewell continues: "Structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures. In this view of things, human agency and structure, far from being opposed, in fact presuppose each other" (4).

More specifically, Giddens is known for identifying structures as "rules and resources." On Sewell's account, however, the combination becomes "schemas and resources" in order to avoid the assumption that the cognitive element must always take the form of a rule (8). Sewell takes schemas to include:

…all the variety of cultural schemas that anthropologists have uncovered in their research: not only the array of binary oppositions that make up a given society's fundamental tools of thought, but also the various conventions, recipes, scenarios, principles of action, and habits of speech and gesture built up with these fundamental tools. (7-8)

It is crucial to Sewell that these schemas are not private and personal patterns of thought, but are intersubjective and transposable in response to new circumstances.

Responding to Sewell, Judith Howard (a social psychologist) points out that Sewell's use of the term 'schema' differs from its use in social psychology. Whereas social psychologists tend to think of schemas as concerned with the organization of an individual's thought, Sewell develops the notion in a way that highlights its cultural deployment. She suggests:

> A synthesis of these conceptions of schemas might prove remarkably useful: the stricter social cognitive models provide a sound basis for predicting how and when intra-individual schemas change, whereas the more recent sociological conceptions say more about how group interactions shape the formation and evolution of cultural schemas. (218)

If we take Howard's idea seriously, we should explore the interdependence between individual schemas and their cultural counterparts: "Schemas, for example, are both mental and social; they both derive from and constitute cultural, semiotic, and symbolic systems" (Howard 218).

What are we to make of this? Let's take schemas to be intersubjective patterns of perception, thought and behavior. They are embodied in individuals as a shared cluster of open-ended dispositions to see things a certain way or to respond habitually in particular circumstances. Schemas encode knowledge and also provide scripts for interaction with each other and our environment. Understood in this way, schemas are plausibly part of the common ground we rely on to communicate. Although some may be rather specific to a small community others will extend broadly, even across cultures.

On this view, schemas are one component of social structures, resources are the other. Social structures cannot be identified simply as schemas because social structures have material existence and a reality that "pushes back" when we come to it with the wrong or an incomplete schema. For example, the schema of two sex categories is manifested in the design and labeling of toilet facilities. If we're analyzing social structures, then in addition to the mental content or disposition, there must be an actualization of it in the world, e.g., an enactment of it, that involves something material. Resources

provide the materiality of social structures. On the Giddens/Sewell account, resources are anything that "can be used to enhance or maintain power" (Sewell 9). This includes human resources such as "physical strength, dexterity, knowledge" (Sewell 9) in addition to materials—animate and inanimate—in the usual sense.

How do schemas and resources together constitute social structures? Sewell suggests a causal interdependence:

> A factory is not an inert pile of bricks, wood, and metal. It incorporates or actualizes schemas….The factory gate, the punching-in station, the design of the assembly line: all of these features of the factory teach and validate the rules of the capitalist labor contract…In short, if resources are instantiations or embodiments of schemas, they therefore inculcate and justify the schemas as well…Sets of schemas and resources may properly be said to constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time. (13)

So on Sewell's view a social structure exists when there is a causal, and mutually sustaining, interdependence between a shared or collective schema and an organization of resources. Sewell's claim that the two elements of structure "imply and sustain each other" suggests a constitutive relationship as well: the pile of bricks, wood, and metal is a punching-in station because schemas that direct employers to pay employees by the hour and employees to keep track of their hours are enacted with this tool. The schema for keeping track of hours is a punching-in schema because there is a punch-clock that the employer will use as a basis for calculating wages. Without the invention of the punch-clock, there could be no punching-in schema. There is a causal relationship, but not just a causal relationship. What else is it?

Consider a familiar example: a statue and the bronze of which it is composed. The bronze constitutes the statue, e.g., the figure of Joan of Arc on horseback in New York City's Riverside Park. The bronze is the statue not only by virtue of its shape, but also by virtue of having a certain history, function, interpretation, etc. Think of the bronze as resource; think of the dispositions that give rise to the

statue's history, function, and interpretation as (roughly) schema. The role of schema may be still more

evident in the constitution of it as a memorial. The Joan of Arc statue commemorates "the 500th

anniversary of Joan of Arc's birth." The statue consists of the shaped bronze, and the statue in turn

constitutes the memorial, understood as a further schema-structured resource [[[bronze, shape], statue],

memorial]. Thus it appears that the schema/resource distinction can be applied in ways analogous to the

matter/form distinction.

