

IDEOLOGY, PIERRE BOURDIEU'S *DOXA*, AND THE HEBREW BIBLE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years "ideological criticism" has emerged as a new and important branch of inquiry in Old Testament studies. This essay examines the ways in which biblical scholars have appropriated the concept of ideology and applied it to the Hebrew Bible. It is argued that most of these researchers share certain fundamental assumptions about what ideology is and how ancient writers made use of it. This "voluntaristic conception," as I call it, stresses the consciousness of the biblical ideologue *qua* ideologue. It focuses on the ideologue's deliberate attempt to use his writing as a means of persuading others of the veracity of his group's world view. As a means of broadening the variety of theoretical options available to ideological critics, this article challenges the fundamental assumptions of the voluntaristic conception. Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *doxa* is discussed as one possible alternative for socioliterary analysis of the Hebrew Bible.

For that matter, I should probably not speak of writers having ideologies, but rather of ideologies having writers.

—David J.A. Clines

THE VOLUNTARISTIC CONCEPTION OF IDEOLOGY

In this essay I will examine the tacit assumptions that undergird many—though not all—discussions of ideology in contemporary biblical scholarship. For want of a better term, I will refer to this set of assumptions as the *voluntaristic conception of ideology*.¹ The degree to which it appears in the relevant scholarly literature—including the writings of some of the most creative and theoretically informed minds in The Guild of Biblical Studies—is not insubstantial. It is not my intention to demonstrate that this approach

¹ The following definition of this widely used term will suit our purposes: "In its crudest form *voluntarism* means that all social phenomena are directly traceable to the deliberate decisions of human beings" (Fichter: 750; also see Leftow).

is "wrong." It undoubtedly provides a useful optic for the sociological study of the Hebrew Bible, but not the only optic.

By articulating the presuppositions of the voluntaristic conception and then drawing them into wider theoretical discussions, I hope to broaden the range of options available to those who engage in ideological criticism of ancient documents.² As a means of identifying *one* possible alternative to this prevailing approach, I will attempt to transpose Pierre Bourdieu's notion of *doxa* into the key of socioliterary analysis.

The Voluntaristic Conception in Biblical Scholarship

At the risk of homogenizing and oversimplifying the research of an intellectually heterogenous assortment of scholars, I will outline the major assumptions of the voluntaristic conception. To begin, the authors of the Hebrew Bible are said to be *in possession* of an ideology—one that is often referred to as Yahwist, patriarchal, and/or elitist.³ Enfolded within this view is an epistemological assumption about ancient writers. The biblical literati, it is implied, *intentionally constructed* and *promulgated* this ideology. Accordingly, they *recognized* what they were up to; they set out to produce ideology, to persuade others, and this they did *consciously*. I label this conception "voluntaristic" because it views various biblical authors as purposefully articulating a conception of the world, one predicated upon an accurate accounting of their own interests. These interests are thus envisioned as *transparent* to consciousness, capable of being assessed, understood, and made the object of discourse and social action.

Some build upon these premises by suggesting that the ancient writers tried to *conceal* their ideology from the world. They craftily smuggled their agenda into the text—all the better to *impose* it upon their (seemingly) unsuspecting readership. Sometimes, the voluntaristic conception takes a political turn. A connection is made between ancient intellectuals on the one hand, and institutions of this-worldly power on the other. The authors of the Hebrew Bible thus appear as the literary appendage of a dominant group or

² In this essay I will refrain from any analysis of the *modern* biblical reader's and translator's relation to ideology. For interesting attempts to theorize this relation, see The Bible and Culture Collective's chapters on "Ideological Criticism" and "Reader-Response Criticism." For my own views on The Collective's insistence that "ideological criticism is to be seen as a resistant act, a positive, ethical response" (277; see also Yee: 116; Fewell and Gunn: 13; Gunn and Fewell: 205) and their repeated calls for ideological self-confession (280–81), see Berlinerblau, 1999a:17–20, 188–95 (see also Carroll, 1998). As for the ideology of the professional biblical translator, see the analyses of Carroll (1993, 1994) and Clines.

