Are Moral Beliefs Ideological?
A Reconstruction and Assessment of Karl Marx's Critique of Morality

Rory Gillis

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Abstract

The question of whether moral beliefs are ideological has important implications for philosophy and society. Since the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, much political theory has attempted to develop moral principles to guide state action. Similarly, a prominent concern of ethicists has been to deduce the requirements moral principles impose on individuals. More broadly, moral beliefs pervade the life of every person. They determine how we view the world and situate ourselves within it.

This thesis answers this question through a reconstruction and assessment of Karl Marx's critique of morality. In Chapters 2 and 3, I construct Marxian conceptions of morality and moral ideology. In Chapter 4, I construct and defend a Marxian thesis about the development of moral beliefs I call the dominant moral norm thesis. The thesis states that an economically dominant class will likely have disproportionate influence in determining the content of any dominant moral norm and that the dominant moral norm often has the function of sustaining the existing status quo. In Chapter 5, I argue that some moral beliefs are ideological owing to the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis. I conclude that not all moral beliefs are ideological, but that beliefs justified solely through intuition are at particular risk of being ideological. I offer several concluding thoughts in Chapter 6, including on a possible objection to my approach and on the implications of my thesis.

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A Note on Quotation

This thesis uses two different editions of 'The German Ideology' manuscripts. Most quotations are from the edition presented in Volume 5 of the *Marx and Engels Collected Works* (1975) published by *Lawrence and Wishart*. However, where possible, I quote from the updated presentation in Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank's *Marx and Engels's "German Ideology" Manuscripts: Presentation and Analysis of the Feuerbach Chapter* (2014). To reproduce the look of the original manuscripts more faithfully, I follow Carver and Blank's use of certain typographical techniques. These include the following:

- Strikethrough = ~~strikethrough~~
- Addition (above baseline) = ^{addition}
- Addition (below baseline) = $_{\text{addition}}$
- Underlined = <u>underlined</u>

Chapter 1
Introductory Preliminaries

The question of whether moral beliefs are ideological has important implications for philosophy and society. Since the publication of John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, much political theory has attempted to develop moral principles to guide state action. Similarly, a prominent concern of ethicists has been to deduce the requirements moral principles impose on individuals. More broadly, moral beliefs pervade the life of every person. They determine how we view the world and situate ourselves within it.

Unfortunately, the question has been largely neglected. Recent findings demonstrating the pervasiveness of culturally inherited bias and prejudice have often had little impact in metaethics, where authors have often been focussed on problems at the foundations of morality. Insights from the Marxist tradition have been well-hidden owing to a lack of analytical rigour and an insular focus. To rectify this neglect and to answer this important question, in my thesis, I reconstruct and assess Karl Marx's critique of morality to answer the question of whether moral beliefs are ideological. I conclude that some moral beliefs are ideological, and that moral beliefs justified solely through intuition are at particular risk of being ideological. In this chapter, I outline the structure, method, and scope of my thesis. I also show how my thesis contributes to the existing literature.

1. Structure

The structure of my thesis is as follows. After the preliminaries of this chapter, in Chapter 2, I present evidence from Marx's critique of moralism to argue that my Marxian critique of morality can justifiably use a conventional understanding of morality, according to which moral beliefs are justified using principles that are impartial, universal, beneficent, and practical. In Chapter 3, I reconstruct and defend a Marxian conception of moral ideology. The conception states that a moral belief is ideological if it has the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations or if it is accepted owing to the social position or interest of the believer. In Chapter 4, I construct and defend a Marxian thesis about the development of moral beliefs I call the dominant moral norm thesis. The thesis states that an economically dominant class will likely have disproportionate influence in determining the content of any dominant moral norm and that the dominant moral norm often has the function of sustaining the existing status quo. In Chapter 5, I argue that some moral beliefs are ideological owing to the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis. I conclude that not all moral beliefs are ideological, but that beliefs justified solely through

intuition are at particular risk of being ideological. I offer several concluding thoughts in Chapter 6, including on a possible objection to my approach and on the implications of my thesis.

2. Method

The main method used in this thesis is rational reconstruction. Rational reconstruction involves the use of internal and external terms and standards to elucidate and assess an argument of a given author.[1] Internal terms and standards are those used by the author themselves. One internal standard I hold Marx to is his (and Friedrich Engels's) repeated insistence that many of his claims are to be 'verified in a purely empirical way'.[2] External terms and standards are not used by the author themselves.[3] I perform a (broadly) analytical reconstruction of Marx's critique, meaning that I use the vocabulary of modern Anglophone philosophy and that I emphasise conceptual clarity and argumentative rigour.[4] The writings on which I focus do not display these latter virtues, and their meaning is often opaque to the modern reader.[5]

Rational reconstructions are different from historical reconstructions that use historical terms and standards (rather than contemporary terms and standards) to elucidate the intentions

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1 Rorty 1984, 49.

2 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 31.

3 As Rorty (1984, 54) notes, 'rational reconstructions […] are not likely to converge, and there is no reason why they should'. This is because different reconstructions can use different external standards and emphasise different elements in an author's writing. For example, Critical Theoretic reconstructions may be more concerned than I am to play down any 'latent positivism' in Marx's work (Wellmer [1969] 1971, 67). For an example of a Critical Theoretic reconstruction of Marx, see Habermas 1975.

4 My approach is partly inspired by G.A. Cohen's *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (1978). However, Cohen ([1978] 2000, ix) hoped 'that he [Marx] could have recognized it [Cohen's reconstruction] as a reasonably clear statement of what he thought'. This probably brings the book closer to a 'dialectical reconstruction' that synthesises rational and historical reconstruction (see Beaney 2013, 253–55).

Karl Marx's Theory of History is widely viewed as the 'founding document' of a school of philosophy called Analytical Marxism (Leopold 2008, 119). In the Introduction to the book's revised edition, Cohen ([1978] 2000, xvii) offered a number of reflections on the school. Importantly, 'analytical Marxists do not think that Marxism possesses a distinctive and valuable *method*' (*Ibid.*, xii). Like myself, authors within the school explore themes from Marx's writings (such as exploitation) using analytical methods (such as rational choice theory) (see Elster 1985, 167–203; Roemer 1982, 194–237). The analytical thinking characteristic of the movement is said by Cohen to be 'opposed' to 'dialectical' thinking or 'holistic' thinking ([1978] 2000, xvii). Given his other comments on dialectical and holistic thinking, one can deduce that Cohen not only thought that analytical thinking was different from dialectical (or holistic) thinking, but that it is different and superior (*Ibid.*, xxii-xxiii, xxvi). I call my reconstruction broadly analytical as I do not think its truth is contingent on rejecting (or accepting) dialectical or holistic approaches. For useful discussions of dialectical and holistic approaches, see Elster 1985, 1-48; Leopold 2008; Ollman 2019. For methodological criticisms of Analytical Marxism, see Furner 2019, 60-84; Sayer 1987, 126-149; Sayers 1984.

5 See Leopold 2007, 1. Marx's criticisms of his contemporaries could be read as suggesting that he did accept the standards of conceptual clarity and argumentative rigour (for example, see his response to Max Stirner's 'logical' criticisms of communism (Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 205–19)). However, such examples seem to show that Marx 'sometimes appear[ed] keener to press such standards on others than he was to adopt them himself' (Leopold 2007, 1). This is in keeping with the largely polemical nature of Marx's earlier writings. On Marx's particular usage of irony, see Rose 1978, 107-27.

and (authorial) meaning of a given argument.[6] My rational reconstruction is anachronistic, and I do not claim that it is an argument that Marx intended or that he meant to articulate.[7] I use vocabulary and standards from the (nearly) two centuries of philosophical development between Marx and myself.[8] I call my reconstruction 'Marxian' to highlight the gap between Marx's argument and mine.[9] To earn its title, my Marxian critique of morality should bear a family resemblance to Marx's intended critique.[10]

Performing a rational reconstruction is the best way of answering my research question. Applying analytical terms and standards allows me to better understand the precise problem ideology poses for our moral beliefs, and my anachronism means that I can avoid time-consuming questions about Marx's motivations.[11] Phrased baldly, I am more interested in whether what Marx wrote was right than why it was written.[12] I focus on offering a clear presentation of the most promising argument against morality that exists within Marx's writings (in the period on which I focus) to assess whether moral beliefs are ideological.[13]

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6 Rorty 1984, 53. The method of historical reconstruction is regularly associated with the 'Cambridge School' of intellectual history. For the founding document of that school, see Skinner [1969] 2002a, 57–89. For an interesting discussion of the relevance of ideology to historical reconstruction, see Graham 1981.

7 I want to make this very clear to avoid the comment that Jan Narveson (2001, 202) made of Richard Miller's *Analyzing Marx* (1984), namely that the book was 'an example of the lengths to which a sympathiser must go in attempting to retrieve a theory'. Though I sympathise with much of Marx's critique of morality, I am not trying to retrieve anything because I am not concerned with what Marx really meant.

8 As Rodney Peffer (1990, 8) has noted, at Marx's time of writing, 'not only had the techniques and methods of analytic-linguistic philosophy that would prove to be fruitful in the analysis of morality not yet evolved, but the questions that constitute the subject matter of metaethics had not even been formulated'. Unlike Peffer (*Ibid.*, 9), I do not think that applying those techniques and methods does 'solve (or dissolve) the problems Marxists tend to have with morality and moral theory'.

9 This is a unique usage of the term 'Marxian', which is traditionally used to refer to Marx and Engels's writings. On the traditional usage, see Carver 2011.

10 I do not define exactly what bearing a family resemblance means here because I am confident that my reconstruction would come under any reasonable definition.

11 For example, Marx may have exaggerated his problems with morality to differentiate himself from his socialist contemporaries (see Wolff and Leopold 2021). As my reconstruction is anachronistic (and therefore not concerned with what Marx really meant), it is perfectly consistent with such explanations being correct.

12 This also involves highlighting where Marx's writings are 'full of genuine murk' and where they are 'obscure, careless in expression and contradictory' (Mills 1962, 102; Bober 1950, 297). In part owing to this carelessness, as will become clear in later chapters, there are parts where I am required to fill in the gaps Marx left in his writings. On the value of a 'non-dogmatic approach to Marxism', see Roemer 1986, 2; Van Parijs 1993, 1-5.

13 As will become clear, this focus will lead me to be quite selective in the material I reconstruct. On this property of rational reconstructions, see Dole 2019, 52.

3. Scope

I focus on Marx's *critique* of morality, not on any views he held that may be considered moral.[14] In addition, I do not reconstruct Marx's metaphysical views.[15] This is because my discussion about whether moral beliefs are ideological does not depend on metaphysical claims, but rather depends on empirical and epistemic claims. I address Marx's writings between 1844 and 1846, with a particular focus on *The Holy Family* (1845) and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts. *The Holy Family* and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts were co-written with Engels, though I only reconstruct material either wholly authored or co-authored by Marx.[16]

There may appear to exist a tension between the philosophical ambitions of this thesis and its narrow historical scope. I will therefore briefly explain here why I felt it necessary to restrict my research at all, and why I have selected these two texts. After reading through these texts, I, along with Allen Wood, was 'impressed by the […] radical novelty' of Marx's views about morality.[17] However, such views are 'dispersed, unsystematic, even inconsistent'.[18] Norman Geras was right

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[14] For expositions of Marx's positive normative views about human flourishing, see Aronovitch 1980, 362-76; Leopold 2007, 183–278.

