3. Ideology as Artificial Respiration: Hegel on Stoicism, Skepticism and Unhappy Consciousness

by Arvi Särkelä

An inclusive diagnosis of the pathologies of recognition needs to regard the critique of ideology as one of its necessary components. In contrast to many other living creatures and species, humans and their communities relate to their reproductive ends interpretively. Thus, it might well be that a pathological condition, that is, a systematic deviation from reproductive ends making social life ‘dead’ or ‘ill,’ is being maintained precisely by these creatures’ interpreting the ‘false’ situation ‘falsely.’ Yet I will argue that a crucial point of both ideology and its critique, as “moments” of a recognition-theoretical diagnosis of social pathologies, must be that ideology is never fully false. In the broader context of a critical theory of society this demands a reinvestigation of Adorno’s claim that, in ideology, the true and the false are deeply interwoven (Adorno 2003, 465). In the following, I will draw upon Hegel’s phenomenological analysis of Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness as intellectual reactions to social pathology. I will argue that, in Hegel’s view, the true and the false are held together in ideology by its being recognitively educational: ideology presents both a moment of social pathology and a moment of its overcoming. It gives, so to speak, artificial respiration to a social life fallen ill.

1 Phenomenology and Ideology

As it happens, the claim that the chapter ‘Freedom of Self-Consciousness: Stoicism, Skepticism and Unhappy Consciousness’ in Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit already presents something like a critique of ideology is far from being accepted in contemporary Hegel scholarship. For example, Robert Stern distinguishes between two competing readings of these passages. The first I shall call the historical materialist reading, which Stern attributes to Alexandre Kojève. In this interpretation, Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are treated as servile ‘ideologies’ and thus, Stern claims, are given a ‘purely socio-political rationale’ (Stern 2002, 86). By contrast, the other interpretation, which one could call the conceptual realist reading, identifies a clear conceptual progress in these shapes as they bring self-consciousness forth from what initially appears to be a deadlock in the
preceding relation of Lordship and Bondage.

The latter reading, which Stern himself prefers and attributes to a number of authoritative Hegel scholars, does press home some important advantages. Firstly, it is textually hard to see how Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness can be regarded as *servile* ideologies (or ‘ideologies of slaves’ as Kojève puts it; Kojève 1969, 53, 63, 66) as Hegel makes it clear in every instance that both Bondsman and Lord endorse them. Secondly, the circumstance that all three supposed ideologies take an explicitly *negative* stance towards the preceding relation of domination (*Herrschaft*) might appear to be at odds with their allegedly being ideologies justifying servitude (*Knechtschaft*); this demands clarification at least. And finally, as Stern notes, if Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are to denote ‘doomed’ attempts to come to terms with the undeniably disappointing situation of Lord and Bondsman, it is all but clear methodologically why they should appear in the *progression* of consciousness after Lordship and Bondage, since this would point to their being resolutions to problems which Lord and Bondsman were unable to resolve given their conceptual tools and ontological commitments.

On a second look, however, these three points might not appear so advantageous after all. At least, they fail to disqualify reading a critique of ideology out of this chapter and preserving its ‘socio-political rationale.’ This is because, firstly, the circumstance that Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness clearly are not purely ‘ideologies of slaves’ in no way rules out treating them as ideologies both of domination and servitude. Thus, attributing these standpoints to both parties of the relation of Lordship and Bondage need not necessarily be a problem for the theorist of ideology. In contrast, this could be just the point that the critique of ideology wants to make: ‘Ideology’ might make both Bondsman and Lord servile to a pathological condition regardless of their respective functions in the extremely polarized division of labor between them. Adorno, for instance, maintains that ideology is *not* a pure means of domination of one class by another: in such unmediated domination, per definition, there is no room for ideology (Adorno 2003, 465, 474).