More helpful for our purposes may be an example of a social event rather than a social object: the

performance of a Bach minuet on the piano. The performance is an event that involves both the piano,

the sheet music, fingers and such (as resources), and also a set of dispositions to respond to the sheet

music by playing the piano keys in a certain way, plus the various ritualized gestures that make it a

performance rather than a rehearsal (as schema). Considered in this light, most actions involve not only an

agent with an intention and a bodily movement, but a set of dispositions to interact with things to realize

the intention; think of cycling, cooking, typing. These dispositions conform to publicly accessible and

socially meaningful patterns and are molded by both the social and physical context. Because often such

dispositions give rise to objects that trigger those very dispositions, they can be extremely resistant to

change (think of the challenge of replacing the qwerty keyboard).

This sort of schematic materiality of our social worlds is ubiquitous: towns, city halls, churches,

universities, philosophy departments, gyms, playgrounds, homes, are schematically structured and

practice-imbued material things (cf. a "ghost town" or "a house but not a home" whose schemas are lost

or attenuated).   The social world includes artifacts which are what they are because of what is to be done

with them; it also includes schemas for action that are what they are because they direct our interaction

with some part of the world. Thus at least some parts of the social/cognitive world and material world are

co-constitutive.

If a practice is the structured product of schema (a set of dispositions to perceive and respond in

certain ways) and resources (a set of tools and material goods), it is not "subjective" in any of the ordinary

uses of that term. Social structures are not just in our heads (just as the statue is not just in our heads);

social structures are public (just as the bronze only constitutes a memorial by virtue of the collective interpretation and pattern of action in response to it); although social structures are not simply material things, they are constituted by material things. They are "constructed" by us in the ordinary way that artifacts are created by us. One can believe in them without accepting the idea, sometimes endorsed by "social constructionists" that our thought constructs, in a less ordinary way, what there is in the world (Haslanger, "Social").

This rough account of social structures helps to define the idea of a social milieu. As we saw above, the schemas that constitute social structures are intersubjective or cultural patterns, scripts and the like, that are internalized by individuals to form the basis of our responses to socially meaningful objects, actions, and events. In many cases, perhaps even most, the dominant cultural schema will also be the one that individuals in that context have made "their own." However, it is not always that simple. Individuals bear complex relations to the dominant schemas of their cultural context; they may be ignorant of or insensitive to a schema, may reject a schema, or may modify a schema for their own purposes. One may be deliberately out of sync with one's milieu, or just "out of it." It is also the case that different schemas vie for dominance in public space. Plausibly the negotiation over schemas at least partly happens linguistically through the formation of common ground.

For the purposes of this paper it will be useful to define an individual's (general) social milieu in terms of the social structures within which he or she operates, whether or not the public schemas in question have been internalized. Although we can choose some of the structures within which we live, it is not always a matter of choice, e.g., I am governed by the laws of the United States whether I choose to be or not. Of course, individuals do not live within only one milieu, and milieus overlap. One's workplace, place of worship, civic space, and home are structured spaces; each of these structures are inflected by race, gender, class, nationality, age, and sexuality to name a few relevant factors. So it will be important to specify an individual's milieu at a time and place and possibly in relation to specified others. In this essay I will not be able to give precise conditions that specify what milieu is operative for an individual in a given context; we'll just have to rely on clear-enough cases for now.

To summarize briefly, schemas and resources together constitute practices, and patterns of interdependent practices constitute structures. The schemas—dispositions, interpretations, experiences, beliefs and the like—are an important part of the common ground we rely on to communicate; they are also, I maintain, a form of ideology. On this view, ideology is not just a set of background beliefs that purport to justify social structures: ideology in the form of schemas partly constitutes the structures.

