Coordination Power and Ideology: Reflections on Jiborn’s ‘The Power of Coordination’

Magnus Jiborn’s ‘The Power of Coordination’ is an interesting contribution to the debate between political theorists/philosophers who claim that ideology, construed as a form of ‘false consciousness’, plays a central role in maintaining oppression, and those who claim that ‘coordination problems’, as articulated by ‘coordination theory’, drawing from the literature on collective action, are more important than ideology in accounting for (explaining) the persistence of systematic oppressive relations. Jiborn tries to establish two things: i) that what he (following Michael Rosen) calls the ‘theory of ideology’ is neither necessary (in principle) nor sufficient for explaining the persistence of oppressive social institutions/practices; and ii) that when ideology does play a role in maintaining oppressive systems, coordination theory “provides an analytical framework that helps us understand why ideology is important.” (p. 15) Thus the author claims that coordination theory offers us a deeper, more comprehensive explanation of oppression than does the theory of ideology because the former actually can incorporate the latter (or much of it) within itself. (From this point on, I will use the abbreviation IT for ‘ideology theory’ and CT for ‘coordination theory.’)

That is what Jiborn purports to establish. My main criticism is that what he actually (in effect) establishes is something else. What he does establish is also an interesting contribution to the debate, even if he is claiming to be establishing something different. What I think he actually shows is that both IT and CT can help explain the persistence of oppressive systems, with neither being entirely reducible to the other though there is, in some ways and in some areas, contrary to what Jiborn claims, some blurring of the distinction between them. What he shows, in effect, is that the debate itself is problematic. Writers who defend CT, such as Joseph Heath, claim that ideology is not important for maintaining oppression, a marginal factor if a factor at all. And perhaps there are some theorists of ideology (some of the Frankfurt School, perhaps, the Young Hegelians, even David Hume who didn’t use the word ‘ideology’) who downplay the role of any factors other than ideology. Against these two views, the author shows, in effect, that coordination problems and ideology can both be important in our explanations of oppression and that the two are not incompatible. This position seems sensible, and gives us reason for getting beyond this particular debate and seeing coordination theorists and ideology-critics as contributing, in different ways, to our understanding of oppression and of how it might reasonably be confronted. This is what I think Jiborn actually establishes, and this is worth establishing. Given the false dichotomies that seem to pervade much of the debate, it is an even more original contribution than what Jiborn thinks he has shown, which is a

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variation on a theme others (Heath, Rosen, and many others dissatisfied with the theory of ideology and impressed by the literature on collective action) have already put forward – the idea that collective action problems are more basic or explanatory than ideology. The compatibility thesis plus the claim that neither explanation is more basic than the other, though commonsensical, is more original because surprisingly, theorists on both sides of the debate tend to focus on one or the other type of explanation, downplaying each others’ explanations, instead of using both approaches to develop a more comprehensive picture of how and why oppression persists.

Now let me back up these remarks with specific references to Jiborn’s paper.

1. Jiborn makes it clear that his target is “the so-called ideology theory, commonly attributed to Marx.” (p. 4) He construes IT as holding “that the fact that an oppressed majority does not revolt when it is clearly in its interest to do so can only be explained if the majority is in some sense subject to ‘false consciousness’ that serves to support existing power structures.” (p. 4)

Now, a Marxian theorist of ideology would assent to this characterization if the claim is that any adequate explanation of the persistence of oppression will be one in which ideology (as ‘false consciousness’) plays an important role, but she would demur if the claim is that nothing but ideology can explain the persistence of oppression. The former claim is surely plausible and Jiborn himself seems to accept it: he claims that ideology may well play an important role in maintaining oppression but that the CT can account for this. But the ‘nothing but ideology’ claim is not one that a Marxian would or should make. One of Marx’s main arguments in The German Ideology was precisely that ideology alone cannot explain oppression. He (and Engels) attacked the Young Hegelians for assuming that it could, and since Marx that position has come to be known as historical idealism – a position that Hume too seemed to adopt when he claimed that ‘opinion alone’ accounts for the submission of the many to the few. Historical idealism may be a stance that some of the Frankfurt School and Habermas were guilty of, but it would be absurd to saddle Marx and most Marxists with such a view of the role of ideology. The Marxian view is that ideology is part of the explanation for the persistence of oppression (an important part) but not the whole of it; ideology, for Marx, is not an independent variable but dependent on ‘material’ conditions having to do with socio-economic structures and the class divisions these structures generate. While Rosen at times in his book on ideology, and Heath less ambiguously, seem to saddle Marx with such an historical idealism, we shouldn’t follow them in such a blatant misrepresentation (and ‘blatant’ is not an exaggeration; it was one of Marx’s most famous points and a core part of his social theory).