Secondly, that all three supposed ideologies are *dismissive* of the socio-political predicament of Lordship and Bondage might turn out to be compatible with their assuming a justificatory function, since what was intended as a negative stance might invert itself into a vehicle for sustaining the disappointing condition. In fact, this, too, seems to be the very intuition behind theories of ideology in the first place. For example, Adorno understands ideology to be *justification* (‘*Ideologie ist Rechtfertigung*’ [original emphasis]), yet also to contain the experience of a societal condition as
problematic; since without the latter, there would be no apologetic necessity (ibid., 465). If these shapes were merely to present unsuccessful attempts at coming to terms with domination, it would be hard to distinguish them systematically from the shapes of ‘Reason,’ whose general claim is to enable individuals to be ‘at home’ in the world but which do not quite catch up to it. Ideology seems, however, to be different from such ‘merely failing attempts’: In addition to failing to satisfy their own standards, the idea is that ideologies turn against their own intent so as to sustain their initial conditions and to prevent the perception of their unsuccessfulness. Here, the historical materialist has a certain advantage and the conceptual realist an awkward problem. If, as for Stern, consciousness in Stoicism ‘has arrived at a new attitude to the world … as permeated by reason, so that thought is seen as giving us access to the rational structure inherent in things, which are now no longer viewed as ‘other’ by the subject’ (Stern 2002, 87), and one reads this ‘reason’ and ‘rationality’ as not becoming somehow inverted against its own claim, then it is difficult to understand why Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness do not appear in the following chapter entitled ‘Reason.’ That chapter, however, takes its departure from the certainty of reason resulting from the experience of Stoicism, Skepticism and Unhappy Consciousness. On this point the conceptual realist seems to be biting her tail.

Finally, Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness might be both doomed attempts at coming to terms with domination and servitude (as in the historical materialist reading) and progressive (as in the conceptual realist interpretation), since, for the phenomenological observers, they can be read as constituting failed attempts in the sense of not healing the pathology, but still presenting stages in a developmental sequence pointing towards a more promising perspective. Indeed, like Hegel, who identifies Reason as implicit in the false and yet true shapes of the Stoic, the Skeptic and the Unhappy Consciousness, Adorno similarly recognizes a “rational element” in ideology, from which the critic of ideology works (Adorno 2003, 471-3).

Now, between the extreme options of understanding ideology as solely sustaining domination and regarding these standpoints as developing ‘beyond’ domination might lie an interpretation stressing a distinctively ideological development. This would consist in the conceptual story of the ways in which ideology immanently progresses over and beyond itself. Consequently, it seems to me that both the Kojèvian and the Sternian lines of interpretation rely on a common false presupposition. Both on the one hand take ideology to present a false consciousness, and on the other take the critique of ideology to assume the function of revealing a form of
consciousness as wholly false by identifying it with its function in reproducing a false social totality by not allowing the perception of ‘true’ interests. However, I believe Hegel’s argument is on the contrary: ideologies such as Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are more or less true shapes of consciousness and the function of a critique of ideology is to grasp ideology in its productive, educative function.

My hypothesis is, then, that both readings are partly right and partly wrong. The conceptual realist is right to say that Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are distinctively novel shapes of consciousness. The historical materialist, however, correctly points out that Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness are ideologies that functionally sustain the dead equilibrium of Lordship and Bondage. These aspects can be reconciled by regarding ideology as productive and potentially educative. Ideology works not only to maintain the dead equilibrium of Lordship and Bondage, but also revives the organic means of overcoming it.

A first step in this direction would be the acknowledgement that if the Phenomenology of Spirit were to accommodate a critique of ideology, it would have to proceed in accordance with Hegel’s overall method in the book. A widespread and long-lived misconception of the Phenomenology is that it has a ‘dialectical method.’ In reality, Hegel’s method is not dialectical but phenomenological. If the phenomenological method were to require further attributes, those attributes would be ‘descriptive,’ ‘dissociative,’ and even ‘empirical.’