5. "Looping" and Social Kinds

In his discussion of social phenomena, Ian Hacking has emphasized the phenomenon of "looping."[23] On his view, the continuum between the natural and the social depends on a distinction between indifferent and interactive kinds (32, 102-105). Hacking describes the contrast this way:

> The [kind/classification] "woman refugee" can be called an "interactive kind" because it interacts with things of that kind, namely people, including individual women refugees, who can become aware of how they are classified and modify their behavior accordingly. (32)

The classification "quark," in contrast, is an indifferent kind: "Quarks are not aware that they are quarks and are not altered simply by being classified as quarks" (32). As Hacking elaborates the idea of an interactive kind it becomes clear that the interaction he has in mind happens through the awareness of the thing classified in being so-classified, though it is typically mediated by the "larger matrix of institutions and practices surrounding this classification" (103; also 31-2, 103-106).[24] For example, if a particular woman is not classified as a woman refugee,

> . . . she may be deported, or go into hiding, or marry to gain citizenship...she learns what characteristics to establish, knows how to live her life. By living that life, she evolves, becomes a

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[23] I discuss Hacking on "looping" kinds also in Haslanger, "Ontology" and Haslanger, "Social". See also Langton, "Speaker's Freedom".

[24] The contrast between indifferent and interactive kinds is not a simple binary distinction, for there are several different factors that may play a role determining whether a kind is more or less indifferent or interactive. One factor is the degree to which we can have, and have had, a causal impact on members of the kind; in cases where we have had a causal impact, a further issue is whether the similarity amongst the members that forms the basis for the kind is due to our influence.

certain kind of person [a woman refugee]. And so it may make sense to say that the very

individuals and their experiences are constructed within the matrix surrounding the classification

"women refugees." (11)

Hacking concludes that the individuals so-affected are themselves socially constructed "as a certain kind

of person" (11).

Hacking is especially interested in a certain kind of object construction, viz., construction that

works by the social context providing concepts that frame the self-understanding and intentions of the

constructed agent. In cases like this, agents incorporate (often consciously) socially available

classifications into their intentional agency and sense of self, but as their self-understanding evolves, the

meaning of those classifications evolves with them. This forms a "feedback loop" (hence the term:

"interactive kinds") between what we might think of as objective and subjective stances with respect to

the classification. To emphasize the importance of the agent's active awareness in this process, we might

call this "discursive identity construction."

It is important to note, however, that relationship between schemas and resources in the

constitution of social structures is, in general, loopy. Resources are formed to trigger dispositions

(schemas) that are manifested in ways that, in turn, utilize and shape the resources. Cuisine is a good

example (Pollan). In a less-globalized world than ours, food crops were grown to support the local

cuisine and the local tastes and culinary techniques evolved in ways that took advantage of the crops. In

more complex and broadly social changes we can watch consumer taste develop so that certain products

become "must haves" in a particular milieu. Trends in cuisine can become trends in production which, in

turn, affect trends in labor, and this affects schemas of class and taste, etc.

This loopiness can obscure the social dimension of social structures. When ideology is

uncontested and hegemonic, it is insufficiently conscious to be aware of its own effects. So the causal

impact of hegemonic schemas on resources is typically invisible. Because the "trigger" for a schema is

external–in the world–we attend to this, and social structures come to seem inevitable, natural, "given":

Although all ongoing social organizations incorporate contest and struggle over the constitution

of their world, most aspects of social structure are taken for granted….Social actors accept a good

part of their social worlds as necessary, and often as natural, as perhaps they must do to function

at all in those worlds. Often invisible, and certainly uncontested, these taken-for-granted

structures are thus unlikely to be the subject of justice claims and critiques, although they may be

a source of disadvantage and injustice…hegemony colonizes consciousness….(Silbey 289)

The reliance on, say, wheat in a particular cuisine may seem inevitable, natural, "given." Wheat is what

is available; wheat just is what we eat. But the wheat is available because of the impact of schemas on

resources that establish farming practices, food distribution, etc. Given the stability of such structures,

culinary taste conforms. In this context quinoa, or soy, or spelt tastes bad and has a funny texture too; so

who would want to plant it? Hegemony colonizes consciousness.

6. Critique

a. Refusing to Accept the Common Ground

If ideology partly constitutes the social world, then it seems that a description of the ideological

formations will be true, and it is unclear what is, epistemically speaking, wrong with them. The material

world reinforces our tutored dispositions—qwerty keyboards reinforce our qwerty dispositions which

reinforce the use of qwerty keyboards; racial classification reinforces racial segregation, which reinforces

racial identity, which reinforces racial classification. Social structures, good or bad, constitute our lived

reality and they become a matter of common sense for us, i.e., they become hegemonic.