Marxian IT also need not deny that “while false consciousness may facilitate oppressive power, it is only secondary in the sense that it results from and depend[sic] on coordination power rather than being an independent source of power.” (p. 4) It’s not part of a Marxian IT to claim that ideology is an ‘independent source of power’; but this is not to say that it is not an important source of power, it is to say, rather, that it becomes an important source of power as a result of material conditions which, to use the language of CT, give rise to the coordination power of the oppressor classes and the lack of coordination power among the oppressed.
2. Jiborn notes that the CT (or “dual coordination theory”) says “political power rests on the coordinated action of the ruling minority and the lack of coordinated resistance among the ruled majority”, and he says this phenomenon is commonly known as “divide and rule”. (p. 3) But Jiborn doesn’t explain why a Marxian IT (which seems to be his target) needs to deny this. It seems to me they not only do not deny it, they affirm it. In fact, according to IT, ideology is a big part of the explanation for the lack of coordinated resistance. Marxian ideology theorists do not deny that there is such a lack and they do not deny that this lack helps explain the persistence of oppressive social institutions. They would deny that coordination problems are sufficient to explain such persistence. (Jiborn seems to think they are sufficient; see below.)

3. Jiborn argues that CT theory is sufficient to explain the persistence of oppression because, not only can CT help us locate non-ideological obstacles to collective resistance, it can explain why the dominant group has an interest in the dissemination of ideological illusions; and, moreover, it can explain why the oppressed often internalize norms that actually contribute to their own oppression – it can do so by appealing to their interests (or their perceptions of their interests) in a situation where they have severe coordination problems. So CT can account for both non-ideological and ideological obstacles to collective resistance to oppression.

But even if Jiborn is correct about the CT explaining ideology, does this imply that the CT is sufficient to explain the persistence of oppression? CT is made to seem sufficient, it seems, because of three assumptions/claims Jiborn makes: i) there are no factors other than ideology or coordination problems that can account for the persistence of oppression; ii) if A explains B and the conjunction of A and B explains C, then A is sufficient to explain C; iii) whereas IT can be seen as being secondary to CT in the sense that CT can account for the prevalence of system-supporting ideology, CT is in no way secondary to, or parasitic on, IT. I will comment on each of these assumptions/claims in turn.

(i) Throughout his paper, Jiborn suggests that CT is a powerful tool that can explain oppression in a more satisfying and comprehensive way than IT. In arguing this, he takes it for granted that the society he is talking about is indeed oppressive and hierarchically structured, that it would be in the interests of the majority to transform that society, and that the ruling elite/class is a minority and the majority is oppressed. While I do not think these assumptions should be controversial, they are, in most societies, not assented to by everyone or perhaps even most people. The assumptions, which may well be true, are not brute facts but highly theory-laden. There is a social theory (not to mention moral assumptions) implicit in Jiborn’s reasoning. It is because the society is structured in a hierarchical way, with a minority possessing more power (economic, political, social, cultural power) than the majority, and power over the latter, that we can even talk about coordination problems and problems of false consciousness – with the latter, the moral assumptions come into play in an obvious way.