The description of Hegel’s method as ‘empirical’ is justifiable, since its object is the experience of consciousness. The Phenomenology as the ‘science of the experience of consciousness’ is an empirical science in the sense that it does not draw upon any criteria or presuppositions beyond the experiences of the consciousness observed throughout the inquiry. Everything that is observed happens within experience. Such experiences always involve a certainty about something’s being ‘absolute,’ the disruption of this certainty, and the emergence of a new conception of what should count as intellectually authoritative. ‘Descriptive,’ furthermore, as an attribute of the method is correct, since the method is merely to describe, that is, to observe and record, the movement of this experiential subject-matter and to avoid bringing one’s own criteria to bear (Dove 1970). The method is, finally, ‘dissociative,’ since it acknowledges the tremendous ‘effort of self-restraint’ in dissociating oneself from the subject-matter when following a descriptive, empirical method (Bristow 2007, 236-8). What is dialectical, however, is not the method of the inquiry, but its subject-matter – the experience (Adorno 1993, 9-10).

The methodological problem with both readings above is that they
project a ready-made concept of ideology onto the Hegelian text. The difficulty here is that ‘we,’ the observing readers, are not entitled to project our bright ideas about what ideology is onto the experiential material. On the contrary, Hegel expects us to calmly observe the ideological experience as it unfolds before our eyes and grasp this experience at its very end. This might, however, seem frustrating or even conservative for the historical materialist who perhaps wants to celebrate the defeat of the false consciousness at the outset, and utterly unnecessary for the conceptual realist who has already seen the concept of reason lurking behind the praxis of the Bondsman.

Now, suppose we give Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness the general name ‘ideology,’ and the way Hegel deals with them we label ‘critique of ideology,’ and then we observe consciousness’s experience – what kind of conception would that give us of ideology and the critique of it?

2 The Experience of Ideology

The background for the chapter on Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness is the dead equilibrium in the relation of domination between Lord and Bondsman. This equilibrium endures through work. Initially, this appears a good solution: instead of having to prove his subjectivity in the eyes of the other in the life-and-death struggle, the Lord can now dominate the Bondsman’s body, which the latter was not willing to risk. In this way, the Bondsman preserves what was valuable to him, his life, and the Lord will have the pleasure of enjoying the satisfactions of his immediate desires in the mediated fruits of the Bondsman’s labor (Hegel 1977 [1807], §§ 189-96). Thus, the Lord reduces the Bondsman to a mere means for the realization of his arbitrary ends and achieves a more mediated relationship to his natural surroundings as he finds his object ready for enjoyment (ibid., § 190).

The problem is that what initially appeared to be equilibrium seems not so stable after all. For the Bondsman, the situation becomes disappointing because he, moving forth through work, acknowledges the arbitrary nature of the ends given by his Lord. For the Lord the equilibrium becomes unsatisfactory despite the enjoyment, because it does not seem clear why recognition from a Bondsman who does not count as an authoritative recognizer anyway should matter. The ‘victorious’ Lord faces the dilemma of both needing the Bondsman’s recognition and not being entitled to needing it.

The pathology here seems to be that the relation of the Lord-given reproductive ends of the community to the Bondsman’s labor as their means
is external, mechanical, and thus “dead.” When an organ stops serving as a means to the reproductive end of an organism, it is reduced to the status of a mere mechanical or inorganic, chemical process and the organism falls ill. However, nowhere does Hegel claim that this is the problem here. Lord and Bondsman are quite successfully reproducing themselves as organisms, and their biological species as well. What is pathological here is not the biological but the distinctively social reproduction: as the Lord gives arbitrary ends, the Bondsman works on them, and the Lord enjoys the fruits, this species in its self-reproduction divides itself between production and consumption in a way that makes spiritual life fall ill. The specific feature of ‘spiritual life’ or social reproduction is that – as a ‘we’ that is an ‘I’ – it has the freedom to give itself its own ends. The community of Lord and Bondsman, however, reduces the relation between effort and enjoyment, work and leisure to the mechanical relationship between a production that is not consummatory and a consumption that is not productive.