Hegemony, just or unjust, appears inevitable, natural, "given." We've seen that this false

appearance is easily generated due to the "loopiness" of social structures: we respond to the world that

has been shaped to trigger those very responses without being conscious of the shaping, so our responses

seem to be called for by the way the world is. This, I submit, is what our problematic generics (1)-(4),

and others like them, articulate: they describe the world as if it is, by its nature, how we have interpreted

it, and from there caused it, to be. Cows are food, women are submissive, and blacks are violent. In

purporting just to capture the facts, the generics import an explanation, implicate that the source of the

truth of these claims lies in what cows, women, and blacks *are*. Implicatures and presuppositions of this

sort become part of the common ground, often in ways that are hard to notice and hard to combat, and

they become the background for our conversations and our practices. Once the assumption of, e.g.,

women's submissive nature has been inserted into the cultural common ground, it is extremely difficult

and disruptive to dislodge it.

A first step in ideology critique, then, is to reject such claims and to make evident the

interdependence of schemas and resources, of the material world and our interpretation of it. It is not the

case that women are submissive, even if most women are submissive, in fact, even if *all* women are

submissive, because submission is no part of women's nature. Let's consider examples (3) and (4) in a

bit more detail.

Start with:

(4) Blacks are violent (criminal, dangerous).

This seems to be an example of a striking generic because the attribution in question is "harmful,

dangerous or appalling" (Leslie, "Generics" and "Original Sin"). Recall that striking generics, as in

'mosquitoes carry the West Nile virus,' require only a tiny percentage of the kind to exemplify the

property in order to count as true. Nevertheless, the implicature is that all members of the kind are

disposed, by nature, to have the property. So (4) is either itself false or highly misleading by virtue of

inserting into the common ground a false claim about the nature of blacks[25], and one would be right to

object to it.

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[25] I am not in a position to argue for a theory of the truth conditions for generics; in fact, I want to avoid taking a
stand on the semantics of generics (though I admit that the line between semantics and pragmatics is unclear). My
suggestion has been, however, that the generic essence claim is only pragmatically involved. If this is true, then
whether Bert's statement 'blacks are violent,' is false will depend on our semantic account and complicated facts
about how we want to explain the apparent violence of (some) blacks. For example, if there is an explanation of
black violence in terms of a response to racist oppression, then there may be a non-accidental correlation which
would allow the generic to be true *as a striking generic* even if only a very few blacks are violent; but we will be
right to resist or deny it by virtue of how it affects the common ground. The interlocutor's denial is a "meta-

However, suppose someone, Bert, who is highly invested in (4), is challenged; he would probably deny intending the implication in the first place. The claim, he might say, was just intended as an ordinary quantified generalization and the implicature was not intentional. But what quantification makes sense of (4)? The fact that 'some blacks are violent' is too weak to underwrite (4) as a majority generic (which requires that most of the kind have the property). But both 'all blacks are violent' and 'most blacks are violent' are false. So it is tempting to conclude that (4) is not assertable even if the implicature is canceled. Both (4) *and* its implicature are false. Not just metalinguistic negation is called for, but ordinary negation as well.

Bert, however, may still be convinced that there is a truth being expressed by (4), and given that striking generics can be compelling with very few instances, this may be a strong commitment. If he is committed to the claim that blacks are violent and recognizes that 'some blacks are violent' is not sufficient to support the claim as a majority generic, he is likely to infer that 'most blacks are violent.' Why else, he asks, is it reasonable to assert (which he is committed to) that blacks are violent? Thus the falsehood, 'most blacks are violent' comes to seem legitimately part of the common ground. So even if Bert rejects the claim of generic essence, viz., that blacks, by virtue of being black, are violent, there is still a tendency to reinterpret the claim and accept another falsehood in the common ground: 'most blacks are violent.' It is the responsible interlocutor's job, in such a case, to resist this as well.

Consider now:

(3) Women are submissive (nurturing, cooperative).