³ Fowl forcefully challenges the notion that texts have ideologies.

class. Their task was to disseminate certain truths about the world; the biblical scroll was their medium.⁴

A wide variety of biblical scholars—often emanating from unrelated or even mutually antagonistic schools of thought—work with one or more of these assumptions. “The Bible,” writes Gale Yee, “was not written to be an object of aesthetic beauty or contemplation, but as a persuasive force forming opinion, making judgments, and exerting change. It was a form of power acting upon the world” (116, and see 112). David Penchansky opines: “The sins of the Deuteronomist are exactly my own sins. I too put forth a template, a reading strategy, and seek through persuasion to influence others to read texts my way” (40). In his study of royal ideology, Keith Whitelam remarks: “A feature of this psalm [72] in the context of the functioning of royal ideology needs to stress clearly that it provides an extremely powerful justification for the role of the state embodied in the king. . . . The promise of the defeat of the king’s enemies, represented as the powers of chaos . . . provides a powerful warning to those who would usurp the throne” (132; also see Laato; Brettler, 1989, 1995:91–111).

Norman Habel claims: “A biblical ideology . . . is a complex and contested set of ideas, values, symbols, and aspirations being promoted with social and political force in a given literary complex to persuade the implied audience within that text of the truth of a given ideology” (11; also see 5, 10, 12). Philip Davies speaks of the “biblical ‘Israel’ which the literate parts of that society [Second Temple period Palestine] created as an ideological construct” (15).

In a truly formidable work of interdisciplinarity, Meir Sternberg offers the following definition: “Ideology would above all establish a world view and, if militant, a consensus. It accordingly presses for transparent representation that will . . . bring the world into the appropriate doctrinal pattern, schematized in equal disregard for the intractability of historical fact and the ordering niceties of art” (44). Later, he says of the biblical narrator: “His persuasion is not only geared to an ideology but also designed to vindicate and inculcate it” (482). Below, we shall revisit Sternberg’s discussions of this “artful ideologist” (38).

Norman Gottwald’s analysis of ideology in his 1979 *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* is firmly

⁴ Elsewhere, I have called into question the oft-encountered association between the authors of the Hebrew Bible and institutions of this-worldly power (1999b). The political variant of the voluntaristic conception can be compared to what Geertz once called “the interest theory” of ideology, which roots “cultural idea-systems in the social ground of social structure, through emphasis on the motivations of those who profess such systems and on the dependence of those motivations in turn upon social position, most especially social class” (52).

grounded in classical Marxist theory.⁵ His recent writings (1992b, 1993; and see Milbank), however, are greatly influenced by contemporary Marxist literary critics such as Terry Eagleton and Fredric Jameson. What emerges are distinct, albeit imbricated, assumptions about ideology in ancient Israel. Gottwald's complex analyses certainly merit far greater attention than they can receive here. For now, I wish only to delineate a few of his basic assumptions, mostly culled from his *magnum opus*. In *The Tribes of Yahweh* he defines ideology as:

The consensual religious ideas which were structurally embedded in and functionally correlated to other social phenomena within the larger social system, and which served, in a more or less comprehensive manner, to provide explanations or interpretations of the distinctive social relations and historical experience of Israel and also to define and energize the Israelite social system oppositionally or polemically over against other social systems. (1979:66; italics in original)

Consciousness is a crucial variable in this reconstruction of emergent Israel. Gottwald refers to the latter as "a conscious, organized, broad-scale social egalitarian movement" (1979:489). Using Marx's pointed term he describes Yahwistic Israel as "a class for itself" (1979:489). He points to its "consciousness of struggle ... crystallized in the ideology of Yahwism" (1979:647; also see 77, 123, 702; 1983:19, 1992a:83) and speaks of proto-Israelites as "socially uprooted people seeking ideological roots for newly designed, comprehensive and cooperative intergroup relations" (1979:337). "Yahwistic religion," he avers, "was the praxis and ideology of an actual social community" (1979:700). The ideological consciousness of emergent Israel finds a counterpart in statist Canaan, whose own ideology was a stanchion for "socioeconomic and political oppression" (1979:587). In later times the prophets advance a "counter-ideological attack on the abusive and corrupt leadership" of their own society (1996:147). For Gottwald, then, different ideologies coexist and compete (also see 1983:7). Regrettably, this mercilessly pared down version of this major writer's work will have to suffice for now.⁶

The same injustice will be visited upon the immensely engrossing Robert Carroll. Throughout his writings he has experimented with a variety

⁵ For a much more detailed analysis of Gottwald's conception of ideology as well as a discussion of his use of Parsonian systems theory, see Berlinerblau (forthcoming).