[15] Marx is often said to be a materialist. Charles Mills ([1992] 1999, 433) has drawn a useful distinction between 'ontological materialism' (or 'the view that the universe is composed solely of material entities') and 'sociological materialism' (or 'the view that the overall course of history is determined by economic causes'). I would consider any views about ontological materialism to be metaphysical views that go beyond the interest of this thesis, unlike views about sociological materialism. Marx probably considered his views about ontological materialism to be relevant to whether moral beliefs are ideological, and so if I were trying to understand what Marx really meant, I could not afford to ignore his metaphysical views. Ontological materialism has traditionally been a 'particularly infertile' area of Marxist research (Cohen 1983, 445), though see Wood [1981] 2004, 163-194; Ruben [1977] 1979, 63-94; Mepham and Ruben 1979.

[16] The reason Marx's name is in the title of this thesis and not Engels's is because I use Marx's discussion of moralism in *The Holy Family* to help establish the scope of my Marxian critique. The intellectual relationship between Marx and Engels has unsurprisingly generated a number of difficulties of attribution for Marx scholars (for examples of common mistakes, see Carver 1983, xi–xv; Leopold 2019a, 136). Although Engels's name comes first on the book's first edition (according to Carver (1998, 168) owing to his 'international reputation as a journalist and a socialist at the time'), he wrote 'barely one-and-a-half' of the twenty-two printer's sheets that formed *The Holy Family*, and Marx's sections were clearly demarcated by the authors in the first edition (Engels [1845] 1982, 18).

Parts of 'The German Ideology' manuscripts seem to have been a genuinely collaborative affair, and Marx's and Engels's handwriting can regularly be seen on the same printer's sheets (see Carver 1998, 171). Their collaboration is likely what Engels's friend Julian Harney ([1846] 1982, 533) was referring to in personal correspondence as 'your [Engels's] very philosophical system of writing in couples till 3 or 4 o'clock in the morning'. In one of Engels's ([1883] 1997, 31) letters to one of Marx's daughters shortly after Marx's death, Engels notes that '[a]mong Mohr's [Marx's] papers I have found a whole lot of mss [manuscripts], our common work, of before 1848' and recalls reading some of the manuscripts to Marx's housekeeper Helene Demuth. Demuth is said to have remarked '[n]ow I know why you two were laughing so hard at night back then in Brussels so that no one in the house could sleep' ([1883] 1997, 31). To make attribution more difficult, it has been suggested that Marx and Engels's contemporary Moses Hess wrote part of the manuscripts (see Carver and Blank 2014b, 115-7). At the time, Hess's perceived importance even led him to be portrayed as part of a 'triumvirate' with Marx and Engels (Heinzen in Sperber 2013, 159). Historical anecdotes aside, owing to my anachronistic approach, I am not overly concerned with problems of attribution. I am willing to concede that I am being somewhat stipulative in claiming that 'The German Ideology' manuscripts are 'co-authored'.

[17] Wood [1981] 2004, 160.

[18] Buchanan 1987, 104.

to observe that 'Marx was not a moral philosopher', and there is little in the writings on which I focus to dissuade Geras's view that Marx was 'impatient and dismissive of overt theoretical reflection about normative questions'.[19] Commentators have traditionally tried to compensate for the fragmentary nature of Marx's comments about morality by grouping them together, often through the imposition of an overarching narrative.[20] Partly as a reaction against this tendency, and in recognition of the fluctuations in Marx's views about morality, I construct a freestanding argument from two chronologically successive works written months apart.[21] Claims in these texts have not been subject to sufficient analytical scrutiny, and some of their insights have therefore been missed.[22]

My unorthodox choice (compared to the other Marx and morality literature) to reconstruct Marx's views from a short period has the obvious downside of meaning that I do not discuss every interesting thing Marx says about morality and ideology.[23] However, I would not be able to do this and perform my desired kind of reconstruction. Historically narrow reconstructions can more easily highlight an author's premises and assumptions. I think doing this has a great deal of epistemic value.[24] Even if readers do not agree with my conclusions, they may have more sympathy with (parts of) my Marxian argument after understanding its requirements and motivations.

The choice to discuss *The Holy Family* may seem particularly surprising as the book is often ignored, presumably on the assumption that 'what Marx says there he says better in […] other texts'.[25] However, Marx's reaction against the moralism in one of Eugène Sue's novels is useful in establishing the scope of my Marxian critique of morality. In addition, one of Marx's criticisms of

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19 Geras 1985, 62.

20 For example, in his article 'Marxism and Morals Today', Steven Lukes (2015, 55) says that Marx and Engels thought 'moral talk […] a great deception'. To defend this view, in just the first two pages of his article he selects paragraphs from a bewildering number of texts, from *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) to *Anti-Dühring* (1878). This disregard of context when making interpretive claims is regrettably an example of a more general phenomena in the Marx and morality literature. For more examples, see Lukes 1985, 5-26; Miller 1984, 15-6; Wood [1981] 2004, 127-132. On the anachronistic construction of coherence in the history of ideas, see Skinner [1969] 2002a, 67-72.

21 A common claim amongst commentators is that the younger Marx was less bothered by the use of moral language than the Marx of 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, as seen when he writes in 1843 ([1927] 1975a, 182) that '[t]he criticism of religion ends with the teaching that *man is the highest being for man*, hence with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken being'. See Kain 1991, 15-127; Peffer 1990, 36-55.

22 Though it is not a traditional work of intellectual history, this thesis is still driven by the traditional motivation of finding 'buried treasure' from the past that 'has the power to enrich our political arguments here and now' (Skinner 2002b, 126).

23 For example, Marx developed his understanding of ideology in *Capital* (see Best 2015; Mepham 1972). Having a narrow historical scope is not an unorthodox choice for rational reconstructions more generally. For example, see Bennett [1966] 2016a; [1974] 2016b; Strawson [1966] 2006.

24 This view is argued for in D. Miller 1988, 316. It is suggested in the first line of *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, in which Cohen ([1978] 2000, ix) says that his 'book defends historical materialism, by offering arguments in its favour, *but more by presenting the theory in what I hope is an attractive form*' (emphasis mine). Even critics of Cohen's conclusions recognised the 'quite brilliant' way in which Marx's arguments were reconstructed (J. Cohen 1982, 254).

25 Brudney 1998, 18. For a similar dismissal of *The Holy Family*, see Mazlish 1984, 89.

the approach of (some of) his contemporary Young Hegelians is comparable to a criticism commonly made of modern ideology critique.

In contrast, nearly all works on Marx and morality reference 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, and it is not difficult to see why. Marx's 'super-polemic' of Stirner contains his most vocal antimoralism, including much ridicule of those 'various heroes [who] squabble about true morals', and who treat '*morality* as worldly sanctity or as sanctified worldliness'.[26] Perhaps most famously, Marx and Engels claim to Stirner to have 'shattered the basis of all morality'.[27]

However, the book now known as *The German Ideology* is an editorial fiction first published in the Soviet Union in 1932. The manuscripts that formed its content were not complete and were the subject of extensive editing. The 'Feuerbach chapter' has often been used (after any 'Preface') to open the presentation of the manuscripts, including in the *Lawrence and Wishart* edition on which this thesis draws. 'The German Ideology' manuscripts are 'rarely considered in its [their] entirety', and this opening section is largely responsible for it being viewed as 'in effect the first mature work of Marxism' or even as the 'birth certificate of the world view of Marx and Engels'.[28] It has been used to attribute various doctrines to the two authors, from 'historical materialism' to a 'dialectical materialist philosophy'.[29]

Bold interpretive claims grounded in the 'Feuerbach chapter' ought to be viewed with particular suspicion. The manuscripts were left in a state 'very much prior to any "fair copy" destined for the printer', and the sheets break off in numerous places.[30] They are clearly unfinished, and include many deletions, insertions, and marginalia. They contain little discussion of Feuerbach and were certainly not intended to open any book. As Marx's writings became of political (rather than mere scholarly) interest, the manuscripts were reordered and relabelled by the editors, partly to give the misleading impression that they contain a well-developed theory of history.[31]

Nonetheless, I remain sympathetic to the view that 'page after page [of the 'Feuerbach chapter'] contain astonishing insights'.[32] Where possible, I make use of the latest textual scholarship by using quotations from Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank's presentation of the

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26 Mehring [1918] 1962, 110; Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 366, 175.

27 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 247, 419.

28 Thomas [1975] 2011, 113; Churbanov 1975, xiii; Kopf 2001, 1 in Carver and Blank 2014a, 1.

29 Cohen 1988, 156; Kopf 2001, 1 in Carver and Blank 2014a, 1. There are many parts of the 'Feuerbach chapter' that are similar to the 1859 'Preface' to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (see Carver 1983, 72-6; Comninel 2019, 111-50). It was in Engels's ([1859] 1980, 469) review of the latter book in the newspaper *Das Volk* that the term 'materialist conception of history' was first coined. This thesis is entirely silent on historical materialism because I follow the consensus that Marx's empirical comments on ideology (and morality) can largely be separated from his theory of history into what might be called his sociology (Wright, Levine and Sober 1992, 97-8).

30 Carver and Blank 2014b, 2.

31 For an extensive political history of the manuscripts, see Carver and Blank 2014a.

32 Arthur 2015.

'Feuerbach chapter'.[33] These quotations sometimes include strikethroughs and insertions, and I hope this will alienate the reader from texts previously viewed as having an 'almost scriptural status' by reminding them that I am quoting from an unfinished set of manuscripts.[34]

4. Literature Review

I aim for my thesis to contribute to both Marxist and non-Marxist literature. Within the former, my primary area of contribution is to the literature on Marx and morality. This literature is largely centred around two problems. The first is whether Marx's critique of morality and his critique of capitalism can be rendered consistent. This was a popular topic of discussion among Anglophone political theorists in the 1970s and 1980s, at which time 'Marxist moralists' and 'Marxist anti-moralists' argued about whether Marx's critique of capitalism needs a moral underpinning.[35] Starting from this problem would seem to presuppose that there was something worthwhile (beyond historical interest) in rendering these critiques coherent.[36] If the critique of morality is uninteresting and unsound, it seems to offer no challenge to those that want to criticise capitalism. Cohen concluded that, if the evidence showed that Marx dismissed a non-relative understanding of justice, it just showed that Marx 'was confused about justice'.[37] Confused arguments wouldn't stop anyone wishing to utilise moral theory to criticise capitalism. Minimally, I want my thesis to show that a dismissive attitude towards Marx's contribution to moral theory is misguided and that Marx's critique of morality should be taken seriously.