So it seems that a broader, critical social theory, or at least a broad picture of what most societies are like, seems to be a kind of background assumption for much of the discussion of both the CT and the IT. I do not think Jiborn needs, in the context of defending the CT, to defend such background theoretical assumptions. But I do think that both the CT (at least in the context of the question ‘how is oppression
maintained?’) and the IT are only meaningful against such a background explanatory framework of critical social theory. Proponents of IT, particularly the Marxian ones, readily acknowledge this; they readily acknowledge that their theories of ideology are parts of a broader critical social theory. But proponents of CT do not seem to acknowledge this as easily. They tend to go on as if CT can explain oppression all by itself without any appeal to an even more basic social theory in which the CT is embedded.

Just as Jiborn tries to embed the IT within the CT, the explanations he offers in terms of coordination problems seem, implicitly, to be embedded within a broader picture of society. Maybe the broader picture of society which Marx gave us can explain why there are coordination problems at all. Moreover, in the case of Marxism, there are times, Marxists say, when an attempted revolution would be unsuccessful even if the masses engaged in coordinated resistance and even if they were able to ‘see through’ the dominant ideology to a large extent. Perhaps the forces of production have not been sufficiently developed, in such societies, for something like democratic socialism to be sustainable. So here is another factor, or putative factor, neither false consciousness nor coordination problems, that might help explain the persistence of oppression in certain circumstances: the insufficient development of forces of production. In a discussion of the relative merits of CT and IT, it isn’t necessary to say much (or anything) about this, but we should not just assume that CT is sufficient to explain the persistence of oppression, even if we were justified in saying that it is sufficient to explain the persistence of false consciousness. There may be other factors not reducible to either of these. I’ve only mentioned one possibility but there may well be others.

(ii) Even if, as Jiborn argues, CT can explain the prevalence of ideology in oppressive societies, he concedes that ideology can be (and often is) an important obstacle to coordinated resistance to oppression. But this is to suggest that we need to appeal to ideology in our explanations. If we need to appeal to ideology in our explanations of oppression, which is precisely what IT does, then it is slightly misleading to suggest that CT is sufficient to explain oppression. Even if it were sufficient to explain ideology, and even if CT along with an IT subsumed under the CT, may be sufficient to account for the persistence of oppression (but see comment (i) above), still it is misleading because to suggest that CT is sufficient makes it sound as if we have rejected IT. But Jiborn has done no such thing. He has rejected historical idealism, but not the idea that ideology is an important obstacle to fighting oppression and that ‘false consciousness’ is an important part of the explanation of why there is a lack of mass coordinated resistance. But that latter claim just is the central claim of any plausible IT – no plausible IT would say that ideology alone or ‘opinion alone’ accounts for the persistence of oppressive systems, or that ideology is somehow an independent variable in explaining oppression.

(iii) Jiborn argues (persuasively) that CT can account for ideology and that because of this the IT is ‘secondary’ to CT. But now what if the IT can help explain coordination problems, at least to some extent? Would that make CT ‘secondary’ to IT? Let me set up the problem here.

The author seems to suggest, against Tony Fluxman who defends a Marxian version of IT, that CT can give us “a general account of oppressive power.” Now, if CT just
means something like ‘that theory which shows how the powerful maintain and enhance their control and how the oppressed are disabled from sustained coordinated resistance’, then it is a mere tautology to say that CT gives us ‘a general account of oppressive power.’ By definition, it would be the theory that tells us how and why oppression is maintained. But if, more plausibly and usefully, CT tells us about coordination problems as distinct from and independently of the phenomenon of ideology, then it is not a tautology, nor obviously true or perhaps even plausible to say that CT gives us ‘a general account of oppressive power.’ If Jiborn is right in his argument, what he has actually shown is that ideology can be explained in terms of CT, not that CT can give us a ‘general account of oppressive power’ independently of any appeals to ideological power or ideological hegemony – to IT, in other words. If we want to subsume IT under CT and just call it CT, then it seems to become a tautology (apart from my comment in (i) above) to say that CT gives us a general account of persistent oppression. But that would not, I think, be a fair way to adjudicate the debate between IT and CT. Neither side would find it satisfactory if the other were to win the argument by definitional stipulation.