⁶ Elsewhere (and greatly reminiscent of Weber's *Ancient Judaism*) there are references to the Levitical priesthood as an "organizational cadre of leadership" (1979:490), which plays a central role in the ideological process (also see 1992b:55). Yet even with his emphasis on consciousness, Gottwald is still well aware of the antivoluntaristic approaches to be discussed below. Further, he does discuss religion and ideology as "refraction," "mystification," or "*camera obscura*" (1979:28, 640-41, 648, 707; and see 1996:137-38). I am not sure how to reconcile these approaches. On Gottwald and ideology, see Jobling (1987).

of approaches and strategies, showing himself to be one of the most thoughtful, theoretically nuanced, and supple biblical ideological critics. While Carroll is acutely aware of the types of alternative readings of ideology that I shall discuss below, more often than not he advances something akin to the voluntaristic conception. Repeatedly, and responsibly, reminding us to view his conclusions cautiously, he writes: "I suspect . . . that we should read the story of Jeremiah the landowner as a textual strategy helping to enforce the ideological claim to land on the part of those who could trace or claim association with Babylonian Jews" (1991:115; see also 1996:26, 30). Elsewhere he comments: "Such ideology can be extraordinarily rich in complexity and possibility, but it still represents a point of view maintained by a power group over the rest of the community" (1996:25). In another essay he remarks: "The Hebrew Bible comes to us as a collection of documents shaped by partisan, pro-Babylonian Jewish community ideological bias" (1997:310). And one last example: "Canons reflect the powerful ideologies of the canonizers" (1997:318; also see 1981:17).⁷

In her important study of "political and ideological aspects of female characterization in the biblical narrative" (69), Esther Fuchs makes a variety of intriguing observations pertaining to Genesis 31. Later I shall return to, and try to reinterpret, one of her findings. For now, the following quote is helpful in highlighting the epistemological assumption discussed above:

Because menstruation is unique to women, it should come as no surprise that patriarchal ideology should *attempt to associate it* with both deception and idolatry. . . . if patriarchal politics cannot deny the existence of menstruation and its undeniable link to fertility and procreation, it can degrade it by defining it as impure and by legislating a series of laws to contain it. Similarly, if patriarchal politics cannot deny woman's ability to think and speak, it can contain, or warp, the relationship of women and language by minimizing and constricting female dialogue and by implying that it is metaphorically impure, or, deceptive. (80; emphasis mine)

As for the furtive nature of biblical ideology, Danna Fewell and David Gunn quote Michel Foucault's remark that: "Power is tolerable only on

⁷ Unlike most others in the guild, Carroll is very deliberate in pointing out that he prefers to work with what I call the voluntaristic conception (1990:309). Elsewhere (1994) he hints at another variable in ideological analysis: language. "What representation does is to choose a mode of discourse in which to tell a story, creating or shaping it by means of tropes and images employed. The story is not a list of facts strung together, but a highly and creatively shaped account constructed out of linguistic elements which carry specific charges determined by the language used" (1994:12). Here he seems to lighten the voluntaristic load somewhat on the biblical author, insinuating that language itself provides premade ideological optics through which the ideologue may glance.

condition that it mask a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms." To this they add: "Biblical patriarchy has mastered this rule" (12). Robert Carroll invokes the theme of authorial stealth when he remarks: "As ideological literature the Hebrew Bible conceals or renders invisible as much as it makes apparent or represents" (1997:310; also see Gottwald 1992b:50, 1993:221). And while Meir Sternberg deploys a far less suspicious hermeneutic in his discussions of biblical narrative, he too is quick to point to the author's "trickiness" or the "cunning route" he takes when trying to persuade his readers (492, 351).

The Voluntaristic Conception and Its Others

The fundamental theoretical components of the voluntaristic conception are: (1) the existence of (usually dominant) groups or classes across Judahite and/or Israelite time and space who, (2) conscious of their own political and theological interests, (3) formulated an ideology to express these interests (4) and sought to persuade others by inscribing them (overtly or covertly) in this or that biblical text.

Since most discussions of ideology in biblical scholarship are under-theorized, or not theorized at all, it is difficult to identify the voluntaristic conception's affinities with canonical works of social theory.⁸ With its implication of literary ideologues trying to convince others of their Yahwist, patriarchal, or class truths, it is vaguely reminiscent of the more agency-oriented positions of V. I. Lenin and Antonio Gramsci. For each writer, ideology can be a weapon, one that a class wields *consciously* against other classes who may themselves be in possession of their own ideologies (Salamini: 366, 369; Lenin: 37–42). In *What Is to Be Done? Burning Questions of our Movement*, Lenin makes much of the "conscious element" and "political consciousness" (39, 37; and see Carlsnaes: 121). In Gramsci's thought, intellectuals play a central role in articulating, promulgating, but most of all *organizing* the ideological imperatives of the hegemonic coalition (Gramsci: 5–23). As Thomas Bates notes: "The intellectuals succeed in creating hegemony to the extent that they extend the world view of the rulers to the ruled, and thereby secure the 'free' consent of the masses to the law and order of the land" (353; also see Femia: 35; Salamini: 378; Fontana: 25–34). Gramsci's intellectuals, then, give form to a conception of the world in accord with their class interests and seek to persuade other groups of its salience.⁹