That said, I mainly aim for my thesis to contribute to the second problem addressed by scholars writing on Marx and morality. The question of whether moral beliefs are ideological is not a new one in the Marxist tradition and was also a common topic of discussion from the 1960s to the 1980s. Discussions were often framed through the implications of Marx's understanding of history.[38] The overriding problem with this literature has been the lack of analytical rigour applied to the question. All too often the concepts of morality and ideology remain undefined, and there

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33 As Sarah Johnson (2019, 3) has noted, the re-presentation of the manuscripts in their more accurate order also 'presents an opportunity in turn […] to read the 1845-6 manuscripts anew'. However, it is not always possible to use Carver and Blank's (2014b, 34-382) edition as it only includes (what has often been called) the 'main manuscript', leaving out the part of the 'Feuerbach chapter' found from pages 27 to 37 of the *Lawrence and Wishart* edition.

34 Arthur 2015.

35 A similar distinction is made in Nielsen 1988, 212. Cohen, Elster and Geras are Marxist moralists. Marxist anti-moralists include Miller, Brian Leiter, and Wood.

36 One possible explanation as to why authors have sought to reconcile Marx's critique of morality with his critique of capitalism might be that Marx has been treated as a thinker whom some have felt they have 'to swallow (or spew out) whole' (Leopold 2007, 11).

37 Cohen 1983, 443.

38 See Hodges 1962; Kamenka 1969, 31–43; Nielsen 1985.

is often conflation of distinct theoretical and practical questions. Attempts at empirical contributions have suffered from a lack of evidence.[39] More recently there have been better contributions to this problem, as represented in Peffer's *Marxism, Morality, and Social Justice* (1990) and Kai Nielsen's *Marxism and the Moral Point of View* (1989). Both works consider the implications of a Marxian critique for methodology in normative theory. My thesis is easily distinguished from those works because they do not conclude that ideology poses an important problem for our moral beliefs.[40]

The second area of Marxist literature I believe my thesis can contribute to is research on ideology. There are three important mistakes I can help to rectify. Firstly, many authors have neglected Marx's insights into ideology. Caricatures of Marx's views are often left unchallenged, such as that '[w]e can think of Marx as proposing that all of philosophy is explained by one grand "cognitive bias"' or that Marx was 'scarcely interested in […] the most common type of truth discussed by modern philosophers'.[41] I think this is particularly regretful as many interesting insights from Marx's discussions of ideology can be reconstructed without invoking a commitment to controversial epistemologies, unlike Marx's successors in ideology critique.[42] Secondly, authors writing on ideology have often been insufficiently analytical. All too often claims are unclear, assumptions are not spelled out and the concept becomes unwieldy. As a result, theories can come across as a 'confused mélange of cognitive and non-cognitive elements'.[43] Thirdly, those engaged in ideology critique have often ignored research in the social sciences. This is true in both the Marxist and Critical Theory traditions, in which authors can often be found substituting evidence for vague appeals to 'structural homologies' or simply for rhetoric.[44]

Finally, I aim to contribute to the (non-Marxist) literature on the methodology of normative theory and in moral epistemology. There are two main areas to which I aim to contribute: literature on reflective equilibrium and literature on genealogy. I demonstrate the problem that ideology can pose for reflective equilibrium in Chapters 5 and 6. In doing so, I engage with work that has highlighted the danger that cultural conservatism can pose for reflective equilibrium, such as writings by Richard Brandt, Peter Singer, and R.M. Hare. To their detriment, their arguments have entirely neglected the impact class might have in determining our moral

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39 For example, see Collier 1974; Skillen 1977, 122–77.

40 Nielsen 1989b, 2; Peffer 1990, 267.

41 Gaus 2012, 196; Berlin [1939] 1978, 114.

42 On the potentially modest epistemological requirements of ideology critique, see Balkin 1998, 134; Humphrey 2005, 234-5; Shelby 2003, 168.

43 Geuss 1981, 1. For a sense of the obscurantism that can plague discussions of ideology, see Žižek [1989] 2008.

44 As Elster ([1983] 2016b, 143) has written, appeals to 'structural homologies' can often seem 'a solemn name for whatever arbitrary similarities the writer in question can think of'. See also Sankaran 2020, 1456-7.

beliefs. I also introduce Marx to the literature on genealogy, which has primarily used Friedrich Nietzsche and Michel Foucault as its historical referents. Marx's critique of morality is almost entirely absent, yet an important part of his critique of morality can be reconstructed as a 'debunking' argument.

Chapter 2
Marx and Morality

As Bernard Gert has written, '[i]f you start by saying "Morality is…" nothing you say afterward seems to be quite right'.[1] Though it is a term used frequently and we seem to have some rough sense of what it denotes, pinning it down (let alone creating defining conditions) is substantially more difficult. This is not just an exercise in what might pejoratively be termed 'dictionary-philosophy', as it is necessary to establish the referent of my Marxian critique of morality.[2] For one thing, this may make us more cautious about comparing Marx to other anti-moralists, like Nietzsche.[3]

I aim to sidestep the conceptual problem by arguing that my Marxian reconstruction can justifiably make use of a conventional understanding of morality. I reproduce four truisms about morality and present evidence from *The Holy Family* and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts in which Marx's criticisms of moralism are compatible with and suggestive of a conventional understanding of morality.[4] This is not the same exercise as attributing a particular understanding of morality to Marx, which is a much more ambitious interpretive endeavour. Instead, I am merely finding some textual licence to allow me to make use of a conventional understanding of morality in my reconstruction, thereby establishing its scope.

1. The Conventional Understanding of Morality

In his book chapter 'Morality, Ideology, and Reflection; or, The Duck Sits Yet', Railton identifies some truisms about morality shared by the utilitarian, Kantian, and virtue ethics schools of moral

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1 Gert [1988] 2005, 3.

2 I borrow this term from Rosen (1996a, 30), who associates it with the 'post-war heyday' of the method of conceptual analysis.

3 Such comparisons are more commonly made by Marxist anti-moralists, such as Wood ([1981] 2004, 152). However, as Peter Railton ([2000] 2003, 381) has noted, the two [authors] appear to use the term with a different scope – the "morality" Nietzsche most famously stimagized is more specific historically' (elsewhere, Wood (2012, 509) also seems to recognise this). For a non-Marxist example, G.J. Warnock (1967, 52) suggested that Kant and Hume's discussions of 'morality' might not have been discussions about the same phenomena.

4 In this context, moralism can be understood as involving the 'illicit introduction of moral considerations' (Driver 2005, 137). In her useful analytical treatment of moralism, Julia Driver highlighted that it has been used to refer to 'moral absolutism, excessive standards and demandingness, and presenting non-moral considerations as moral ones' (2005, 137). Her understanding is fairly conventional, though in the Marxist literature more unconventional definitions are often given (possibly to allow Marxist moralists to concede that Marx was an anti-moralist (i.e., sensitive to the misuse of morality) whilst maintaining that he was not a morality critic (i.e., not critical of morality itself), for example in Geras 1990, 10. See also Geuss 2015, 55.

philosophy.[5] Edited for my purposes, the four truisms state that moral beliefs are justified using moral principles that are:

A. '*Impartial*' (or 'non-partial') – moral principles take 'into account all those potentially affected';
B. '*Universal*' (or 'non-indexical') – moral principles 'claim legitimacy and scope of application that goes beyond any particular set of boundaries or conventions';
C. '*Beneficent*' - moral principles assign '*prima facie* positive weight to the well-being of those affected, negative deliberate weight to their suffering';
D. '*Practical*' – moral principles 'purport to provide answers to the agent's questions "What ought I to do?" or "How best to live?"'.[6]

As Railton notes, each truism will be supported by members of each school for different reasons.[7] For example, whereas utilitarians might believe that moral principles should be impartial because each person's utility has the same value, Kantians might believe that moral principles should be impartial because each individual has the same moral worth.

Evidence from psychological studies on moral convictions have also suggested that these truisms are widely shared beyond the academy. Such studies ask participants what they consider to be unique about moral convictions. In support of the impartiality condition (A), moral convictions are regularly reported as going 'beyond subjective preferences'.[8] In support of the universality truism (B), moral convictions are said to apply 'regardless of group boundaries'.[9] That people also report moral convictions as being based on considerations of 'right and wrong' is supportive of the beneficence truism (C), as right is often associated with assigning a positive weight to well-being.[10] Finally, in support of truism (D), moral convictions are regularly portrayed as having a practical character.[11]

Obviously, there will be those that disagree with these truisms, and who favour an unconventional understanding of morality. Notably for my purposes, Wood and Miller both portray Marx as being one such person. Wood argues that '[a]s I read him, Marx bases his critique

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5 A similar set of truisms are repeated in Peffer 1990, 183.
6 Railton [2000] 2003, 360-1. Following Railton (*Ibid.*, 382), I am 'assuming that we can speak of "moral belief" or "belief in moral statements or propositions" innocently, without thereby presupposing a cognitivist moral metatheory'. For a useful overview of the literature on defining morality, see Wallace and Walker 1970, 1-20.
7 Railton [2000] 2003, 360.
8 Skitka 2010, 268. See also Nucci 2001; Turiel 2002.
9 Skitka 2010, 268. See also Turiel 2002.
10 Skitka 2010, 268. See also Skitka, Bauman and Sargis 2005; Haidt 2003.
11 Skitka 2010, 270.

of capitalism on the claim that it frustrates many important nonmoral goods'.[12] In contrast to moral goods ('such things as virtue, right, justice, the fulfilment of duty, and the possession of morally meritorious qualities of character'), nonmoral goods are said to include 'such things as pleasure and happiness, things which we would regard as desirable and good for people to have even if no moral credit accrued from pursuing or possessing them'.[13] Though Wood admits this distinction 'is never explicitly drawn by Marx', he maintains that 'it is not implausible to think that Marx might be tacitly aware of it and even make significant use of it without consciously attending to it'.[14]

However, as Peffer has pointed out, Wood's definition of morality is unconventionally narrow.[15] A principle of hedonistic utilitarianism that tells us to maximise pleasure and minimise suffering is impartial, universal, beneficent, and practical. It thereby meets all the four truisms about morality and would ordinarily be considered a moral principle. However, for Wood (and for Wood's Marx) it is seemingly not a moral principle because pleasure is one of his examples of a non-moral good.