What (3) implicates will, of course, depend on context. Moreover, it is not clear how the example fits into Leslie's categories of generics. Neither being submissive, nurturing, or cooperative fits the criteria for being a striking generic. Is it a characteristic generic? Are women, by nature, submissive (nurturing, cooperative)? There are definitely many positive counterinstances. But here again the idea could be that *good*, or *normal*, women are submissive (nurturing, cooperative), where 'normal' is not understood as

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linguistic negation" that blocks the implicature that blacks are by nature violent. This is also relevant in the case of fashion because we may want it to be true that a fashion item is cool even if we don't grant the essentialist claim.

'statistically normal' but in terms of what individuals are good examples of the kind. Or is there a template in the background: Recall that we can say 'birds (or bees) lay eggs' even if most don't because there is a template for animals that has a box for reproductive mechanism, and "lays eggs" is one of the options considered acceptable. Is there a template for animals, or for humans, that offers a pull-down psychology menu? There might be a story to tell: in interacting with other creatures we need to be able to predict whether they are going to be easy to interact with or hard to interact with, whether we are going to have an easy time being dominant or whether we are likely to be dominated. The claim that women are submissive provides a value for that box in the template and a basis for predicting behavior. Yet another option is that it is just a majority generic and is true just in case most women are submissive (etc).

Given these options, I think there is reason to deny (3): it is neither characteristic (part of what it is to be a good example of womanhood) or generally the case that women are submissive (nurturing, cooperative). However, even if it is unclear what are the truth conditions for (3), we can still consider its pragmatic effects. The implication of (3), on the account I am proposing, is that women are, by nature, submissive; women who aren't submissive are, nevertheless, disposed to be under the right circumstances, because this is how women *are*. Perhaps the implication is that the category of woman is a functional kind: women are *for* nurturing, or women are *for* being dominated. Again, this is how women *are*. If this is conveyed in conversation, it may be hardly noticeable, but once it takes hold, it becomes a schema that shapes our social world. Blocking the implication is called for.

In this case, the invested defender of (3), in the face of objections, might have an easier time defending the quantified substitute for the generic: 'most women are submissive (nurturing, cooperative)' and may also regard this as an adequate basis for asserting (3) as a majority generic (not taking into account the many non-submissive women). But the tempting slide (and apparently good inference) from 'most women are submissive,' to 'women are submissive,' must keep us on our guard to block the essentializing implicature.

One might object, however, that feminists and antiracist theorists regularly employ generics that, on my account, have problematic implications. Consider, for example:

5) Women are oppressed.

6) Blacks in the United States suffer racism.

How should we handle such cases? If (5) and (6) are simply majority generics, then both are plausibly true (assuming, as I do, that the oppression and racism affect all women and all blacks in the circumstances at issue). In asserting (5) and (6) however, does one implicate that women are oppressed *by nature*? Or that blacks are naturally targets of racism?

I can think of two options for handling such cases. One is to claim that the context cancels the implicature because the point of making such a claim is to criticize the practice, not to justify oppression or racism as appropriate or natural to women or blacks. Thus there is no need to block the implicature. This strategy is also important for understanding majority generics such as 'barns are red' and 'cars have radios,' more generally. The idea is that in cases where it is obvious that there is no non-accidental connection between the kind and the predicate, i.e., where it is clear that what is being expressed is a majority generic rather than a characteristic or striking generic, there is no implicature, and so no implicature to be blocked or negated.[26]

The second option is to allow that there is a non-coincidental or non-accidental connection between being a woman and being oppressed, or being black and being the target of racism. The idea is not that women or blacks are naturally treated this way; rather, the point is that being a woman or being black are good predictors for the unjust treatment. So it is not necessary to block or negate the implicature because it is true.

This may seem troublesome, but the appearance of trouble hinges, I believe, on a slide we need not make. According to some accounts of gender and race, being unjustly subordinated is part of what it is to be gendered man or woman and to be raced (Haslanger, "Gender and Race"). On this view, it is true

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[26] There is empirical evidence that we are aware of the distinction between majority and characteristic generics. In the case of characteristic generics, speakers are more willing to count both bare plural and indefinite singular forms of the generic as natural to assert than majority generics, e.g., 'tigers have stripes' and 'a tiger has stripes' are both judged assertable, whereas speakers are more likely to differ in their assessment of 'barns are red' and 'a barn is red' (Leslie et al "Conceptual" 482).

that women are oppressed by virtue of being women, and a paradigm example of a woman is someone who is oppressed. So when someone asserts (5), both the utterance and the implicature are true. Does this entail that women are oppressed by their very natures? How could that be acceptable? It isn't acceptable, but neither is it entailed. Consider the comparison:

It is true in virtue of what it is to be a bachelor that bachelors are unmarried.

with:

It is true in virtue of what it is to be a woman that women are oppressed.

or

It is in virtue of being poor that the poor are disenfranchised.