⁸ Thus Harris, Brueggemann, Japhet, Gorman, and Pippin and Aichele all refer to ideology in their titles but offer little or no discussion of the term.

⁹ On Gramsci's voluntarism, see Femia (35–48).

Be that as it may, in its currently undertheorized state, "ideology" in Hebrew Bible research tends to shed its theoretical brawn and to wither into a somewhat less freighted term: "propaganda." In his *Propaganda and Subversion in the Old Testament*, Rex Mason defines "propaganda" as: "The presentation of material so as to express a particular belief or set of beliefs in such a way as to command assent to it from those to whom it is addressed" (170). Let there be no doubt: *there is propaganda in the Hebrew Bible*, especially of the Yahwist variety (see Carroll, 1995:29). But any attempt to make an analogous claim about ideology must confront the awesome word-and-thought defying ambiguities inherent in the term.¹⁰

"Ideology," Jorge Larrain cautions, is "perhaps one of the most equivocal and elusive concepts one can find in the social sciences" (1979:13). This state of affairs may be attributed, in large part, to the fact that the foundational text for the study of this issue, Marx and Engels's *The German Ideology*, is problematic in the extreme (Barrett: 3, 46; also see Williams; Larrain, 1983; Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner: 7–11; Boudon: 19, 34–52; Ricoeur: 68–102). Not surprisingly, there exist "a startling variety of interpretations of what Marx actually thought on this subject" (Barrett: 3). Complicating matters immensely is the fact that many major social theorists, be they Marxist or non-Marxist, have developed their own idiosyncratic explanations of ideology. As Raymond Boudon observes, "The impression is that the same word is used to describe a multitude of phenomena rather than a single one, that theories of ideology are at odds on something they define differently, and that the large corpus which they constitute seems therefore like a dialogue of the deaf" (17; also see Eagleton, 1991:31).

Bearing this in mind, I advise biblical ideological critics to follow the lead of Norman Gottwald (1996), Robert Carroll (1990), K. Lawson Younger Jr. (47–52), and David Clines (9–25). These writers devote sustained attention to the many possible readings of the term. Had the biblical researchers discussed in the preceding section employed the word *propaganda*, as opposed to *ideology*, I could find myself agreeing with many of their claims. Yet it seems to me that the very ambiguity of the term *ideology* has served to generate a variety of extremely fruitful theoretical possibilities in a manner that *propaganda* has not. For now, I want to explore some of these possibilities by demonstrating that two central contentions of the voluntaristic conception (i.e., points 2 and 3 above) have been, and can be, approached differently by theorists of ideology.

¹⁰ Brettler (1995:13–14) notes the overlap between these two terms. He defines propaganda as "the methods used to disseminate and foster" ideology, the latter defined as "a specific type of sets of beliefs." For reasons that will become apparent momentarily, I do not think that the association of these two terms is helpful.

In the voluntaristic conception the ideologue is conscious of his or her ideological production. Without engaging a host of thorny epistemological questions, I submit that one could derive an entirely different understanding of the ideologue's consciousness after reading, for example, *The German Ideology*. There, ideology is referred to as an "illusion" (40, 43), "the illusion of that epoch" (30), and a "camera obscura" (14). Michèle Barrett parses Marx's conception into the following equation: "ideology = mystification serving class interests" (167). Louis Althusser reads it as "an imaginary assemblage (*bricolage*), a pure dream, empty and vain" (1971:160). Boudon, arguing that Marx and Engels maintained two distinct positions within one text (41, 52), writes of the first, or "irrationalist," approach: "People unknowingly adhere to false ideas because they are impelled by *unconscious* forces outside their control which make them slaves either to their own interests (if they belong to the ruling class) or to the interests of the ruling class (if they belong to the underclass)" (36).