For his part, Miller claims that moral decisions are characterised by the 'features' of equality, generalisability, and universality.[16] He then says, 'it is also natural to adopt the narrower usage [of morality], and to see Marx as advancing a non-morality'.[17] When Miller defines each of the three 'features', it becomes clear he is also advancing an unconventionally narrow definition of morality. The criterion of equality says that 'people are to be shown equal concern or respect or afforded equal status'.[18] Though this might, at first glance, appear to approximate the impartiality truism (A), it is in fact much stronger. Miller's equality criterion reads more like a substantive moral belief than a defining condition for the concept of morality. Peffer offered a useful counterexample to Miller's equality condition. He noted that the 'contention of many ancient philosophers that the freeborn are worthy of a type of concern and respect that slaves are not is seemingly a *moral* proposition, even if it does not show all persons equal concern and respect and thus is not an acceptable one'.[19]

Wood and Miller are burdening Marx with an unconventional understanding of morality.[20] This would be a high price to pay (especially with little evidence) because it would make Marx's critique less relevant to the majority that still hold a conventional understanding of morality. By

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12 Wood [1981] 2004, 129.
13 *Ibid.*
14 *Ibid.*
15 Peffer 1990, 182-3.
16 Miller 1984, 16.
17 *Ibid.*, 17.
18 *Ibid.*
19 Peffer 1990, 190.
20 See also Buchanan 1987, 120-6.

presenting evidence that shows Marx's critique of moralism to be compatible with and suggestive of a more conventional understanding of morality, I am *ipso facto* arguing against Wood and Miller's interpretive claim that Marx held a narrow, unconventional understanding of morality.[21]

In addition, by presenting such evidence, I am *ipso facto* arguing against the view that Marx held two conceptions of morality. Michael Rosen has argued that Marx implicitly endorsed Hegel's distinction between morality and ethical life.[22] Rosen presents evidence from Marx's critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* (1820) and his article 'On the Jewish Question' to suggest that he uses the distinction to criticise abstract moral rights.[23] In a complementary manner, Lukes has argued that Marx tacitly draws a distinction between 'the morality of *Recht* and the morality of *emancipation*'.[24] This chapter gives evidence that suggests Marx might instead have only held one understanding of morality.[25]

2. Impartiality and Beneficence

In Chapters 6 and 9 of *The Holy Family*, Marx is almost entirely preoccupied with Sue's novel *The Mysteries of Paris*. The novel, published serially in the French newspaper *Journal des débats* between 1842 and 1843, was recognised to have been particularly important in highlighting social issues to German readers.[26] Engels remarked at the time that 'the well-known novel […] made a deep impression upon the public mind, especially in Germany' by highlighting 'the state of the poor in general'.[27]

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21 I am only arguing against Wood and Miller (and Rosen and Lukes) in an *ipso facto* manner (rather than in a direct manner) because I am not primarily interested in establishing what Marx really believed about morality. I present evidence to license my reconstruction, and I think that this evidence needs a discounting explanation from these authors to defend their position.

22 Rosen 2000, 30-2.

23 *Ibid.*, 27-8.

24 Lukes 1985, 27.

25 My evidence would also be supported by Geras's observation (see section 3 of Chapter 1) that Marx was not overly concerned with discussing morality in the abstract. Geras's observation suggests that morality was not of primary concern to Marx, intuitively making it more likely that he relied on a conventional understanding of the concept. In addition, my evidence would be supported by the observation that, where he feels it necessary, Marx can be quite exacting in his distinctions. Given this, it would be odd (though obviously not impossible) if Marx's critique of morality relied on a distinction between two conceptions of morality that he failed to make. For an example of one of Marx's exacting distinctions, during his defence of Proudhon against Edgar Bauer's (perceived) misrepresentations, Marx affirms Proudhon's distinction between saying that 'the law is a *definition* of what is right' and the law as a *'statement'* of what is right (according to the former what is right or just is determined by law) (Marx and Engels [1845] 1975a, 28). Less charitably, it might be observed that Marx's parts of *The Holy Family* hardly shy away from belabouring 'minute' distinctions (Cohen 1968, 21).

26 For further discussion of Marx and Sue, see Acton [1955] 2003, 194-201; Brown 2012, 35-9.

27 Engels 1844, 255. In Paris, the book was said to have created a 'reading fever', with one commentator quipping that the 'critically ill delayed their moment of death to keep up with the story' (Bhatti 1983, 84).

In Chapter 9, Marx discusses the book's protagonist Rudolph, Prince of Geroldstein, who is derided as '*the man of "pure criticism"*'.[28] Throughout the chapter Marx ridicules the prince's ability to reveal 'mysteries' about a wide range of social issues and focusses on his inability to help the poor that he meets. Where Rudolph does have any impact, this does not owe to 'his fine words but his ready money' as his '[m]orality is "impotence in action"'.[29] Finally, Marx gets around to speaking about Rudolph in the abstract and makes clear his main problem with the character. He writes that:

> Rudolph makes himself one of those angels. He goes forth into the world to sever the wicked from among the just, to punish the wicked and reward the good. The conception of good and evil has sunk so deep into his weak brain that he really believes in a corporeal Satan and wants to catch the devil alive, as at one time Professor Sack wanted to in Bonn. On the other hand, he tries to copy on the small scale the opposite of the devil, God. He likes 'to play the role of Providence a little'. Just as in reality all differences become merged more and more in the difference between poor and rich, so all aristocratic differences become dissolved in idea in the opposition between good and evil. This distinction is the last form that the aristocrat gives his prejudices.[30]

The power of the paragraph comes from its final sentence, in which Marx concludes his unmasking criticism of Rudolph's moral views in his claim that his 'opposition between good and evil' is simply 'the last form that the aristocrat gives his prejudices'. From the passage, we can deduce what role morality, minimally, would have to fulfil for this unmasking to have any power. Firstly, morality (or moral principles) must have the appearance of taking everyone's interests into account, or of being impartial. This would fulfil the impartiality truism (A). This is what I take Marx to mean when he says that 'aristocratic differences become dissolved in the idea of good and evil'.

Secondly, morality must have the *appearance* of doing good. This would fulfil the beneficence truism (C). The idea of playing 'the role of Providence a little' doesn't make sense

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28 Marx and Engels [1845] 1975a, 77.

29 *Ibid.*, 201.

30 Marx and Engels [1845] 1975a, 203. The phrase 'to play the role of providence a little' is quoted in French and I have substituted this with the English translation included in a footnote on the same page. The line about 'Professor Sack' is a reference to criticisms made about the radical theological conclusions of the Young Hegelians (notably Bruno Bauer) by K.H. Sack, who was a professor at Bonn University. For a satirical poem about the affair, see Engels [1842] 1975a, 313-51. For discussion, see Toews 1980, 288-326.

unless Rudolph (and others) think he is doing good.[31] Put differently, we might say that Rudolph is using the veneer of impartiality to hide his prejudices, and to pretend he is taking everybody's interests into account. In addition, these moral premises rely on the fact that Rudolph can fool people into thinking he cares about their well-being, as morality *prima facie* attributes value to beneficence.

3. Universality and Practicality

Marx and Engels's engagement with Stirner is a long assessment of Stirner's book *The Ego and Its Own*, which was widely recognised to have had a 'decisive' impact on Marx, importantly in helping him move away from what he'd later call the 'Feuerbach cult'.[32] Stirner promoted an egoistic account of autonomy and argued against various restrictions on the individual, including moral obligations.[33] One of Marx and Engels's primary charges in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts is that Stirner's egoism, contrary to his pretences, necessitates moralism. Stirner 'remains within the world of pure thoughts', and 'can, of course, save himself only by means of a moral postulate'.[34] Marx and Engels seem particularly sensitive to any suggestion that they also engage in moralism. This is most clearly articulated when they write that:

> The communists do not preach *morality* at all, as Stirner does so extensively. They do not put to people the moral demand: love one another, do not be egoists, etc.; on the contrary, they are very well aware that egoism, just as much as selflessness, is in definite circumstances a necessary form of the self-assertion of individuals.[35]

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31 Certainly, it is clear that Rudolph thinks he is promoting human well-being. In the book he is quite clear that his aim is to 'recompense the good, punish the bad, solace those who suffer, probe all wounds of humanity, [and] to endeavour to snatch souls from perdition' (Sue [1842-3] 1844, 145).

32 Leopold 2019b; Marx [1867] 1987, 360. Marx and Engels's response to *The Ego and Its Own* in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts is by far the longest part of the manuscripts and is much more detailed than any exposition of their positive views (Lobkowicz 1969, 69). On Stirner's intellectual relationship to Marx, see Adams [1940] 1965, 141-82; Blumenfeld 2018, 132-48; Dematteis 1976, 99-135; Dupré 1966, 145-58; Hook [1936] 1962, 173-85; Kolakowski 1978, 163-71; McLellan 1969, 132-36; Thomas [1975] 2011, 133-42; Thomson 2004, 189-206. On Marx and Feuerbach, see Brudney 1998, 227-63; Hook [1936] 1962, 272-307; Leopold 2007, 218-223; McLellan 1969, 101-116.

33 Stirner's narrow understanding of morality is defined by its positing of obligations on individuals. He viewed such obligations imposed by the 'rigid unbending *master*' as unjustified infringements on individual autonomy, and memorably described the conscience of protestant morality as putting 'a man in the position of a country governed by secret police' ([1844] 1995, 60, 81-2). On Stirner's views on morality, see Leopold 1995, xxiii-xxv. For a stimulating framing of nineteenth century German anti-moralism as a reaction to Kant's attempt to unify morality and freedom, see Katsafanas 2015.

34 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 326.

35 *Ibid.*, 247.

The examples ('love one another, do not be egoists, etc.') that Marx and Engels give of Stirner's preaching of morality are of practical principles. Elsewhere, they ridicule Stirner's use of the 'categorical imperative', such as in his (supposed) appeals to "'turn yourself to account", "recognise yourself", "let each become an all-powerful ego", etc'.[36] These principles fulfil the practicality truism (D) because they purport to tell us what to do and how best to live.

In addition, the examples suggest a universal understanding of moral principles. They thereby fulfil condition (B). This is because Stirner's moral directives are not dependent on the establishment of certain conventions. That they impose universal demands in all circumstances seems to be Marx and Engels's implication when they write that, in contrast, 'the communists' recognise that 'in definite circumstances', egoism is 'a necessary form of self-assertion'.

In this chapter, I have sought to establish that my Marxian critique of morality can legitimately make use of a conventional understanding of morality. I reproduced four truisms about morality and gave evidence from *The Holy Family* and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts in which Marx's criticisms of moralism are compatible with and suggestive of a conventional understanding of morality, according to which moral beliefs are grounded in principles that are impartial, beneficent, universal, and practical. This has allowed me to establish the scope of my Marxian critique of morality. The next chapter continues on the same theme of conceptual analysis, before embarking on empirical study in Chapter 4 and analytical argumentation in Chapters 5 and 6.

[36] *Ibid.*, 292.

Chapter 3
A Marxian Conception of Moral Ideology

In *Making Sense of Marx* (1985), Elster opens his discussion of the Marxist treatment of ideology with the following passage:

> From his first writings, Marx was never content with stating his own views and criticising those of others. In addition, he wanted to *explain* how others came to hold their erroneous views. The theories of others were not treated mainly as alternative views of the same social reality that he also studied − as legitimate if possibly incorrect explanations of society. Rather he considered them to be *part of the reality to be explained*.[1]

In this passage, Elster nicely identifies what Michael Morris has called 'the dual status of thought'.[2] Beliefs are both *in* and *about* this world. Following Elster, we treat beliefs as *about* this world when we focus on their plausibility 'as alternative views of the same social reality'. This involves a focus on the *cognitive* dimension of beliefs. In contrast, we can treat beliefs as *in* this world by treating them 'as *part of the reality to be explained*'. This will involve a focus on the *non-cognitive* dimension of beliefs. The unique nature of ideological analysis is that it focusses on the non-cognitive dimension of beliefs.