In each of these cases the non-accidental link is being asserted between properties. As long as one allows that no individual is by nature a bachelor, or by nature a woman, or by nature poor, then it doesn't follow that the individual is by necessity unmarried or oppressed or disenfranchised, or that they should be. There is a further scope error, however, that many find tempting. Consider:

(7)   Women are [non-accidentally, by virtue of what they are, by nature] oppressed

(8)   Sally is a woman.

(9)   Therefore, Sally is [non-accidentally, by virtue of what she is, by nature] oppressed.

Of course this conclusion is unacceptable, but the inference is invalid and requires the stronger premise:

(8*)   Sally is [non-accidentally, by virtue of what she is, by nature] a woman.

If we deny (8*), which is needed in place of (8) to infer (9), then we can avoid the problematic conclusion.

Whether this second strategy is an acceptable option (and I'm not convinced it is!), will depend on several considerations. In particular, it will depend on the details of how we spell out the precise content of the implicature: what sort of non-accidental connection is being claimed between the kind and the property referred to by the generic, what is involved in a claim of generic essence, how should we interpret assumptions about nature(s). The issue here is, I believe, metaphysical, in the sense that we need good metaphysical distinctions to make sense of the alternatives, but more than metaphysical, it is

psychological. The goal is to understand what people *tend to believe* when they hear someone assert a generic. There has been valuable research on the human tendency to essentialize (Gelman "Essential Child", "Conceptual Development") and a better account of the pragmatics of generics should take this research into account.

b. Critique?

The project of at least many social constructionists is to make explicit how the world we respond to, the world that triggers our schemas, is shaped by us and is not inevitable, natural, or "given." In other words, the project is to make evident the role of schemas in shaping resources that "fit" our schemas. Once the loop is laid bare, new questions can be asked about the adequacy of the schemas, the distribution of resources, and alternative structures that might be put in place. The goal is to make explicit the hegemonies that hold us in their grip so that they can be challenged and contested. My arguments thus far have attempted to connect this understanding of social construction and the formation of hegemony with practices of speech and conversation that help constitute the common ground. If what I have argued is correct, there is less mystery how confused and mistaken ideologies become hegemonic – they are absorbed as the background to successful communication. Moreover, we need not assume that the parties to the conversation are deviously insinuating the false beliefs into the cultural background. It may be that the mechanisms of presupposition accommodation and implicature that are essential to establishing shared meanings and the contours of our social world are simply not serving us well in these domains.

Is the point of ideology critique, then, to make explicit the content of hegemony, to bring it to the level of belief to be evaluated? There is much emphasis in discussion of ideology on this idea that what is gained through critique is an understanding that things could be different. Catharine MacKinnon emphasizes that in unveiling ideological illusion one comes to see that how things are is not how they must be:

> Women's situation cannot be truly known for what it is, in the feminist sense, without knowing
>
> that it can be other than it is….Patterns of abuse can be made to look more convincing without

the possibility of change seeming even a little more compelling. Viewed as object reality, the

more inequality is pervasive, the more it is simply "there." And the more real it looks, the more it

looks like the truth. As a way of knowing about social conditions, consciousness raising by

contrast shows women their situation in a way that affirms they can act to change it. (101)

This fits with the idea that what is inserted into the common ground by the problematic generics is a claim

of generic essence. If the presumption is that subordinated groups occupy the social positions they do

because of facts about their nature or essence, then effective resistance requires that we first explore the

possibilities that this move has foreclosed (see also Taylor "Interpretation").   But it is one thing to

recognize the possibility of a different social structure and another to offer a critique of one. Is the

revelation of alternatives sufficient to provide social critique?

A simplistic hypothesis might be that once one is exposed to the social workings of one's milieu,

one will come to see the weaknesses of it. On this view, the unveiling of the illusion of inevitability can

disrupt an investment in one's current (inadequate) milieu and provide opportunities for improvement.