The point here is not to arrive at some type of verdict as to what Marx really meant (an unenviable task taken up with great wisdom and patience by Paul Ricoeur). Instead, I only maintain that there is theoretical precedent for prying apart the voluntaristic conception's persistent coupling of ideology and consciousness. For a Marxist theorist such as Althusser, for example, ideology is precisely what is not transparent to the agent's consciousness. "A philosopher," he states, "thinks in it [i.e., ideology] rather than thinking of it." He continues: "An ideology is already unconscious of its 'theoretical presuppositions'" (1993:69). Ricoeur analyzed Althusser's position as follows: "Ideology is unconscious in the sense that it is not mastered by consciousness or self-consciousness" (120). Or, as Larrain puts it: "Men 'practise' their ideology but do not know it. Ideology is 'profoundly unconscious' and surpasses the way in which it is 'lived' by particular individuals" (1979:155; also see Barrett: 37, 109). As is well known, Fredric Jameson—a major influence on biblical ideological criticism—would speak of the political *unconscious* (1981).¹¹ Suddenly, we see versions of ideology in which consciousness cannot be seen as transparent, as cognizant of its own political interests.

This brings us to a second questionable component of the voluntaristic conception. The view I have been criticizing contends that ideology "belongs" to a particular group or social class. Again, a defensible proposition. But

11 Jameson describes the following situation as a "mirage": "the vision of a moment in which the individual subject would be somehow fully conscious of his or her determination by class and would be able to square the circle of ideological conditioning by sheer lucidity and the taking of thought" (1981:283). Jameson's influence on biblical ideological criticism has been noted (Briggs: 16; *The Bible and Culture Collective*: 273; and see Jameson's interview with biblical scholars, 1992). In most cases, however, the problematic of consciousness or the political unconscious is not forcefully engaged, though see the interesting discussions of Boer, Jobling (1991), and Beal.

another plausible reading of Marx and Engels suggests that ideologies are not possessions but possessors and, more importantly, not in possession of one class, but of *entire social formations*. Ideology is, after all, described as "*the illusion of that epoch*." In my view, the illusion of an epoch is not necessarily synonymous with the illusion of the feudal aristocracy. In other words, ideology could be what *all* agents within a social body share. The ruling class, it is true, "regulate[s] the production and distribution of the ideas of their age" (Marx and Engels: 39). Nevertheless, theirs is an illusion that mystifies those who are not members of the ruling class as well.

THE DOXA OF SCRIPTURE

Doxa

The preceding remarks are not intended—and are not sufficiently substantive—to invalidate the voluntaristic conception. Instead, they permit us to open up some theoretical space—to envision different approaches to socioliterary analysis of the Hebrew Bible. Pierre Bourdieu's remarks on doxa do not constitute a theory of ideology *per se*. They do, however, contain affinities with the two alternative assumptions discussed above.

In *Outline of a Theory of Practice* Bourdieu argues that within any *field* there will exist competing heterodox and orthodox opinions. But underneath these surface contentions—acrimonious as they might be—there exists an unstated and unrecognized domain of agreement. For Bourdieu, orthodoxy and heterodoxy exist in "the universe of discourse (or argument)," while doxa resides in "the universe of the undiscussed" (1992:168). Yet even though doxic beliefs are outside the realm of discourse, they are nevertheless "known" by agents. Or, as Loïc Wacquant describes it, they comprise "a realm of implicit and unstated beliefs ... which govern their practices and representations" without the agents even realizing it (185).

Discussions of doxa are scattered throughout Bourdieu's work, usually ensconced in broader discussions of *habitus* and *field*. In his many asides on the topic, Bourdieu offers the following descriptions: "the pre-verbal taking-for-granted of the world that flows from practical sense" (1990:68); "fundamental acceptance of the established order situated outside the reach of critique" (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 247; also see 73–74); "the world of tradition experienced as a 'natural world' and taken for granted" (Bourdieu, 1992:164, 166); "presuppositions—*doxa*—of the game" (Bourdieu, 1990:66); "unthought assumptions" (Bourdieu, 1981:279); "ensemble de croyances fondamentales qui n'ont même pas besoin de s'affirmer sous la forme d'un dogme explicite et conscient de lui-même" ("the ensemble of fundamental beliefs, which do not even need to express themselves through the form of an explicit dogma, conscious of itself"; Bourdieu, 1997:26): "an adherence to

relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident" (Bourdieu, 1984:471; also see 1983:6; Bourdieu and Passeron: 162; Calhoun: 56, 151).