Any discussion of ideology first has to go through the 'routine' of commenting on the 'vagueness of the notion and the resulting theoretical confusion of its analysis'.[3] This vagueness is well illustrated by the 'prodigious variety of recent classificatory schemes' that have been used to attempt to pin down 'one of the most slippery of terms'.[4] Here I will follow Geuss's discussion, which highlights that the term 'ideology' has been used in three senses: a descriptive sense, a pejorative sense and a positive sense.[5] When used in its descriptive sense, labelling a belief as ideological does not also evaluate it. This is the sense in which the term has been used in anthropology and sociology by authors such as Clifford Geertz and Daniel Bell, in addition to the morphological approach to ideology introduced into political theory by Michael Freeden. Such authors are interested in expanding our understanding of beliefs by focussing on their non-

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1 Elster 1985, 459.
2 Morris 2016, 36.
3 van Dijk 1998, 1.
4 Morris 2016, 1; Minogue 1983, 179.
5 Geuss 1981, 4-44. For alternatives, see Boudon 1989, 17–68; Eagleton 1991, 1–31; Mannheim [1929] 1954, 49–94; Plamenatz [1970] 1971, 15–31; Rosen 1996a, 30–53; Rossi-Landi 1990, 17–48.

cognitive properties. In contrast, when used in its pejorative sense, labelling a belief as ideological is also a criticism of that belief. The Marxist tradition has mostly used the term in this sense. The least popular sense in which ideology is used is its positive sense, in which calling a belief ideological designates a good thing about it. Geuss associates this usage with sets of beliefs (and practices) that satisfy certain needs and desires, such as in Christianity.[6]

In this thesis, I want to find out whether moral beliefs are ideological in the pejorative sense.[7] When used in its pejorative sense, the concept of ideology is a tool for critique. There have been two main varieties of the critique of ideology: 'the functional critique of ideology' and 'the epistemic critique of ideology'.[8] The functional critique of ideology focusses on the role that beliefs play in the real world. By solely focussing on a non-cognitive property of beliefs (their function), it 'treats beliefs as mundane entities *in* the world, while at least temporally disregarding the sense in which beliefs also purport to be *about* the world'.[9] Authors associated with the functional critique of ideology include Antonio Gramsci and Herbert Marcuse.

The epistemic critique of ideology focusses on the cognitive implications of the non-cognitive properties of beliefs.[10] Morris identifies three conceptions of epistemic ideology critique: a propaedeutical conception, a neo-Kantian conception and a neo-Hegelian conception. The propaedeutical conception, as practiced by authors such as Elster, has sought to reveal 'important ways in which rational mental processes can be undermined by irrelevant causal influences'.[11] By doing so, the propaedeutical conception 'thus helps us to identify, understand, and avoid some common errors, and it thereby clears the way for the proper acquisition and justification of knowledge'.[12] In contrast to the propaedeutical conception, the neo-Kantian and neo-Hegelian conceptions, as defended by Jürgen Habermas and Morris, directly incorporate a concern for non-cognitive properties within their epistemology.[13]

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6 Geuss 1981, 25-6.

7 I therefore see my discussion as largely autonomous from works of descriptive ideology study. On the (distant) relation between descriptive and pejorative ideology studies, see Humphrey 2005, 241-5.

8 Morris 2016, 8. See also Drucker 1974, 15. As Morris (2016, 9) notes, the difference between functional and epistemic ideology critique 'is primarily a matter of emphasis' rather than signalling an exhaustive distinction.

9 Morris 2016, 5.

10 The legitimacy of the epistemic critique of ideology has been a point of contestation in the Marxist tradition. See Althusser [1968] 1971b; Collier 1978.

11 Elster [1982] 2016a, 142.

12 *Ibid.*

13 Habermas ([1968] 1972, 313) does this by recognising different 'categories of possible knowledge' that include 'information that expands our power of technological control' and 'interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions'). On Marx and ideology, see also Habermas [1969] 1989, 100-14. Morris (2016, 183-290) defends a neo-Hegelian epistemology that is said to synthesise 'Mannheim's sociology of knowledge', 'Lukács social ontology' and 'the broadly psychoanalytic conception of ideology critique sporadically elaborated by Habermas, Althusser, and Žižek'.

In this chapter, I construct and defend a Marxian conception of moral ideology. In section 1, I highlight that Marx used the term ideology in an epistemically pejorative manner and that he implied that a belief's genetic and functional properties were relevant to it being ideological. In section 2, I construct a pejorative epistemic conception of moral ideology from these writings.

1. Marx and Ideology

The concept of ideology has become increasingly important in the Marxist and Critical Theory traditions. That Marx was one of the first authors to use the term in its pejorative sense has thereby guaranteed his status as a 'revolutionary figure' or as one of the 'masters of suspicion'.[14] Those less sympathetic bemoan that 'modern [ideology] scholarship […] still labours heavily under the mid-nineteenth century shadow of Marx and Engels'.[15] Given this, it might be surprising to find out that 'there is no clear and sustained discussion of ideology' in any of Marx's writings.[16] Instead, readers are met with a range of 'striking images' and polemical accusations.[17] Marx has been charged with equivocating between epistemic concerns ('ideology as illusion') and functional ones ('ideology as an intellectual armoury of the ruling class'), and even for being partly responsible for the rift between functional and epistemic ideology critique.[18]

The fact that Marx's discussions of ideology trade in 'obliqueness and reticence' has not hindered authors writing about the topic, and 'something of an "arms race" appears to have emerged with authors finding models of ideology in Marx's writings'.[19] It is not my intention to further escalate this race here, as I am not trying to attribute a model to Marx but rather to find textual license to ground my Marxian conception.[20]

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14 Geuss 1981, 1; Ricoeur [1965] 1970, 32-3. See also Leiter 2004, 79-89.
15 Freeden [1996] 2006, 14.
16 Leopold 2013, 20.
17 *Ibid.*
18 Eagleton 1991, 90.
19 McCarney 1980, 82; Leopold 2013, 21.
20 If I were searching for Marx's *intended* use of the term 'ideology', I would begin instead by attempting to reconstruct Marx's intellectual context, rather than with 'The German Ideology' manuscripts. It may be worth noting that I treat 'ideology' as distinct from 'false consciousness', which was a phrase (with clearly epistemically pejorative connotations) introduced by Engels ([1893] 2004, 164) a decade after Marx's death. For two interesting analytical discussions of false consciousness, see Shelby 2003, 170-2; Weberman 1997.

1.1. *Ideology and Epistemic Status*

In this section, I provide evidence to suggest that Marx's usage of the term 'ideology' in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts was not epistemically neutral.[21] I do this to argue that the epistemically pejorative conception of ideology I defend in section 2 is Marxian. This debate has a long history in the literature on Marx and ideology. In his article "'Ideology" in Marx and Engels', Charles Mills distinguished three main interpretive positions on the issue: (a) Marx's usage of the term is *always* epistemically pejorative, (b) Marx's usage of the term is *sometimes* epistemically pejorative and (c) Marx's usage of the term is *never* epistemically pejorative (it is epistemically neutral).[22] I here present evidence from 'The German Ideology' manuscripts to pose problems for position (c). I am quite happy for position (b) to be true, and to admit that my pejorative conception of ideology does not exhaust Marx's understanding of the concept. However, I want to make clear that Marx's usage of the term ideology was epistemically pejorative in an important sense.

The two main proponents of the view that Marx's usage of the term ideology was epistemically neutral have been Joe McCarney and John McMurtry.[23] Given this is (by far) the minority position in the literature and because I think it has been satisfactorily dealt with elsewhere, I do not spend long on it here.[24] McMurtry does not explicitly engage with 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, and so I focus on rebuking McCarney's argument. McCarney says that, in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, Marx and Engels's 'concern is not with ideology as such but a particular variety, the *German* ideology, through its "representatives" and "prophets"'.[25] For McCarney, this means that ideology is an epistemically neutral term, and that any impression otherwise owes to the fact that Marx just happens to be concerned with particular ideological beliefs that are also epistemically flawed.

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21 I do not discuss *The Holy Family* in this chapter because Marx does not use the term ideology (in its pejorative sense) in the book. See Cowling 1989, 18-9; Parekh 1982, 1-14.

The reason that I use the clunky phrase 'usage of the term ideology' rather than 'theory of ideology' or 'conception of ideology' is because I am sympathetic to those that argue that Marx didn't present (and didn't seem concerned to present) anything amounting to a theory of ideology in a meaningful sense (see Rosen 1996b, 210; McCarney 1980, 82). On what labelling something a 'theory' might mean, see Stemplowska 2008, 323.

22 Mills 1985, 328. Position (a) is supported by Acton [1955] 2003, 123; Althusser [1965] 2005, 78; Barth [1945] 1976, 48; Cohen [1978] 2000, 46; Mannheim [1929] 1954, 67; D. Miller 1972, 435; Plamenatz [1970] 1971, 79; Poulantzas [1968] 1975, 207; Rader 1979, 41-3; Seliger 1977, 2. Position (b) is supported by Leopold 2013, 21; Moskvichov 1974, 63; Therborn 1980, 3; Williams 1977, 66.

23 See McCarney 1980, 80-126; McMurtry 1978, 123-56. In fairness to both authors, they present evidence from Marx's other writings that I do not consider here. This does not mean (contra Sushinsky 1990, 472) that I cannot dispute their claims about 'The German Ideology' manuscripts.

24 See Mills 1985, [1992] 1999.

25 McCarney 1980, 82-3.

However, there are many places in which Marx and Engels do seem to refer to ideology in general as epistemically deficient. The most famous of these is the '*camera obscura*' passage (in the 'Feuerbach chapter'), in which Marx and Engels write that '*if in all ideology* men and their relations appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process'.[26] Ideological beliefs are epistemically flawed because 'men and their relations appear upside-down'.

In addition, more evidence can be found when one focusses on Marx and Engels's discussions of ideologists. Within the dominant class ('in every epoch'), there exist 'active, conceptualising ideologists, who make the production of the *illusions* of that class about itself their main source of livelihood'.[27] I take that the 'illusions of that class about itself' denotes some degree of epistemic error. The motif that ideologists propagate illusions is common in the manuscripts, and Marx and Engels seemed quite happy to portray the ideologists as (one of) the 'estates privileged to cherish illusions' more generally.[28] As Carver and Blank have put it, when Marx and Engels were calling someone an ideologist it seems like it was often 'their term of abuse for certain political rivals in the philosophically coded politics of the time'.[29] Such unqualified dismissals of 'ideology' and 'ideologists' seem to suggest that Marx's usage of the term ideology was often epistemically pejorative.

1.2. *Functional and Genetic Properties*

The natural extension of this discussion is to ask which properties Marx portrayed as relevant to a belief being ideological. Commentators have noticed that Marx was 'certainly interested in identifying certain recurring and characteristic types of ideological error', however it is not always clear what links these errors together and what thereby distinguishes them from other misguided ideas.[30] In this section, I draw out two properties from a reading of Marx and Engels's brief discussion of two moral philosophies: utilitarianism and Kantianism.