Moreover, if, as Jiborn concedes to the ideology theorists, ideological hegemony ‘facilitates’ oppressive power, why doesn’t that imply that the persistence of the rulers’ coordination power and the oppressive system is at least partly explained by the prevalence of ideology? If false consciousness didn’t exist, perhaps it would be more likely, though not guaranteed, that the oppressed could successfully tackle their coordination problems. Jiborn seems to accept this when he suggests (pp. 10-11) that ideology can prevent the ‘convergence of expectations’ among the oppressed that would help them to deal more effectively with their coordination problems. Realistically, for the oppressed majority even to see that they have a coordination problem, they would have to have some awareness of their common interest in overthrowing the existing oppressive system. Their awareness of their coordination problems presupposes that they have, to some significant extent, broken their ideological lenses. Ideology theorists have always stressed that ideology prevents the oppressed even from seeing that they are oppressed by a system, seeing what is in their ‘true interests’, and from seeing that there could be a better system in place. In this way, CT presupposes ideology-critique and the persistence of coordination problems is to some extent dependent upon the persistence of false consciousness. And Jiborn seems to suggest this himself though he doesn’t notice that this means there is a two-way dependency: it’s not just IT being ‘dependent on’ CT but in some respects the other way around. Without seeing through the dominant ideology to some extent, the ‘masses’ would never get to the point of even trying to coordinate their resistance for they would not care to overthrow an oppressive system if they didn’t see it as oppressive, not in any realistic situation. Overcoming ‘false consciousness’, or at least partially overcoming it, would not guarantee that the oppressed will solve their coordination problems but it would (a) allow them to see in the first place that they have a coordination problem and (b) it would (would it not?) at least make it more likely that they will, in time, solve them. So why is ideology ‘secondary’ to coordination, given these points which Jiborn implicitly acknowledges when he stresses that ideology can play a big role in maintaining oppression and maintaining the coordination power of dominant groups? In some ways, if Jiborn is right, ideology is not an ‘independent source of power’ because CT can explain why ideologies emerge or persist; but in other ways, coordination problems are not
‘independent’ obstacles to collective resistance because ideology can keep people from seeing that they have a coordination problem in the first place.

Coordination problems are very much practical problems of how to coordinate a sustained resistance movement. Ideology is a practical problem too (for example, a problem of how to disseminate a counter-ideology which is less distorting than the hegemonic ideologies), but it is also a problem of reflective knowledge of common interests. Without such reflective knowledge that could only come from seeing ideology for what it is (a form of ‘false consciousness’ supportive of the status quo), according to IT, such collective action and practical solutions to coordination problems would not even be an issue. Why can’t the ideology theorist say: ‘Sure, coordination problems are real and they would persist even if masses of people rejected much of the legitimating ideology; but once the legitimating myths are no longer doing the work that they used to do, perhaps half the battle is won: these very important practical problems to which CT draws our attention would be more easily tackled, though with no guarantee of success.’?

Perhaps Jiborn should say, not that CT is prior to IT or the other way around, but that both are ‘secondary’ to a substantive social theory. What has explanatory primacy is the institutional arrangements, the social and/or economic structures that put one group in a position whereby they are oppressing another. These structures explain, perhaps along with a few assumptions about human psychology in such social contexts (and perhaps through a kind of functional explanation) the need for ideology but they also explain the need for coordination and why the dominant group can satisfy this need in a way that isn’t usually available to the oppressed groups. If ideology didn’t just come from nowhere (if it’s not an ‘independent source of power’) surely this is also true of coordination power. Moreover, this sort of underlying broader functional explanation seems to be implicit in Jiborn’s own reasoning. In effect he/she shows that (a) the CT and IT are actually mutually dependent on each other, and (b) both the CT and IT are embedded in, dependent on, a broader critical theory or account of society that helps us understand both the persistence of ideology and the persistence of coordination problems. Again, most ideology theorists would happily accept this point, as they usually do put forth their theories of ideology as part of a broader critical theory; but the coordination theorists tend to like the CT so much that they often see it as explaining important social phenomena all by itself with no help from substantive social/political theories. In this they seem to me to be kidding themselves; in their efforts to be scientific, they shy away from substantive social theorizing beyond the CT itself. CT, unlike IT, can be applied in many contexts, including in the context of very non-critical social theories. This makes CT more flexible but in a way less meaningful than IT.