To this point we see that doxa is what agents immediately know, but do not know that they know. Or, as Bourdieu cleverly expresses this idea, it "*goes without saying because it comes without saying*" (1992:167). Moreover, these unrecognized or doxic beliefs are shared by *all* members of a field. Here there is unanimity, or what is referred to as "an unquestioned and unified cultural 'tradition'" (Bourdieu and Wacquant: 248 n. 45; and see Bourdieu 1998:67, 1982:156, 1997:22, 123). Beate Kraus notes: "Every mode of domination, even if it uses physical violence, presupposes a doxic order shared by the dominated and the dominants" (169). The question one might legitimately ask is: where does doxa come from? Bourdieu addresses this query with some clarity in *Practical Reason*: "Doxa is a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which presents and imposes itself as a universal point of view—the point of view of those who dominate by dominating the state and who have constituted their point of view as universal by constituting the state" (1998:57). This elliptical remark would seem to indicate that doxic beliefs, although shared by all, are themselves produced and reproduced by the dominant class. What is odd, however, is that this group never deliberately planted them in a given field's epistemological soil. Doxic assumptions, then, are a sort of unseen and unintended support for the rule of the dominant.¹²

For now let us summarize and draw comparisons. The fundamental theoretical components of the doxic approach to the Hebrew Bible are: (1) the existence of dominant groups or classes across Judahite and/or Israelite time and space who, (2) sharing certain unrecognized, tacit assumptions about the world with (3) all other synchronous, nondominant Judahite and/or Israelite groups and classes, (4) unknowingly inscribed these assumptions in this or that biblical text, and hence (5) unintentionally solidified their own dominant position (which they exerted great efforts to solidify through intentional efforts as well). Point three is crucial. Doxa refers to paradiscursive assumptions held by all synchronous Judahites and Israelites.¹³ To identify (what I call) the doxa of scripture, then, is not the same as identifying (what the voluntaristic conception calls) the ideology of

¹² That this surmise resembles, in a few respects, the formula "ideology = mystification serving class interests" is an issue to be engaged elsewhere.

¹³ Admittedly, I have done some violence to Bourdieu's scheme. For him, doxa binds together the members of a *field*. I have broadened the doxic base to include all of those Israelites and Judahites sharing time and space. I am thus shading doxa into the realm of what are known as "mentalities" (see Vovelle: 1–12; Hutton; Chartier).

scripture. Doxa is what everyone in a social body "knows." Ideology (or propaganda, as I label it), as the voluntaristic conception conceives it, is what one group or class knows *and wants others to know as well*.

Since doxic beliefs are unrecognized beliefs, they motivate the "ideologue" to action without him or her actually being aware of it. As such, doxa cannot be deployed (as can propaganda), because it cannot be held or comprehended by the agent. The voluntaristic conception works from the premise of the ideologue's consciousness, the doxic approach from the ideologue's unconsciousness—or unawareness, or misrecognition—of those social factors that are stimulants to thought and action. The former argues that the literati concealed their agenda, the latter that this very agenda was concealed from the literati themselves. Both approaches, however, share the assumption that dominant classes or groups are the fount of literary production.

Applications, Possibilities, Problems

I have yet to see a biblical scholar work with all of the five doxic assumptions enumerated above. And perhaps this is a good thing. Momentarily, it will be noted that the scheme is not without its own difficulties. If any type of doxic initiative has surfaced in Old Testament research, it would center around the surmise that the Hebrew Bible, to paraphrase Michael Polanyi, knows more than it can tell. In his *Interested Parties* David Clines writes: "Since ideologies are, in my opinion, very often simply assumed, even without their adherents even knowing quite what they are assuming, it is my purpose in this book to do a lot of uncovering of ideologies" (12; see also 103). In his analysis of Amos, for example, Clines remarks: "It is an essential element in the text's ideology that sin should be punished" (90). What is doxic (in the sense of point number 2 above) about Clines's approach is that he looks, not at what the text explicitly articulates, but what it takes as a given.

In the same spirit, I would add that as far as the author of the "oracle against the nations" (Amos 1:3–2:16) is concerned, when God punishes he punishes collectively. In the first moment of a doxic reading we do not concern ourselves as to whether the Ammonites really were cruel murderers (1:13), whether Tyre really deserved to be destroyed (1:9–10), or what have you. These are explicit statements—what the literati know and want us to know, propaganda. What is presupposed, however, is that all eight socio-political entities mentioned in the oracle *are to be destroyed in their entirety*; divine retribution is aimed at everyone within a social unit. For now, let us speculate that the author/s of this text simply "knew" that God's retribution is collective—no one is spared. Going a bit further, we might propose that what they really "knew," what went without saying in their times, was that human groups settled their scores collectively.