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[26] Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 36. Emphasis mine. McCarney (1980, 86-7) has disputed the English translation recited here, and suggest that a more faithful translation of the German 'in der ganzen Ideologie' (Marx and Engels [1932] 2017, 135) would be 'in the whole ideology'. In response, Mills's (1985, 335) noted that 'the pejorative interpretation of "ideology" is equally widespread among German scholars of Marxism (such as Barth and Mannheim […]), who would not have been led astray by mistranslation'. He also claimed that 'the context of the passage makes the "general" translation ("if in all ideology") far more natural than the "specific" translation ("in the whole ideology")'. See also McCarney 1990, 454; Mills [1992] 1999, 453.

[27] Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 176, 178.

[28] Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 196. Other estates mentioned are the 'school-masters, students, members of the *Tugendbund*' (*Ibid.*, 196). The *Tugendbund* were a patriotic secret society.

[29] Carver and Blank 2014b, 4.

[30] Leopold 2013, 24.

In their dismissal of utilitarianism, Marx and Engels seem particularly concerned with the role the theory plays in practice.[31] They claim that behind the 'verbal masquerade' of 'merging all the manifold relationships of people into *one* relation of usefulness', the 'utility relation has [in practice] a quite definite meaning, namely, that I derive benefit for myself by doing harm to someone else (exploitation of man by man)'.[32] This is a two-step process. Firstly, 'the category of "utilisation" is first abstracted from the actual relations of intercourse'.[33] Secondly, 'these relations are made out to be the reality of the category that has been abstracted from them'.[34] In other words, Marx and Engels imply that utilitarianism sustains exploitation because exploitation is said to promote the (abstract category of) utility.

In contrast, in their dismissal of Kant as an ideologist, their emphasis appears to be on the genetic properties of Kant's theory. In order to better contextualise Stirner's criticisms of liberalism, Marx and Engels offer a brief 'history of the German bourgeoisie' with 'special attention to some aspects of this history since the French Revolution'.[35] Curiously, they write that 'the state of affairs of the last century is fully reflected in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*'.[36] They explain that 'while the French bourgeoisie […] was achieving domination and conquering the Continent of Europe', the 'impotent German burghers did not get any further than [Kant's] "good will"'.[37] Kant is then personally derided because '[n]either he, nor the German middle class, whose whitewashing spokesman he was, noticed that these theoretical ideas of the bourgeoisie had *as their basis* material interests and a will that was conditioned and determined by the material relations of production'.[38] The implication here is that we should be sceptical of the epistemic status of Kant's

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31 Marx seemingly reserved particular bile for Jeremy Bentham, famously referring to him in *Capital* as 'that insipid, pedantic, leather-tongued oracle of the ordinary bourgeois intelligence' and as 'a genius in the way of bourgeois stupidity' ([1867] 1996, 605).

32 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 409. The phrase 'exploitation of man by man' is quoted in French and I have substituted this with the English translation included in a footnote on the same page.

33 *Ibid.*, 410.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*, 193.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.* This appears to be another example of Marx's use of the *Traumgeschichte* (literally 'dream-history') metaphor, according to which Germany was economically backward but philosophically developed (Leopold 2007, 26). There are interesting parallels between Marx's discussion of Kant and Heinrich Heine's ([1834] 2007, 75, 78) discussion of the 'oddest analogies' between the French 'material revolution' and the German 'spiritual revolution', in which Kant is memorably compared to Robespierre. Marx and Heine were also 'well-acquainted' and 'personally close', and quotations from the latter can be found in both *The Holy Family* ([1845] 1975a, 157) and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts ([1932] 1975b, 470) (Leopold 2007, 22). On Marx and Heine, see Leopold 2007, 26-32; Marcuse 1955, Reeves 1973; 1974, 151-9; W. Rose 1956, 68-73; Rosen 1996a, 167-173.

38 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 195. Emphasis mine. It is not of relevance here whether the claim about Kant is 'very crude' or even 'absurdly' inaccurate (Brudney 1998, 325; Elster 1985, 464). This passage should not be taken to signal that Marx and Engels had a *wholly* negative attitude towards Kant. For a more positive assessment of one the 'master-spirits of Germany', see Engels [1845] 1976, 17.

'purely ideological conceptual determinations and moral postulates' owing to their origin in the 'German middle class'.[39]

2. A Marxian Conception of Moral Ideology

A moral belief *x* is ideological (and therefore unjustified) if:

A. *x* has the function of helping to 'create or sustain' illegitimate class relations;
OR
B. *x* is accepted owing to:
(i) the social position of the believer,
OR
(ii) the social interest of the believer.[40]

In this section, I defend this conception of moral ideology independently of Marx's writings. The conception is Marxian because I have formalised properties that Marx implied were relevant to whether a moral belief is ideological. There may appear a tension between my long discussion of the multiplicity of ways in which the term ideology has been used at the beginning of this chapter and my narrow, stipulative definition of ideological moral belief. However, these two considerations are connected. My definition is narrow and stipulative because a descriptive definition of ideology that tries to capture all our intuitions about the term is simply not possible. I therefore follow Jonathan Leader Maynard's advice that 'different definitions [of ideology] should be justified according to how functionally useful they are for research'.[41] The aim of my research is to identify certain errors made in moral reasoning related to the non-cognitive properties of moral beliefs.

I am offering a conception of *moral* ideology, rather than a conception of ideology more generally. According to the definition, if a moral belief is ideological, it is also unjustified.[42] My definition is therefore of an epistemic, pejorative conception of ideology.[43] In this thesis, I articulate the problem of ideology through the framework of reflective equilibrium. First

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39 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 195. The same conclusion is reached in Kain 1991, 105.
40 The phrase 'create or sustain' is from Balkin 1991, 104.
41 Leader Maynard 2017, 299.
42 I focus on beliefs because I am using an epistemic conception of ideology. I do not deny that ideology can usefully be thought of in a more expanded manner, as in Haslanger 2012, 411-3.
43 One general concern about pejorative conceptions of ideology is that they can be used in a dismissive manner (see Bianchin 2020, 316; Leader Maynard 2017, 299). This is a concern about usage, and I do not think I use the concept in a dismissive manner because I explain *why* beliefs are ideological.

introduced into normative theory by Rawls, reflective equilibrium holds that moral beliefs are justified after they reach a degree of 'acceptable coherence'.[44] This 'requires that our beliefs not only be consistent with each other (a weak requirement), but that some of these beliefs provide support or provide a best explanation for others'.[45]

I have chosen reflective equilibrium for three reasons. Firstly, reflective equilibrium is not a very demanding method. Most other methods would assign some place to consistency and mutual support. Indeed, Michael Smith has said that one of the 'platitudes' about moral enquiry is that it takes on 'a certain characteristic coherentist form', and, when detailing an analogous method, Shelly Kagan argued that 'in practice, everyone does accept an approach pretty much like this'.[46] Secondly, and relatedly, reflective equilibrium is very popular. It is widely used in moral and political philosophy, often claimed (or assumed) to be 'the only defensible method' or 'the only game in town'.[47] In addition, the requirement of 'acceptable coherence' is often used informally in moral deliberation. Most people would want their moral beliefs to be consistent and mutually supporting.[48] Thirdly, reflective equilibrium is compatible with a number of moral epistemologies. In his article 'The Independence of Moral Theory', Rawls abstained on the question of whether moral beliefs justified through reflective equilibrium are *true*, and I follow him in this abstinence.[49]

My conception contains two sufficient conditions, either of which is sufficient to label a belief as ideological. Condition (A) is a functional condition. A belief meets the condition if it has the characteristic effect of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations.[50] The emphasis on the 'class function' of moral beliefs is not unusual within Marxist discussions of ideology.[51] However, my condition should be distinguished from non-epistemic Marxist definitions of ideology. For example, Alex Callinicos has written that '[i]f we take seriously the "pragmatic" dimension of ideology, the determination of ideologies by the class struggle, then the question of the truth or falsity of ideologies is besides the point'.[52] In contrast, my functional condition exists

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44 Daniels 2020. See also Rawls 1951, 177–97; [1971] 1999, 18–9.

45 Daniels 2020.

46 Smith 1994, 40-1; Kagan 1997, 16.

47 Scanlon 2002, 149; McGrath 2019, 11.

48 As Norman Daniels (1996a, 1) has written, '[a]ll of us are familiar with the process of working back and forth between our moral judgments about particular situations and our effort to provide general reasons and principles that link those judgments to ones that are relevantly similar'.

49 Rawls 1974-5, 7-10.

50 In his book *Morality, Normativity, and Society* ([1995] 2001, 110-1), David Copp made a useful distinction between the dispositional and etiological senses of the term 'function'. When used in its dispositional sense, to say that a belief has a certain function is to claim that it has a characteristic effect. In its etiological sense, for a belief to have a given function doesn't only involve its effect but also the fact that the effect explains something about the emergence or persistence of that belief. My conception of ideology uses the term in its dispositional sense.

51 Leopold 2013, 20. See also Balkin 1998, 2-7; Nielsen [1983] 1989a, 98; Thompson 1990, 7; Wood [1981] 2004, 120.

52 Callinicos 1983, 135.

within an epistemic conception of ideology. I think that moral beliefs that create or sustain illegitimate class relations are epistemically flawed. In Chapter 5, I explain why this is the case.[53] Many different kinds of moral beliefs can perform this function, such as racist or sexist beliefs. I give examples of beliefs that fill this condition in the next chapter.

According to the genetic condition (B), a moral belief is ideological if a deliberator accepts it owing to their social position (it is 'position-induced') or their social interest (it is 'interest-induced').[54] Ideological beliefs that meet the genetic condition (B) are biased.[55] They are held owing to a disposition by the deliberator that can be explained by their social position or interest. The stereotypical Marxist example would be the charge that a member of the bourgeoisie holds right-wing moral beliefs just because they are bourgeois. The implication is that the deliberator's social position (i.e., as a member of the bourgeoisie) or their social interest (e.g., maximising profit through fewer economic regulations) can explain why they hold the moral beliefs they do. When beliefs meet the genetic condition (B), their acceptance can be *wholly explained* without reference to the cognitive content of those beliefs. More colloquially, an interlocutor could charge that 'you just believe that because…' of who you are or because believing in it is self-serving.[56]

It is not the case that all position-induced beliefs are also interest-induced. As Elster has noted, 'ideas shaped by class position need not serve class interest'.[57] He gives the example that 'any dependent man in Classical Antiquity had to believe that he owed his living and his security to his master'.[58] The dependent man might be better off without his master, so it is not in his interest to perpetuate the class relation. However, the belief may (likely) still be position-induced and therefore ideological.

Many of the cases of ideological belief I discuss in Chapter 4 are overdetermined because they satisfy both the functional condition (A) and the genetic condition (B). To show that they are different criteria, it might briefly be helpful to give an example of a belief that fulfils (A) without fulfilling (B) and vice versa.

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53 I do not extend my functional condition to all beliefs, as I do not think that all beliefs creating or sustaining illegitimate class relations are necessarily epistemically flawed. For example, Shelby (2003, 173) writes that '[d]uring the Jim Crow era, it was a widely held belief among blacks that the military and policing power of the government would crush any violent black revolt'. I take it that such a belief would stabilise illegitimate class relations insofar as black people were economically subordinate under Jim Crow. However, as Shelby (*Ibid.*) notes, though 'this common belief had the effect of reinforcing domination by engendering political passivity and resignation in some Blacks […] their belief about the power and resolve of the military regime was true'. This is an example of where a belief reinforces illegitimate class oppression, but it is not ideological. For an interesting discussion on this topic, see Anderson 1995, 37-42.

