

Ideologies

“Systems of conviction” between trust and suspicion

Something is *very clearly* starting to shift in “our” self-evident assumptions of the world; this shift is apparent to most people and stirs up strong as well as contrary emotions. Loss, worry and sorrow meet as well as morph with anger, upheaval and euphoria into—yet—unrecognisable shapes. *Polarisation*—not least named word of the year 2024 in the USA—suggests recognisability and “selectivity”. If this expectation proves elusive, the over-determined concept of *ideology* promises analytical clarity, except that it in turn proves to evade simple categorisation and does not allow for ascertainment.

If we recognise and admit that we *all* are—and always have been—interbedded in complex and plural “systems of conviction” (R. Jaeggi) that “embody” (also) political practices, which reciprocally affirm these systems of conviction, we (again and painfully so) become aware of our position as participants in and the critique on *our* ideology.

If we are part of “systems of conviction”, this means we cannot fully extract ourselves from the institutions that we criticise and yet remain *in relation* with. Ideologies and their “offer of identity” rely on “institutional ties” for stability on an individual as well as collective level. Thus, ideologies have a double effect: within a “system of conviction” they provide shelter, but outwardly they are defensive and closed off. The latter has raised and initiated the necessity for a *critique* of ideology.

However, any *critique* of ideology tends to become ideological itself by *obscuring* its own shortcomings and distortions. Thus, the “only” object of a critique of ideology can be the continuous *transformation* of its own epistemic and lived contradictions.

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Religions, due to their historic longevity, are ideal “paradigms” of both inevitable ideological *suspicion* and the (undeniably ambivalent) *quality* of ideologies. Where religions have been or are successful in creating an existential shelter for people, this can be in part attributed to their ability of creating a “holistic” vision. However, (too) broad a vision can also give rise to *closed-off* and *protective tendencies*, which in turn create alliances with structures of power and dominance.

LIMINA 10:1 invites *interdisciplinary* examinations of different approaches to ideology and a critique of ideology that seek to investigate how these concepts can meaningfully contribute to a (more) nuanced understanding of our complex political circumstances. The editors are committed to a dialectical understanding of the Enlightenment tradition and aim to reveal through critical analyses the existential and epistemic possibilities of ideology and its critique as well as their hidden undercurrents.

This constitutes our departure point from which to consider and question the topic of ideology from the following perspectives:

- How has the concept of ideology developed historically and philosophically—from a primarily epistemologically critical instrument to a complex concept of embodied systems of conviction? What links can be traced between this etymology and epoch-specific contextual conditions in practical and social terms?
- What is the relationship between *trust* and *suspicion* in the context of perceived or ascribed ideologies? What form does this relationship take in historically developed religions—primarily in Christianity and its manifold denominations?
- Can theology take the role of an immanent critique of ideology that aims not at overcoming but at transforming epistemic and practical contradictions? What are its potentials and structural limitations?
- How can biblical texts be interpreted from an ideology-critical perspective that forefronts their potential for critique and resistance without negating their ambivalent entanglements in logics of power, identity and closure?
- To what extent are ideologies (also) of a “literary” nature, i. e., what role—positive or negative—does *form* or genre (narrative, rhetoric, etc.) play? And to what extent does the same apply to the *critique* of ideology? (Literary studies, linguistics, German studies)
- In what way do ideologies create stability inwardly (“shelter”) and demarcations outwardly through institutional arrangements?

- What significance does this hold for current political dynamics of polarization, the use of emotions, and the offering of identities?
- What challenges arise for religious and political education when people are always already part of embodied systems of conviction? How can a critique of ideology be discussed without tipping into a pejorative rhetoric of exclusion?
 - To what extent do recent technological developments such as the internet, social media, and AI promote or inhibit the intentional shaping of ideologies? What makes these “new” media different from traditional forms of communication, which are inherently “ideology-friendly”? (Ethics of technology, social ethics, communication sciences)
 - What underpins the (mostly) reciprocally stabilizing relationship between ideology and institutions? Are there institutional forms—including from a historical perspective—that are more *ideologically susceptible* than others, and if so, to what can this be attributed?
 - How do the different organizational forms of Christian communities—church, sect, mysticism (E. Troeltsch)—interact with their “need for ideology”? How can this be evaluated within the heterogeneous self-image of secular or post-secular societies?

If you are interested in contributing to this discussion on “ideologies” with an innovative and yet unpublished article in [LIMINA](#), please submit an outline (max. 4,000 characters) to: [limina\(at\)uni-graz.at](mailto:limina(at)uni-graz.at)

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