A somewhat similar point was made in David Daube's 1947 *Studies in Biblical Law*. In discussing Abraham's negotiation with God in the Sodom episode of Genesis 18–19, Daube makes a crucial observation that I shall quote at length:

Whereupon he [Abraham] replied [to God]: Preserve them—there may be a few good men. This was proposing the simplest alternative. Was it? Was the pardoning of all really the most plausible course when the punishing of all appeared unwarranted? *Yes, it was, if one assumption continued to be made . . . the assumption that, for better or for worse, a community must be treated as a whole, no discrimination between its various members being possible. Abraham continued to make this assumption. . . . Probably, communal thinking was so deep-rooted that Abraham could think in no other way; the method of judging a city as one unit so unreservedly accepted that he never questioned it as such. . . . While he expressed horror at the idea that "the righteous should be as the wicked," his own proposal implied neither more nor less than that the wicked should be as the righteous.* (156–57; emphasis mine)

If we substitute "the biblical author" for Daube's "Abraham," we seem to be veering in the direction of doxic readings.

In the article by Esther Fuchs cited earlier, she observes: "There is a difference between the representation of male and female deceptiveness, a difference directly related to biblical patriarchal politics" (70). Her very close reading of the text reveals subtle discrepancies in the author's treatment of male and female protagonists. Instead of directly reprimanding Rachel, he suspends judgment on her, leading to "a paleosymbolic association of femininity and deceptiveness" (70). The writer also fails to give her story—as opposed to Jacob's and Laban's—closure. This, Fuchs suggests, means that "in the case of women, deception is not a problem requiring punishment or reformation." In addition, he fails to provide explicit indices of Rachel's motivations—as he did for the male characters—making it "difficult for the reader to exonerate the female deceiver" (70).

Fuchs's analysis embraces nearly every single tenet of the voluntaristic conception and its political variant. The narrative discrepancies mentioned above are the vehicle through which the author gives vent to his patriarchal ideology. Instead of using more straightforward tools of slander to denigrate women, he cunningly deploys nearly imperceptible literary stratagems in order to get his patriarchal point across. He subtly manipulates the narrative to make different demands upon his male and female characters. He therefore uses his story as a means of gently ushering the reader to certain unflattering "truths" about the nature of Rachel (and hence all women).

But why would the narrator resort to such cryptic narrative encoding? In a patriarchal society, what would constrain him from unambiguously

expressing his patriarchal propaganda? Let us view the same data through a doxic filter. The author unknowingly depicts men and women differently. Without intent he skews his narrative so that he poses different questions of his male and female protagonists. He cannot help but associate menstruation with deception; of this degrading and sexist link he is unaware. But a sensitive critic such as Fuchs, standing a few thousand years away, can see it with abundant clarity. His assumptions about women are paradiscursive; they have been unintentionally put in their doxic place by a society that *we* recognize as patriarchal. As such, they served as an unintended and invisible truss of a system of patriarchal domination, albeit one that did not recognize itself as such.

The voluntaristic conception and the doxic approach are not necessarily mutually exclusive strategies. Instead, they should be seen as two "moments" of socioliterary analysis. In the first, we look for explicit information, what the literati wanted us to know. Mason's definition of propaganda strikes me as a plausible means of categorizing such data, and it roughly corresponds to what most biblical scholars have in mind when they speak of ideology. In the second moment, we plumb the sediment of the text for those things the authors did not "know" that they knew. It should be stressed that such information is often of the most banal variety. For example, I have suggested (1996:48-65) that biblical writers simply "knew" that vows were made by individuals, as opposed to groups. In and of itself, this discovery is not likely to elicit cries of "stop the presses!" However, when strung together with other banal tacit assumptions, and then compared with explicit ones, it is conceivable that certain intriguing patterns may emerge.

But I do not wish to foster the impression that the inchoate method adumbrated above is unproblematic. Leaving a discussion of its internal theoretical defects for another forum, doxic readings are hampered by many of the limitations that afflict the voluntaristic approach. The Hebrew Bible was written, rewritten, cut-and-pasted, canonized, recanonized over a millennia. Thus, when we identify the doxa of collective punishment in Amos we cannot really be certain that this is an assumption from the prophet's time. The effects of redaction and textual tampering may have resulted in a composite text and thus a series of completely distinct doxic assumptions poured into the prophet's mouth from various times and places. Both approaches are also paralyzed by the paucity of written materials at our disposal. How do we know that what strikes us as a tacit assumption of the book of Joshua was not the explicit subject of a lengthy disquisition in the missing Book of the Wars of the Lord mentioned in Num 21:14-15?