54 Elster [1982] 2016a, 145, 144, 149. My genetic condition is a narrower version of Elster's propaedeutical conception of ideology.

55 *Ibid.*

56 White 2010, 573.

57 Elster [1982] 2016a, 144.

58 *Ibid.*, 146.

A belief can fulfil the functional condition (A) and not the genetic condition (B) if it is a non-biased moral belief that has the function of creating or sustaining illegitimate class hierarchy. For example, imagine that upon reading Robert Nozick's political theory, I was motivated to engage in economic activity that clearly sustains illegitimate class relations. My belief in the justice of libertarianism fulfils the functional condition (A). However, in this case, I have been motivated by the strength of Nozick's arguments, rather than by my social position or interest (for example if I stand to gain profit from this exploitation). My belief is therefore not ideological in virtue of the genetic condition (B).[59] *If* Nozick's political theory had the function of perpetuating illegitimate class relations, it would be considered ideological on my account.[60] I explain this perhaps surprising result in Chapter 5.

In addition, a moral belief can satisfy the genetic condition (B) without satisfying the functional condition (A) if it is a position-induced or interest-induced moral belief that does not create or sustain illegitimate class hierarchy. One example of this might be a socialist who was wary of accepting beliefs that sustain illegitimate class relations, but whose own socialist beliefs are position-induced or interest-induced.

In this chapter, I constructed and defended a Marxian conception of moral ideology. In section 1, I presented evidence that Marx used the term 'ideology' in an epistemically pejorative manner and that he suggested functional and genetic properties to be relevant to whether a belief is ideological. In section 2, I constructed a pejorative Marxian epistemic conception of ideology. According to this conception, a belief is ideological if it has the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations, or if it is position-induced or interest-induced.

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[59] For further discussion, see Peffer 1990, 245.

[60] I note here that it would be particularly empirically demanding to defend the view that a particular work of political theory has an ideological function.

Chapter 4
The Dominant Moral Norm Thesis

In his own 'modest defence of Marxist paranoia', Nicholas Olsson-Yaouzis drew a useful distinction between two kinds of colloquial objections Marxist ideology critique can face.[1] He wrote that '[t]he first is an "Oh yeah?"– objection that questions whether the economic elite can influence your beliefs in the suggested way. The second is a "So what?"– objection that questions the epistemic relevance of the genealogical explanation'.[2] This chapter can be portrayed as addressing an "'Oh yeah?"– objection', as I explain how an economic elite could have an important influence on our moral beliefs. The next chapter can be seen as addressing a "So what?"– objection, as I explain why this is important. In doing so, I also broadly follow the distinction regarding the 'dual status of thought' made in Chapter 3, with this chapter focussing on the non-cognitive element of moral beliefs and the next on the cognitive implications of this chapter. The aim of this chapter is to reconstruct and defend an empirical thesis about the development of moral beliefs inferred from 'The German Ideology' manuscripts that I call the dominant moral norm thesis. I explain the nature of my dominant moral norm thesis and its relationship to Marx and Engels's dominant ideology thesis in section 1. In section 2, I evidence three sociological mechanisms in defence of the dominant moral norm thesis, before evidencing three psychological mechanisms in section 3.

1. From the Dominant Ideology Thesis to the Dominant Moral Norm Thesis

> In every epoch the ideas of the dominant class are the dominant ideas, i.e. the class which is the dominant material power over ~~history~~ society is at the same time the dominant intellectual power. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal also deploys the means of intellectual production, so that the ideas of those lacking the means of intellectual production are on average subordinated. The dominant ideas are nothing more than the ~~ideological~~ ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations put into ideas; hence [these are ideas] of the relations which make one class the dominant one, therefore [these are] the ideas of their dominance.[3]

1 Olsson-Yaouzis 2018, 827.
2 *Ibid.*, 828.
3 Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 176.

This famous passage in Engels's handwriting in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts has come to be viewed as central to Marx's (and Engels's) understanding of ideology, with one commentator even remarking that 'here lies the Marxist theory of ideology'.[4] Its first sentence is often called the 'dominant ideology thesis', largely owing to a book of the same name by Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner.[5] The claim that the 'dominant ideas' come from the 'dominant class' is commonly understood as a genetic claim.[6] Scholars have generally understood the second sentence as an empirical justification for the dominant ideology thesis.[7] On this reading, the reason that 'the ideas of the dominant class are the dominant ideas' is because 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal also deploys the means of intellectual production'. This justification could (in principle) be tested by gathering relevant empirical data. The third sentence has generated more disagreement and has instead been regarded (partly in virtue of containing the phrase 'nothing more') as non-empirical, variously described as 'structural' or even 'phenomenological'.[8] Marx and Engels have been said to be making a claim about the intrinsic nature of the dominant ideas, namely that they can be 'nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations'.

In contrast to these commentators, my purposes with this passage are not interpretive.[9] I am not (primarily) interested in what Marx and Engels meant when they articulated or defended the dominant ideology thesis. Instead, I am interested in the implications of the dominant ideology thesis for the justification of our moral beliefs. In this chapter, I assess a related hypothesis that I call the dominant moral norm thesis.[10] The truth (or plausibility) of the dominant moral norm thesis is autonomous from the conceptual analysis of the previous two chapters. One could question whether I have a reasonable understanding of morality or (moral) ideology yet still agree with the dominant moral norm thesis (and vice versa).

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4 Wolff 2002, 60.

5 Abercrombie, Hill and Turner 1980, 8. See also Callinicos 2004, 156-67; Conway 1987, 171; Pines 1993, 57-64. I (broadly) follow the literature in calling the first sentence the dominant ideology thesis, though I note here that one passage is likely not sufficient interpretive warrant to prescribe a precise thesis to Marx or Engels, especially given the concerns I raised about the status of 'The German Ideology' manuscripts in Chapter 1.

6 As Eagleton (1991, 44) has noted, this could either mean that the dominant ideas are produced by the dominant class, or just that the dominant ideas were once in the possession of the dominant class.

7 Brudney 1998, 327. See also Leopold 2013, 26; Pines 1993, 12. In support of this reading, one might note the addition of 'on average' in the passage.

8 Brudney 1998, 329-37; Balibar [1994] 1995, 45.

9 Recently, some philosophers have become more concerned with evaluating rather than interpreting the thesis. See Edwards 2018, 100-72; Olsson-Yaouzis 2018, 828-9; Stanley 2015, 178-291.

10 Though it is technically a hypothesis, I have chosen to call it the 'dominant moral norm *thesis*' to emphasise its lineage from the dominant ideology thesis. On hypothesis and the doxastic attitudes, see Palmira 2018.

The dominant moral norm thesis is as follows:

A. If there exists an economically dominant class of individuals in society *x*, then that class will likely have a disproportionate influence in determining the content of the dominant moral norm in society *x*;
AND
B. The dominant moral norm in society *x* will often have the effect of helping to sustain the status quo in society *x*, and this effect partly explains the popularity of the dominant moral norm.

For my purposes, I adopt a very narrow understanding of a moral *norm* as a set of moral principles held by a group of individuals, allowing them to evaluate actions.[11] The dominant moral norm is simply the set of the most popular moral principles held by that group.

1.1. *Lineage*

There are three important differences between the dominant ideology thesis and my dominant moral norm thesis. Firstly, my dominant moral norm thesis has a narrower scope. As I am only interested in the dominant ideology thesis as part of Marx's critique of morality, I do not have to spend time reconstructing or assessing Marxian views about non-moral beliefs (or ideas).[12] In addition, I also do not have to spend time reconstructing or assessing the development of moral beliefs throughout history. I (happily) drop the requirement that I discuss 'every epoch'.[13] Secondly, my dominant moral norm thesis is weaker. This is true of its genetic claim (A) ('that class will *likely* have a disproportionate influence in determining the content of the dominant moral norm') and of its functional claim (B) ('[t]he dominant moral norm in society x will *often* have the effect of helping to sustain the status quo'). As I will explain (in section 1.3), this is to make explicit that the

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[11] Heath 2008, 166. More sophisticated discussions of moral and social norms (and differences between the two) emphasise their non-cognitive components (e.g., Bicchieri 2017; Elster 2007, 353-72). For a useful overview of the literature, see Dubreuil and Grégoire 2013, 137-8.

[12] As John Plamenatz ([1970] 1971, 29) has pointed out, Marx and Engels do not make the scope of their discussion of ideology very clear. On a generous reading, the dominant ideology thesis only refers to 'social' ideas (rather than *all* ideas). Certainly, there seems no obvious reason why our beliefs about abstract logic would be determined by an economically dominant class.

[13] It is curious that Marxist authors sympathetic to the dominant ideology thesis do not restrict its scope, and indeed often ignore the (possible) plausibility of a restricted version of the thesis. For example, see Callinicos 2004, 152-205.

dominant moral norm thesis is an empirical hypothesis. Thirdly, my dominant moral norm thesis makes the function of the dominant moral norm explicit (through claim (B)).

By making these changes explicit, I want to make clear that neither Marx nor Engels ever (to my knowledge) articulated any version of the dominant moral norm thesis. However, I do think that the dominant moral norm thesis can legitimately be called Marxian. Firstly, that my dominant moral norm thesis has a narrower scope than the dominant ideology thesis is legitimate because it relies on a simple deduction from the dominant ideology thesis. If it is the case that 'the ideas of the dominant class are the dominant ideas', then it will be the case that the moral beliefs of a dominant class are the dominant moral beliefs. Secondly, that my dominant moral norm thesis is weaker than the dominant ideology thesis is legitimate because the dominant ideology thesis can plausibly be read as an empirical thesis. Thirdly, that my dominant moral norm thesis includes a functional claim (B) is legitimate because it involves making explicit the important functional implications of the dominant ideology thesis. I here give evidence from 'The German Ideology' manuscripts to defend the latter two claims and thereby to establish that my dominant moral norm thesis is Marxian.

That the dominant ideology thesis can plausibly be read as an empirical thesis would be supported by observing Marx and Engels's criticisms of 'Hegelian' theories of history, particularly as articulated by Stirner.[14] They claim that '[s]peculative philosophy' cannot understand why historical change occurs because it 'detaches the thoughts of the dominant class from the dominant class […] without bothering oneself about the conditions of production and about the producers of those ideas'.[15] This is said to manifest itself in certain mistakes, such as when the '"thinkers", "philosophers", ideologists' are portrayed as the 'makers of history, as "the Guardian Council", as those who rule'.[16] They offer a parody of Stirner's historical method, the first step of which is said to 'detach the ideas of the rulers, who rule *on an empirical basis, under empirical conditions & as material individuals*, from them, & thereby recognise the domination of ideas or illusions in history'.[17] They give the example that, owing to his method, Stirner fails to understand that 'hierarchy and its struggles with feudalism (the struggles of the ideologists of one class against the class itself) are only the ideological expression of feudalism', and that 'feudalism [is] the political form of the medieval relations of production and interchange'.[18]

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14 Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 188. This is not the first time Marx criticises (what he saw to be) Hegelian theories of history. In *The Holy Family*, Marx paints Bruno Bauer as giving a '[c]ritically caricatured consummation of Hegel's conception of history' in which 'the history of mankind becomes the history of the Abstract Spirit of mankind' (Marx and Engels [1845] 1975a, 85).