Further critique, strictly speaking, is not necessary; one need only broaden the horizons of those in the

grip of an unjust structure and they will gain "consciousness" and gravitate to liberation.

It is true that this can happen, but it is far from guaranteed, and there is a danger that not all such

gravitation is toward liberation. Ideology critique begins by taking aim at the particular masking of social

schemas that occurs when they become hegemonic, but it takes further moral or political critique to

determine whether the structures they constitute are legitimate or just. Questions of justice don't arise for

the common sense world that is taken for granted. To raise normative issues we must first make visible

the social dynamics that create our social worlds; once articulated ideology can (in principle) be debated.

So showing how something is simply presupposed as common ground and that it needs critical

examination is one goal of ideology critique.

This is an important step, but alone is insufficient to capture the critical dimension. Moreover, as

noted, schemas are entrenched dispositions and often don't change in response to cognitive engagement.

A further, often unacknowledged, concern is that components of hegemony are polysemic, so we cannot assume that it is possible to articulate "the content" of hegemony (Ewick and Silbey, "Subversive Stories" 212; Silbey 293):

> The hegemonic is not simply a static body of ideas to which members of a culture are obliged to conform…[it has] a protean nature in which dominant relations are preserved while their manifestations remain highly flexible. The hegemonic must continually evolve so as to recuperate alternative hegemonies. (Silberstein 127, qtd in Ewick and Silbey, "Subversive Stories" 212).

This "protean" nature of hegemony can protect it from critique (Ewick and Silbey, "Subversive Stories" 212), but can also make room for resistance and counter-hegemony:

> Since power is exercised through the patterned distribution of resources and schemas, if there is resistance to this power it must also operate through the appropriation of these selfsame structures. Resistance, as much as power, is contingent upon the structural resources available to the relational participants…."Counter-hegemony has to start from that which exists, which involves starting from 'where people are at.' Such a conception of counter-hegemony requires the 'reworking' or 'refashioning' of elements which are constitutive of the prevailing hegemony" (Hunt, 316). (Ewick and Silbey, "Narrating" 1335 (including Hunt quote))

In studies of hegemony and counter-hegemony, many humanists, legal theorists, social scientists, have focused on narrative. Narrative is important because of its power to entrench social scripts that have plots which are transposable to different contexts; narratives frame the personal in cultural forms. Acts of resistance to social scripts can also be narrated using the "elements which are constitutive of the prevailing hegemony" and become subversive stories (Ewick and Silbey, "Narrating").

Narratives—subversive or not—are crucial components of the schemas we bring to social life. However, they are not the only component. For example, feminists have long noted that dualistic conceptual frameworks that oppose reason/emotion, mind/body, nature/culture, masculine/feminine guide

and distort our thinking. It is also plausible that schemas include presumption rules that direct our reasoning in cases where evidence is slim (Ullman-Margalit). Such rules are often encoded in narratives, but we have seen that they are also ubiquitous in conversation and other forms of social interaction. And habits of body and mind—including non-intentional behavior, "body language," moods, feelings, emotions, suspicions, and the like—play an important role in social life, and their interpretation and coordination depends on socializing individuals to fit (roughly) within a pattern of collective dispositions.

So it would seem that ideology critique can and should take a variety of forms. For example, we can articulate the hegemonic in ways that open space for contestation and justice claims, e.g., by criticizing conceptual frameworks and offering new ones, by noting and challenging presumption rules that occlude evidence of alternatives, by pointing to the effects of social practices on consciousness. We can give voice to the counter-hegemonic by describing and recommending resistant interventions and practices. We can analyze social conditions and organization in terms that are broadly accessible so that the looping of social structures is rendered visible and so less fixed or inevitable. We can also promote norms and standards for contesting ideology that are more democratic and alert to the muting (and deafening) effects of hegemony. We can reject generics that support false claims about generic essences: it is not the case that women are more submissive than men; that blacks are more violent than whites; that cows are food.

A further goal, of course, is social change resulting in greater justice. Ideology critique of the sort I've described can help create conceptual space for such change, but thought can never replace action. The power of consciousness raising is not just to offer new avenues of thought, but to create social spaces where new schemas can be acted out, and eventually new—less oppressive—practices can become hegemonic. Describing what those practices should look like is a task for further normative debate.

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