The Bondsman’s realization of his Lord’s ends, however, involves an interaction between him and his natural environment that ‘in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is’ (Hegel 1977 [1807], § 193). First of all, in working upon his natural environment to realize the ends set by his Lord, the Bondsman must formulate ideas that are, in fact, responsive to those natural objects. Under the fear of death and the discipline of service, he learns to verify and falsify practical success and, thus, at least implicitly, to treat the standard of such success as located in the interaction between him and his environment. Thus his working upon natural objects presents him with an interactive continuum of consciousness and its object, which is materially incompatible with and more inclusive than the initial claim of Self-Consciousness to being the source of authoritativeness. Secondly, to realize his Lord’s ends the Bondsman must reflect upon the means to those ends. In delivering to his Lord, he thus learns to grasp a continuum of means and ends, which is more refined than the Lord’s treatment of the Bondsman as a means to the ends dictated by desire. Meanwhile for his choices between these different available means not to be completely arbitrary, the Bondsman needs, thirdly, to set his own ends, which must be responsive to nature. Under the Lord’s command, the Bondsman learns to take practical success into account: contrary to the first-order ends set by his Lord, these ‘Bondsman-type ends’ are not fully arbitrary, but falsifiable and verifiable on the basis of their success in molding the natural environment in accordance with ‘normative’ Lord-ends. The ‘Bondsman-type end’ is an end that provides practical guidance in the selection of means but also itself serves as a means for a further end, such as that given by the Lord. By this activity of realizing ‘first-
order Lord ends’ by evaluating means and ‘second order Bondsman-ends’ according to their practical consequences in nature, the Bondsman is able to identify his own subjectivity in nature, seeing his own ends become consequences.

This might have been a great turning point for Self-Consciousness. To fully appreciate these aspects of the Bondsman’s praxis would be to arrive at the standpoint that Hegel labels ‘Reason,’ which attributes intellectual authority to natural interactions of purposive activity – all of which is already *implicit* here. Alas, the experience of Self-Consciousness does not end here. Instead, ‘we’ encounter the dialectical problem of ideology. The achieved continuum of means and ends is namely ‘a freedom which is still enmeshed in servitude’: as a social reproduction parasitic on the Lord-ends, it is not ‘the universal power and the whole of the objective being’ (ibid., § 196). That is, even if the Bondsman has succeeded in establishing a certain continuum of means and ends beyond the initial claim of Self-Consciousness, the social *species*, the community of Lord and Bondsman, still functions mechanically, by an arbitrary, isolated end-giving.

The reason why we cannot jump from the dialectic of Lordship and Bondage to the dialectic of ‘Reason’ is thus the same as the reason why the critique of ideology presents a necessary ‘moment’ of any inclusive diagnosis of social pathologies: ‘spiritual’ life or social reproduction demands ends that are truly authoritative. It does not suffice that the instrumental organs merely fulfill their function: the end itself needs to be integrated and free. In addition to the experience of labor, what *mediates* between the dead equilibrium of Lordship and Bondage and the claim of reason is the ideological experience.

Now, the activity of formulating means to ends and ends to means provides the background for the Stoic conception of ‘thinking.’ When the Lord gives his arbitrary ends and the Bondsman works on them ‘as if’ they were truly authoritative, both learn to place authoritativeness outside of their social relationship. Stoicism emerges, on the Lordship side, when the Lord acknowledges the servitude implicit in his doing nothing but giving orders about shaping the natural surroundings, but still tries to preserve the high social standing of end-giving in contrast to the ‘mere’ calculation of means, which he attributes to the Bondsman. While he has established a certain degree of freedom from ‘outer nature’ by having the Bondsman work on it, the Lord still makes himself a servant of his ‘inner nature’ by treating his desires as immediately authoritative. On the servile side, the Bondsman tries to preserve the freedom involved in his activity of formulating ends to means in spite of the disappointment about arbitrary Lord-ends. When these sides coincide, we get Stoicism – the ideology for which the actual social position...
of the individual is of no import, since in her contemplative retreat from her institutional life-world she is free (ibid., §§ 197-9). Consequently, both Lord and Bondsman turn away from the unessential world of mere things (external means) to the contemplation of truly authoritative ends.