4. In Jiborn’s example (p. 6) of prison guards being prisoners themselves because they are ignorant of each others’ intentions (they don’t know what the other guards intend on want in relation to the tyrannical authorities above them), how long can such ignorance be maintained without an ideology that dissuades them from trying harder to find out each others’ intentions? The ‘ignorance of each other’s intentions’ can be seen as analogous to ideology.

Take a more realistic example. In the US, most people want universal health care, but they probably do not know that this is what the majority wants because the media
don’t tell them and in fact the media tell them otherwise. Moreover, even if an individual American comes to know that this is what the majority wants, she would not thereby know that most others know this fact. But isn’t this a problem of false consciousness, or in Habermas’s conception of ideology, a problem of distorted communication rather than merely a problem of fear of punishment or other sanctions as in Jiborn’s prison example?

5. In the case of the gunman, where a lone gunman is able to keep a number of hostages in line without need of deception (p. 9), it is obviously a situation of domination and in this case it’s not necessary that false beliefs contribute to maintaining that situation. In the case of modern complex societies it’s not always so obvious (think of the ‘middle classes’) and hence is it not more likely, in these realistic cases, that there will be widely shared false beliefs about the society and about the nature and degree of oppression in them? In one of Jiborn’s few examples that appear relevant to real-world conflicts outside prison settings, spanning pages 10-11, where a broad insurgency is prevented from developing by the dissemination of lies about how prepared and capable the forces of repression are, it is the truth that is concealed. Modern society is not like the gunman and prison examples where it is obviously a domination situation.

So, while Jiborn may be right in saying that false consciousness is not necessary to maintain every possible situation in which there is domination and subordination, that shows only that false consciousness is not a logical or metaphysical necessity (whatever that could be). But I doubt that Jiborn can point to any actual hierarchical, oppressive society in the history of the world in which false consciousness was not only not present but did not significantly contribute to the persistence of such societies. Can he give one example? If not, then the IT should be regarded as being massively confirmed. False consciousness seems necessary to maintain oppressive power in real societies, though not in every possible situation (Sing-Sing, the gunman example) in which some people are dominating others. Of course one can always imagine cases in which domination can be maintained without the help of ideology, but try to think of one actual hierarchical oppressive society in the history of the world in which that was so. Again, I don’t think one will find such an example, and even if there is one such example, that is only one! Societies are not like the Sing-Sing and gunman examples in which false consciousness seems unnecessary to maintain control. Perhaps, as has been plausibly suggested by many writers on ideology (Noam Chomsky and Michael Parenti, for example), the less an oppressive regime can be maintained by the threat or use of violence, the more important ideological controls become. Force is not, as Hume said, always on the side of the governed. Usually it’s on the side of the rulers. But the less a regime can be maintained by force, the more important ideology becomes. Perhaps something like this can explain why people in Nicaragua or El Salvador may actually be less deluded about how their social and political system has been maintained than people in Western societies that have achieved a level of political democracy and freedom (including freedom from brutal coercion) that has not been allowed in less lucky places.

6. At page 11, Jiborn asks: “But, doesn’t this [explaining ideology in terms of coordination] just blur the distinction between coordination and ideology? Isn’t the coordination theory saved at the expense of making it indistinguishable from its
rival?” He answers no to both questions. But surely it does somewhat blur the
distinction between IT and CT. Jiborn has argued that in their efforts to maintain their
coordination power, rulers/elites make use of ideology and other measures as well.
Ideology, on this account, is on a continuum with other, less ideological methods of
maintaining coordination power and preventing the oppressed from coordinating.
This somewhat blurs the distinction between ideology-as-explanation and
coordination-as-explanation. There is an overlap here between the two types of
explanations. IT and CT overlap to some extent. That constitutes a blurring!