Finally, and uniquely vexing for the doxic approach, there is the nettlesome question of how we actually define an assumption. In forthcoming research we will have to distinguish between: (1) propaganda (what the biblical author knew and wanted his or her listeners to know as well), (2) doxic

assumptions (what the biblical author "knew" but did not know that s/he knew), and (3) those things that the ancient writers did not know at all, but nevertheless impacted upon their writings.¹⁴ Finally, we must take into consideration our own helplessness in the face of doxa. We bring our own doxic assumptions to bear on the text, and according to Bourdieu's theory it would be very difficult for us to recognize these.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Robert Carroll certainly identified an authentic intellectual fault line when he remarked that: "Between these two markers of politics and poetics, ideological study of the Hebrew Bible is likely to develop over the next few decades" (1990:310). That those standing on either side of the divide often occupy similar epistemological ground has been one of the major contentions of this article. It was argued that voluntaristic assumptions are currently the unrecognized theoretical hallmark of most biblical ideological criticism. Extreme proponents of "politics" incline to see a verse, or chapter, or narrative gap, or canon, as—to borrow a line from Terry Eagleton—"nothing but ideology" (1976:17). Here the consciousness of the ancient writer is a political consciousness, singularly bent on furthering its group's interests.

As much as this approach may disturb some proponents of poetics, they nevertheless share nearly identical suppositions about the relation between ideology and consciousness. Meir Sternberg clearly rejects the "nothing but ideology" view. He proposes, sensibly I think, that "Biblical narrative . . . is regulated by a set of three principles: ideological, historiographic and aesthetic" (41; see also Alter, 1992:44–45). Yet in developing this thesis his analysis becomes subjectivist in the extreme. "The very choice to devise an omniscient narrator," Sternberg affirms, "serves the purpose of staging and glorifying an omniscient God" (89; and see Alter, 1981:25, 33). Having understood that a new, omnipotent, and omniscient God needs a new, omniscient narrative voice, the biblical author swings into action. The artful ideologue so brilliantly envisioned in *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* might as well be described as omnipotent himself. As Sternberg describes him (or perhaps I should say Him), he is a writer who is cognizant of everything, who seamlessly weaves together ideology, history, and aesthetics, who retains a boundless capacity to finesse narratives as a means of winning

¹⁴ Of this last level I think of the young Georg Lukács's remark that: "The essence of scientific Marxism consists . . . in the realisation that the real motor forces of history are independent of man's (psychological) consciousness of them" (47).

¹⁵ Again proving the veracity of Carroll's view of *Ideologiekritik* as "a double scrutiny, of text and reception—of writer and commentator" (1995:28).

over the reader, who comprehends epistemological revolutions *as they are happening* and dutifully transcribes them into suitable literary form (also see Alter, 1992:83–84). This is the apotheosis of the biblical author.

Unrestrained voluntarism of this sort is not a view that a student of ideology, or more broadly, social theory, could countenance without taking some pause. In *The Philosophy of History*, G. W. F. Hegel referred to “a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct” existing within “the whole process of History” (25). He continues: “In a simple act, something further may be implicated than lies in the intention and consciousness of the agent” (28). That human beings are unaware of the true determinants of their thought and action is a surmise whose innumerable variants have run like a thread throughout the history of social theory, coiling in and out of Marxist and non-Marxist schools of thought. In another contribution, I will try to trace the genealogy of Hegel’s claim and track down its manifold incarnations in the history of social theory. For now I submit that the voluntaristic conception affords us little opportunity to confront this rich theoretical tradition. With its extremely undersocialized and hyper-subjectivist view of the agent it turns our attention away from the study of unconscious influences upon the narrator, interest-based illusions, and social or cultural factors that impose constraints upon one’s capacity to make sense of the social. Let this not be construed as a call for a rigid methodological determinism as much as it is a plea for more biblical scholars to engage theories of ideology in all of their glorious complexity.¹⁶

¹⁶ On the merits and demerits of determinist and subjectivist theoretical traditions and particularly the need to explode this “Antinomy of Social Physics and Social Phenomenology,” see, for example, Bourdieu (1990:30–51); Bourdieu and Wacquant (7–12).

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