So in Stoicism, for both Lord and Bondsman thinking is thus distinguished from work, which remains external and damned. As external to what really matters, work counts as abstract, isolated, and thus dead. In that way, the Lord’s misrecognition of the Bondsman is extended as a socially shared contempt for the practical in general. Both regard themselves as fettered by their social functions. But in contemplation they gain independence. For the Lord this is a good deal, since he can now legitimately withdraw from work to esteemed leisure. But it is also attractive for the Bondsman, as it affirms the futility of his work. The problem, however, is that a contemplative retreat from their institutional forms of life to the calmness of their respective self-identities cannot liberate them, since every self needs expression in a concrete form of life. Stoicism promises a freedom it forbids: it cannot provide for ends that really matter for particular individuals. Thus, Stoicism presents an ideology that takes the shape of an inner protest against the pathological condition, but in fact it celebrates what is dead by making any transformative praxis look dead-born (ibid., §§ 200-1).

The insight that thought is constitutive of the world is true, but only insofar as thought is instrumentalized in directing praxis. This, however, ideological self-consciousness is not ready to accept. Instead, disappointed with the impotence of the Stoic ideology, it turns to what initially looks like a more radical outlook: namely, Skepticism. Whereas the Stoic dismissed the authoritativeness of Lordship, the Skeptic wants to negate any claim to authority. Any end can be turned into its opposite. And as no end is authoritative as such, everything appears a mere means for something else. Dropping the Stoic intellectual aspirations of contemplating empty ends, the Skeptic claims to reach peace and satisfaction by following appearances. The allegedly ‘real life’ that she takes to be her base is the ceaseless flux of contradictions (ibid., § 202). She thus lets herself be guided by something whose authority she denies. She makes the empirical subject the lord of the world who is not much brighter than was the explicitly end-giving Lord.

Skepticism, caught in this ‘absolute dialectical unrest’ (ibid., § 205) of experience, looks very much like the Phenomenology would without the describing ‘we’ recording its movement, or the experience of consciousness without the phenomenological method. The lack of thought in Skepticism appears as a lack of ‘we.’ Without a concept of ‘we’ mediating self-reflection, ends remain futile. Yet this, too, is a conclusion that the ideological
consciousness is not ready to draw. Instead of turning to the spiritual ‘we,’ it projects authoritative ends into an unattainable beyond, which it claims not to know, but in which it invests its faith (ibid., §§ 203-6).

Skepticism does not succeed in keeping its two sides together in one view. On the one hand, it laughs at the unessential reality of every end just appearing to be a means for something else, and on the other, it takes just these means as authoritative. At one moment, the Skeptic is the Lord of the empirical world; at the next, she is its Bondsman. The Unhappy Consciousness is aware of this contradiction: ‘Consequently, the duplication which formerly was divided between two individuals, the lord and the bondsman, is now lodged in one’ (ibid., § 206). If in Stoicism, ideology worked as a rejection of the reality of domination, and in Skepticism as the objection to the authoritativeness of that reality, then in Unhappy Consciousness, it functions as the internalization of the structure of that reality.

The Unhappy Consciousness is a great turning point in the ideological experience for two reasons. Firstly, in contrast to Stoicism and Skepticism, it is an explicit consciousness of pathology: it is aware of being alienated from its essential end and pretends nothing else. Secondly, by projecting this truly authoritative end into a beyond, ideology becomes educative: this unhappy, unessential consciousness needs to unite itself with what it regards as its ‘unchangeable’ alien essence and, thus, ‘it must … set about freeing itself … from itself’ (ibid., §§ 208). What up until now was ideology systematically blocking any transformative praxis turns into something like an unintended learning process pointing beyond the pathological condition and ideology itself. Although this educative stance points explicitly beyond the pathological condition, the learning process it effects must still be regarded as unintended, since this beyond is not intended to be actualized in this world by overt action. The learning process is directed at transforming the unessential Unhappy Consciousness, not the objective pathological condition. But as we shall see, this might have unintended consequences for the objective condition itself.