But Jiborn is right to say this doesn’t make the two theories indistinguishable for there
are large areas where they do not overlap. However, what does seem to be the case is
that in the real world, in real oppressive societies, though ideological power and
coordination power are distinguishable, and hence IT and CT are distinct, they are as
a matter of fact inseparable: dominant groups cannot maintain coordination power
for long without the help of ideology, nor can they maintain ideological hegemony for
long without the coordinated ability to impose collective sanctions.

7. Long before CT came on the scene, it was recognized that the stability of a society
requires that something like false consciousness obtain among the ruled and even to
some extent among those at the top. Plato with his ‘noble lie’ argument implicitly
recognized just that, as did Hume (as Jiborn acknowledges), and many in between
including many ruling class people who were neither philosophers nor theorists. And
Marx of course recognized this without the aid of anything so specialized and esoteric
as CT. Given this, perhaps it is the CT which is not necessary to explain oppression?
That it helps the oppressors if people have false beliefs about the system and possible
alternatives is hardly something we need CT to justifiably assent to. So perhaps
Jiborn and other defenders of CT could clearly explain to those of us who defend a
version of IT what advantages or insights CT has or can give us that we couldn’t
already have without CT. The concept of ‘divide and rule’, for example, is far better
known to reflective, informed people than the concept of a coordination theory; and
the former has long been understood without any appeal to the literature on collective
action or game theory or rational choice theory or micro-foundational analysis.

8. Jiborn characterizes Hume’s so-called ‘paradox of oppression’ thus: “how is it
possible for a small minority to dominate and rule a large majority against its will?”
(p. 2) If we look carefully at Jiborn’s three quotes of Hume (two in the main body of
text, one at the beginning), we will see that this is not quite what Hume said. What
Hume actually asked is this: ‘how is it possible that the many submit to the few?’ and
his answer, in effect, seems to have been that so submitting is not ‘against their will’
even if it is in some sense against their interests.

9. One argument Jiborn presents to show that ideology is insufficient to maintain
oppressive regimes is that even in a society in which everyone accepts the legitimacy
of the regime and has no false ideological beliefs about it, some form of sanctions
would still be necessary to ensure, for example, that everyone pays their taxes. The
argument is convincing, but not in the way Jiborn suggests. Sanctions would be
necessary in such a situation to ensure that individuals don’t engage in tax evasion,
yes, but if the regime were seen by everyone to be legitimate, a) wouldn’t they be less
likely to engage in tax evasion? and b) without sanctions people may evade taxes but
if they found the regime legitimate they wouldn’t engage in any activities aimed at
radical transformation of the system. So the argument does not, as it stands, show that ideology may not be sufficient to ensure non-radical behavior even if it is not sufficient to prevent less radical forms of disobedience.

10. Jiborn asks how we can understand “that people who are oppressed sometimes come to adhere to and promote moral norms that support their own submission, and hence not only seem to accept but to actively take part in maintaining the power structures that oppress them.” (p. 13) The obvious answer that IT would give is that they aren’t fully aware of the fact that, and the ways in which, those norms ‘support their own submission’. If they were aware, or more aware, they would be more likely to recognize that the presence of these norms, and the required conditions of replacing them with other, better norms, represents a difficult coordination problem for them. Their seeing this would be a corollary to their seeing how and/or that these norms ‘support their own submission’. They would have to see these norms as being illegitimate. That would require throwing away some of their ideological lenses. This answer, straightforward enough, seems less complicated than the CT answer given by Jiborn, though perhaps there is an overlap here between the two kinds of answers. (The CT answer given by Jiborn is, roughly, that the oppressed don’t have false beliefs about the norms contributing to their own submission but they can’t solve their coordination problems in a way that would make it in their interests to violate those norms.)

11. Jiborn accepts Törbjorn Tännsjö’s point that “part of the problem [of why oppression persists] resides in the heads of the oppressed” (p. 10) but he contends that this is an integral part of the CT itself because CT gives beliefs an important role in its explanations. But it is, of course, also an integral part of the IT. Jiborn, I think, should say that here we an area of overlap between the two theories rather than suggesting that CT is sufficient to explain oppression.