The Unhappy Consciousness regards the present (Diesseits) as an external means to the eternal life beyond (Jenseits). First, the Unhappy Consciousness tries to reach communion with its alienated end by means of religious devotion (Andacht). The difficulty is that however much it tries to embrace the alien essence, the unessential consciousness cannot flee from itself, since this activity of reaching is still just its own unessential doing (ibid., § 217). Thus, if it is to extend to union with the ‘unchangeable’ beyond, the change in the Unhappy Consciousness’s changeable condition has to come from above.
The second attempt is, quite consequently, to understand the beyond as surrendering (preisgeben) a part of itself in return for the Unhappy Consciousness’s giving of thanks (Danksagung). It now regards the present qua the here and now (Diesseits) as a present qua gift (Preisgabe) from beyond. This implies both a more mutual relation of recognition between the Unhappy Consciousness and a truly authoritative end-giving Heavenly Lord, but also a more organic relation of social reproduction. The progress here is that the relation becomes vivified, as the authoritative ends of labor are regarded as sanctifying the means. Unhappy Consciousness now appreciates its natural environment and its labor power as, in part, ‘gift[s] from an alien source’ (ibid., § 220) and goes on to work assured that this is the activity of the beyond. Yet also this time the Unhappy Consciousness fails to impress itself: its thankfulness for the enjoyment seems like an attempt at counterbalancing the truly authoritative recognizer’s self-sacrifice with an equivalent. But by virtue of its very act of thanking, it has, in fact, proven that it has not, in fact, relinquished itself (ibid., § 222).

After failing to come to terms with the authoritiveness of an unattainable beyond and the authoritative recognition from God that enables a universal servitude and equality of all before the real Heavenly Lord, the Unhappy Consciousness finally tries to come into contact with this truly authoritative recognizer through the mediation of the priest. The mediator is another sinner, but he is taken to be a recognizee in touch with the absolute recognizer. The Unhappy Consciousness can be united with God only if it gives up its own independent finite consciousness. Thus it can already see itself from the perspective of a legitimate recognizer. But it now needs a mediating consciousness to assure that its bodily nature, that is its work and desire, is in accordance with the ends of the truly authoritative recognizer. By totally giving itself up to the directions of the mediator, it comes voluntarily to God. Thereby it turns its own consciousness into a mere ‘thing,’ to a piece of inorganic nature, in an act of subjection. The mediator, however, assures that its activity is God’s will. In this way, the Unhappy Consciousness’s hopeless struggle for recognition from the truly authoritative Lord does, in fact, ‘create the authority of the Church’ and actualize ‘God’s will in the world’ (Harris 1995, 46). For consciousness itself, its experience of emancipation is postponed, but it has now reached a certainty of its praxis’s being in principle in accordance with truly universal ends (Hegel 1977 [1807], §§ 226-230).

For us, the phenomenological observers, or critics of ideology, if you will, the community with God reveals itself as the constitution of the reproductive end of a community, namely the church. With the help of the mediator, the Unhappy Consciousness and its natural environment cease to
be mere *external* means of the ends of the beyond. Its praxis now actualizes the ends it takes as authoritative in this very life. For us, production and consummation, effort and enjoyment have thus become one. It has the structure of the spiritual ‘we,’ the recognize unity-in-difference of the ‘I,’ the mediating other sinner, and the authoritative recognizer, that is reproduced as a social institution claiming universality; or, in the terminology of George Herbert Mead, as the triad of the ‘I,’ ‘the significant other’ and ‘the generalized other’ (Mead 1962, Part III). As mediating between what Mead calls the ‘I’ and the ‘Me,’ the standpoint of the generalized other effects critical self-reflection in praxis. The constitution of this unity, however, appears to consciousness itself as a miracle produced by this absolute recognizer Himself and assured by the mediator (Hegel 1977 [1807], § 230). This internalized recognize triad is the representation of ‘Reason,’ which is the purposive activity inclusive enough to be able to account for both its means and its ends (ibid., § 22).

### 3 What Ideology Appears to Be

Ideology is an interpretive response to a pathological social condition. Whereas social pathology is the systematic disturbance of distinctively *social* reproduction, ideology functions as a systematic learning blockade to working out the authoritative reproductive ends. More specifically, it is an intellectual reaction that divides theory as allegedly true and authoritative from a social praxis perceived as false. As such, it also ignores what is true about that unfree social praxis: in the relationship of domination, the actual praxis of the Bondsman already points over and beyond the primitive conception of intellectual authority that is effective by being implicitly rational. The relative dead equilibrium of the situation will persist, however, since the participants are not able to perceive the rationality implicit in the purposive activity of a ‘spiritual’ community. The reason for this is the cultural contempt for the servility of instrumental calculation, body, change and the practical – in contrast to the esteemed goods of contemplation, mind, stability and the theoretical. Thus, just like the dualism of means and ends in social reproduction marked the pathological condition, at the heart of ideology lies the dichotomy between theory and praxis. Ideology extends the misrecognition of the Bondsman to the contempt of the practical in general, thus preventing any truly transformative activity by the members of the community.

This boils down to a functional explanation. On the one hand, in order for the relation of domination not to be based on pure violence—that is, to be thrown back to ‘a life-and-death struggle’ (ibid., § 187)—the dead
equilibrium needs an ‘artificial respiration’ of ideological theoretical reactions that ensure the low status of means as opposed to ends, work as opposed to contemplation, body as opposed to mind and, generally, praxis as opposed to theory. On the other hand, as habituated into ideological self-conceptions, these reactions are further supported by the persistence of the dead social institutions out of which the dualism of theory and praxis was born. These institutions’ being dead provides further evidence for the supremacy of contemplation.

But more importantly, for Hegel this functional relationship of ideology and pathology is productive: ideology is effective by being a factor in sustaining the pathology it reacts against. The respiration that ideological institutions provide might be artificial, but it does breathe a breath of authentic spirit into the diseased community:

[T]he life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. (Ibid., § 217)

For the ideological consciousness, the educational process that ideology initiates seems like the magical power of an other, an alien spirit healing the present; but by giving itself up to the ends of the authoritative recognizer, it actualizes that spirit in this very life. Ideology culminates thus in an unintended learning process; it is unintended since the ideological consciousness intends not to change the world, but only itself; yet it is a learning process, because, in changing itself, the ideological consciousness also appears to change the world. Ideology denotes, then, a learning process that goes beyond itself: the participants learn to acknowledge the practical consequences of their ideological conceptions as the truth of those conceptions by assuming the standpoint of a generalized other – the great institutional achievement of the ideological experience itself.

The critique of ideology aids in this process by ‘liquefying’ what to the ideological consciousness appears as ‘unchangeable.’ It not only, then, opens new possibilities for praxis, but also makes transformative praxis seem possible. So in a sense the phenomenological record of Stoicism, Skepticism
and the Unhappy Consciousness fulfills the three aims of ‘traditional’ critique of ideology. Firstly, it aids in **clarifying** the ‘true’ interests of the parties of a relation of domination, by showing what it would be to have an end of one’s praxis that does not owe its authority to any particular subject’s desires – be it the Lord’s, the Stoic self’s, the finite subject’s or the Unchangeable’s; it shows how the authoritativeness of ends of social reproduction are a spiritual, that is, socially reflexive affair. Secondly, it **explains** why the Lord, the Bondsman and their ideological successors are unable to work out these ends: that is, why they cannot act rationally, although the principle of rationality is already implicit in their practices and self-conceptions. And finally, it claims to **reconstruct** how ideological experience immanently points towards the concept of reason: that is, it traces the true function of ideology as an unintended learning process that leads to the concept of true, generally acceptable ends of social praxis.