12. In the slave example (pp. 14-15), Jiborn purports to show that because a regime can make it very costly for slaves to violate slavery-supporting norms by imposing forms of collective punishment, it can be in every slave’s interest that such norms are not violated unless all slaves rise up and violate them together. He concludes that “[w]ithout collective sanctions, it is unlikely that the norms would survive for long”. (p. 15) First question: Which ideology theorist ever said or implied otherwise? Second question: Why do we need CT to know this? Third question: How can we be sure that in every such case the slaves who are collectively punished would resent the slaves who violated the norms (as Jiborn suggests) rather than the regime that imposed the collective punishment because some individual slaves violated the norms? Why would it always be the case that the “moral force” of the norms would be reinforced in the way Jiborn suggests rather than lessened? What might be reinforced is the persistence of the norms (the slaves continue to adhere to them) because of fear of punishment, but why should that be equated with “moral force”?

Let me now summarize my comments/criticisms:

Jiborn, in reasoning about ‘the power of coordination’, purports to show that ideology is neither necessary nor sufficient to maintain an oppressive social system. Regarding the ‘not necessary’ claim, contrary to Jiborn, ideology does seem to be necessary as a practical condition obtaining in real-world societies, though it is not necessary in all
conceivable situations of domination (Sing-Sing or the gunman case, for example). Is there even one example of a real-world society in which there were not widespread false beliefs that contributed to maintaining an oppressive status quo? Even if there is one, is there more than one? Indeed, Jiborn concedes the claim of IT that ideology often does play an important role even if it is not logically or metaphysically necessary. Regarding the ‘not sufficient’ claim, if everyone in an oppressive society believed the regime was legitimate, this surely would in most circumstances be sufficient to maintain obedience in the sense of non-radical behaviour even though it wouldn’t guarantee less radical forms of disobedience. Moreover, even if we say, plausibly, that overcoming false consciousness would not guarantee collective revolt because there would still be coordination problems, no Marxian theory of ideology (which seems to be Jiborn’s main target) would deny this, though Hume seems to have regarded ‘opinion alone’ as sufficient and though some members of the Frankfurt School and Habermas can plausibly be said to have overplayed the role of ideology and under-played the role of coordination (and other non-ideological) obstacles to collective resistance. Jiborn reads IT slightly less uncharitably than critics such as Heath and Rosen, but still saddles IT with the implausible claim that ideology is sufficient to maintain oppression. I am not aware of any important ideology theorist making the strong claim that Hume made (‘opinion alone’). Regarding the CT, it seems one can turn the argument around and say that CT is not necessary or sufficient for explaining the persistence of oppression either. It does not seem necessary because the basic idea (that oppressive power rests on the ability of the oppressors to coordinate and the lack of such coordination among the oppressed) was understood long before CT came on the scene, long before this commonsensical point was elevated to the status of a theory (in Plato’s writings, in fact). Though I do not say it cannot be done, shouldn’t coordination theorists clearly explain what CT adds to our knowledge that was not already known without its machinery? In any case, CT is not clearly sufficient either because (i) the very recognition of a coordination problem of the relevant kind seems to presuppose that there would be people who have seen through the dominant ideology to some extent, (ii) the CT theory can be regarded as sufficient by incorporating the IT within itself – by explaining ideology – but then saying CT is sufficient is misleading because (a) CT thereby explains oppression by using, not rejecting, IT and (b) if oppression is explained by both coordination problems and ideology, then even if ideology is explained in terms of coordination problems, still both coordination problems and ideology are necessary parts of the explanation (again, that A explains B and A and B together explain C, does not imply that A alone is sufficient to explain C); (iii) both IT and CT may together be insufficient if both depend on a broader functional analysis or explanation given by a broader social theory; and I might add, finally (iv) the rulers/oppressors often believe the dominant ideology themselves, believe what the critical theorists would regard as falsehoods, and it’s not clear how the CT is sufficient to explain their internalization of the ideology. (Is saying ‘it’s in their interests to internalize it’ a CT explanation or some form of psychological/class interest explanation?)