It is, however, important to note how meager the achievement and how modest the claim of ideology critique is in the end. The critique of ideology does not say why domination is wrong or what consciousness is true. It shows why certain intellectual reactions that regard a pathological situation as problematic become necessarily inverted and sustain the conditions they intend to overcome, and it records what is implicitly rational in them. Thus it remains a moment of an inclusive diagnosis of pathology. It enters a kind of division of labor with other moments of a distinctively **social philosophy** not because it would be a ‘parasitic’ project dependent on normative standards it cannot deliver itself. Normativist worries that the critique of ideology does not discern universal standards of moral rightness or epistemic truth in identifying ‘false consciousness’ fall short. The critique of ideology can neither draw upon external moral yardsticks nor rely on the ethical resources of a given community. But it is the precise business of an immanent critique of ideology to clear the hurdle for a situation to emerge in which participants might actually assess their problems in normative terms on the basis of a socially shared conception of a universally acceptable form of social life. The standard by which to measure the correctness of any ideology-critical praxis is precisely the degree to which it succeeds in that.

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2 This is a central social-ontological commitment in Honneth’s recent rethinking of ‘the diseases of society’ (Honneth 2014).

3 One could of course call this an “idealist” reading as opposed to the materialist one, but the claim of Stern’s conceptual realism is anyway to offer an interpretation of the Hegelian concept of idealism “that is true to the text, that is not clearly extravagant and that is not subject to the [charge] of triviality” (Stern 2009, 45; cf. ibid., Ch. 1).

4 Also in Kojève, both Lord and Bondsman accept Stoicism, Skepticism and the Unhappy Consciousness. According to his reading, however, these ideologies remain essentially servile, even if the Lord endorses them, since they constitute servile achievements. In the Kojèvian picture, these ideologies are servile accomplishments that the Lord appropriates retrospectively. This is what also distinguishes them from the shapes of Reason, which Kojève also interprets as “ideologies.” The latter are not created by “slaves,” but by “intellectuals,” i.e., “men who live somehow ‘above the battle’” and thus are neither Lords nor Bondsmen (Kojève 1969, 33).

5 In fact, in Stoicism, self-consciousness does view the things as “other,” since, in withdrawing to “thought,” it first “turn[s] away” from the things
and “return[s] into itself,” in order to contemplate them through its own given concepts. This is why the opposition of self-consciousness remains and why Stoicism presents a shape of self-consciousness (cf. Hegel 1977, § 200).

6 In Frankfurt School critical theory, such readings date back to Horkheimer’s interpretation of the Hegelian “metaphysical” type of “dialectic” as building on an epistemic identity of subject and object presupposed at the outset of inquiry (Horkheimer, 1987).

7 Marcuse was, to my knowledge, the first interpreter to comprehend the phenomenological “we” in terms of the “readers” of the book who are “shaken in [their] security, overlaid with the feeling that [they do] not possess the whole truth.” As such, the “we” does not possess the characteristics of a Horkheimerian “presupposed identity,” but “dwells in the element of philosophy” somewhere “en route” between “natural consciousness” and “science” (cf. Marcuse 1955, 94).

8 In this I am following F. Neuhouser’s (forthcoming) interpretation.

9 Cf. Honneth’s attempt to outline a program for a social philosophy as distinct from political philosophy that, instead of merely inquiring into a justifiable political order, reflects upon successful forms of social life (Honneth 2007)

10 R. Jaeggi argues against a division of labor between critique of ideology and other social-philosophical projects on the grounds that it contradicts with ideology critique’s self-understanding as a unity of critique and analysis in its own right. In what I understand to be Hegel’s view, however, the two aspects are not mutually exclusive. As a response to certain experiential subject-matter, the descriptive immanent critique (as a unity of analysis and critique) develops the instruments to deal with it and prepares the ground for a further problematic experiential subject matter (Cf. Jaeggi 2009, 280).