15 Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 181.

16 *Ibid.*, 195.

17 *Ibid.*, 193. Emphasis mine.

18 *Ibid.*, 201.

In contrast, Marx and Engels's own discussion of history is said to begin from 'real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination', and therefore from 'premises [that] can thus be *verified in a purely empirical way*'.[19] They are not 'setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined' but rather 'real, active men' because '[t]he phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is *empirically verifiable* and bound to material premises'.[20] The result is that '[*m*]*orality*, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence'.[21]

In addition, I think the dominant ideology thesis has important functional implications. This is because Marx and Engels imply that it is in the interest of the dominant class that their ideas are the dominant ones. They were not seemingly just making an anodyne genetic claim about where ideas come from. After articulating the thesis, Marx and Engels explain that 'Hegelian' theories of history won't be able to account for the function of certain ideas. More specifically, they 'will necessarily come up against the phenomenon that ideas which are more and more abstract become more dominant'.[22] They explain that, 'for each new class that takes the place of the one that was previously dominant, it is now necessary, *in order to achieve its objectives*, for its interest to be represented as the common interest of all members of society, i.e. expressed ideally: to give its ideas the form of universality, to present them as the only rational, universally applicable ones'.[23] Hegelian theories of history are insufficiently concerned with where abstract ideas come from, and they are liable to therefore miss that certain ideas (such as presenting one's interest 'as the common interest') perform an important function in the transfer of power.

1.2. *Misconceptions*

In this section, I pre-empt two possible misconceptions about the dominant moral norm thesis that might arise owing to its lineage in the dominant ideology thesis.

Firstly, the dominant moral norm thesis is not designed to provide a sociology of morals. A sociology of morals explains the emergence and persistence of (all) moral beliefs.[24] It is not required that I offer a sociology of morals to answer my question of whether moral beliefs are

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19 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 31. Emphasis mine.
20 *Ibid.*, 36. Emphasis mine.
21 *Ibid.*, 36-7. Emphasis mine.
22 Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 183.
23 *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.
24 For a useful overview of the literature, see Hitlin and Vaisey 2010. By drawing a (schematic) distinction between sociologies of morals and discussions of moral ideology, I am *ipso facto* arguing against the notion that there exists a 'Marxian sociology of morals', as has been claimed in Husami 1978, 32, 32-41.

ideological. One criticism of the dominant ideology thesis has been its reliance on 'brutal simplicities' and 'dramatic simplification' and its subsequent failure to account for the diversity of ideological worldviews.[25] However, it is at least doubtful whether Marx and Engels's articulation of the thesis was intended to fulfil this latter aim. As Jorge Larrain has written:

> The critical [pejorative] concept of ideology, and therefore Marx's concept, is certainly inadequate to account for the formation, articulation and transformation of discourses, currents of thought, political ideas, in short, ideologies in the neutral [descriptive] sense. But then it was not produced to perform that task, but to criticize certain distortions.[26]

Similarly, my dominant moral norm thesis should be read within the context of a pejorative conception of (moral) ideology. I am primarily interested in where moral reasoning goes wrong, rather than to account for the development of all moral beliefs. This manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, I only (largely) offer evidence that supports the dominant moral norm thesis. I want to present as much of the supportive evidence of the dominant moral norm thesis as I can here, to better account for the problem that ideology poses for (the justification of) our moral beliefs in Chapter 5. Secondly, I allow myself to use the dominant moral norm thesis as a highly simplified model for illustrative purposes. I do not think accepting the dominant moral norm thesis requires that an individual believe that there exists only a binary relation between a dominant and subordinate class, for example. There will also, of course, be disagreement and diversity within any dominant moral norm.

Secondly, the dominant moral norm thesis is not designed to explain the stability of 'bad social arrangements'.[27] This has been a popular question in the Marxist and Critical Theory traditions. For example, Sally Haslanger has written that '[i]deology […] is intended to function as an answer to the *explanatory* question: What explains persistent racial injustice?'[28] If I was trying to explain the stability of bad social arrangements, it would obviously be unsatisfactory to conclude that '[t]he dominant moral norm in society *x* will often have the effect of helping to sustain the status quo in society *x*'. This would just create many more questions, most pressing being *how important* the dominant moral norm is in stabilising the status quo.[29] It is at least debatable whether

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25 Hall 1996, 287.

26 Larrain 1991, 20-1. It is tempting to observe that when Marxist authors attempt to over-extend the pejorative concept of ideology, we are left with obviously implausible attempts to describe all ideas such as in Karl Kautsky's ([1906] 1918) 'dilettantish attempt' at a complete Marxist sociology of morals (Kamenka 1969, 40).

27 Sankaran 2020, 1442.

28 Haslanger 2017, 8.

29 Some authors have argued that coordination problems have played a more important role than ideology in explaining the stability of bad social arrangements. See Heath 2001; Sankaran 2020, 1446-8.

Marx and Engels's articulation of the dominant ideology thesis was designed to answer the stability question, contrary to what is often assumed. For an example of such an assumption, In his article on 'The Problem of Ideology', Rosen finds five models of ideology from across Marx's writings and concludes that 'Marx's theoretical models for the theory of ideology are unsatisfactory' in answering the question.[30] However, it does not seem that in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts Marx (or Engels) were trying to answer the stability question.[31] This is not to deny that they displayed interest in the function of certain ideas, or that their arguments might be useful to those trying to explain the stability of bad social arrangements.

1.3. *Method*

As my dominant moral norm thesis is empirical, I can treat it as though it were a thesis in social science.[32] Doing so encourages modesty about my ambitions, as it is very difficult to establish what it might mean for a social scientific thesis to be true.[33] I cannot reasonably expect, given space constraints, to establish whether my thesis is true regardless of context, and therefore settle for determining whether it is plausible given certain preconditions.

More accurately, I evidence *possible* mechanisms that *can serve* and *have served* the role I require to defend the dominant moral norm thesis. As defined by Elster, mechanisms are '*frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences*'.[34] They are distinct from social scientific laws, which allow for the prediction of consequences. To explain what mechanisms are, Nancy Cartwright gave the example of planting camellias in warm manure in the garden. Camellias 'like rich soil', but 'cannot take high temperatures'.[35] The camellias died, and one of her mechanisms dictates that they died because they were planted in warm soil. However, it was possible that the camellias would have survived owing to the rich soil. Having knowledge of the mechanisms did not allow us to (reliably) predict

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30 Rosen 1996b, 222. See also Rosen 1996a, 127-200.

31 See also Finlayson 2014, 141. Evaluating Marx's remarks on ideology based on their ability to account for the persistence of bad social arrangements can come uncomfortably close to fulfilling Skinner's ([1969] 2002a, 64) 'mythology of doctrines'. One version of the mythology involves prescribing authors doctrines based on scattered remarks and evaluating the resulting doctrine's ability to answer contemporary questions.

32 On Marx and social science, see Jost and Jost 2007; Kain 1986, 34-57; Little 1986, 40-67.

33 This modesty sometimes seems rare in political theory, particularly where there is an obvious 'asymmetry of scrupulousness' when authors discuss empirical claims (this phrase is borrowed from Leopold 2019a, 135). For example, Leader Maynard (2017, 308) references 'Geuss's interesting but entirely unsubstantiated claim that Rawlsian political theory underpinned neoliberal economic policies and a rise in global inequality in the 1970s and 1980s' (see Geuss 2003, 285-6). For greater appreciation of the complexity of social science in political theory, see D. Miller 1999, 42-60; Swift and White 2008.

34 Elster [1998] 2005, 45. See also Elster 2007, 32-51.

35 Cartwright 1983, 1-2.

what would have happened. In my context, I cannot predict that a given moral belief comes from an economically dominant class or that it has a status-quo-sustaining function. If it does, I can explain why this might be the case. There will, of course, be countervailing mechanisms that challenge the dominant moral norm thesis.[36] However, I think the aggregate effect of the mechanisms I defend makes the thesis plausible.[37] The dominant ideology thesis reads more like a (social scientific) law, and my dominant moral norm thesis is weaker because I do not think the mechanisms I defend here would make an analogously strong law-like claim plausible.

Within Analytical Marxism (see section 1 of Chapter 1), there was a dispute between Cohen and Elster about the legitimacy of functional explanation.[38] According to Cohen, functional explanations have the following form: '*e* occurred because the situation was such that an event like *e* would cause an event like *f*'.[39] For example, take Leiter's (flippant) remark that: '[t]he best reason to suppose that the ruling class is, in fact, effective in promoting its own interests, and the dominated class is not, is precisely that ideas favorable to the interests of the ruling class typically dominate, and without being recognized as such!'[40] Cohen argued that it was sometimes legitimate to appeal to functional explanations without evidence of an underlying mechanism, whereas Elster disagreed.[41] This chapter remains neutral on Cohen and Elster's debate because it does not rely on the legitimacy of functional explanation. I provide mechanisms that explain why the effect of the dominant moral norm explains its persistence.

This insistence on the importance of mechanisms means that I do not rely on general claims about the 'function of morality'.[42] As Nicholas Smyth has identified, the consensus view amongst writers about the topic is that 'the function of morality is to reduce social tensions, and to thereby enable a society to smoothly and efficiently ensure the well-being of its members'.[43] Establishing moral principles helps to 'build a coherent social group' that 'leads us to cooperate and prevent us from harming members of our communities'.[44] It helps in 'bonding individuals in a shared framework of decision-making' through the introduction of a 'moral habit' that allows us 'to produce mutually beneficial co-operative patterns of action and emotion'.[45] It might be thought

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36 The evidence I present in this chapter has an Anglo-American bias, and I leave open the possibility of countervailing mechanisms evidenced through a less restrictive pool of data.

37 The problem that ideology poses for our moral deliberation is scalar. This means that my thesis will still be relevant to those who think the dominant moral norm thesis is only partly true.

38 See Cohen [1978] 2000, 249-96; 1980; 1982a; 1982b; Elster 1980; 1982.

39 Cohen 1988, 8.

40 Leiter 2007, 750.

41 For a defence of Cohen's position, see also Meyerson 1991, 29-33. Elster did think that functional explanations were legitimate in a small number of cases. See Elster [1979] 1990, 30-1.

42 For examples of claims about the function of morality in the Marxist tradition, see section 1 of Chapter 5.

43 Smyth 2017, 1127.

44 Prinz 2007, 32.

45 Joyce 2006, 208.

that moral norms help to sustain the status quo because altruistic sentiments might discourage revolutionary (or reformist) political action. However, as Smyth identifies, these authors often fail to make clear the mechanisms that guarantee this function.[46] Identifying a mechanism that guaranteed morality had a particular function would be a particularly unenviable task as the mechanism would have to be operative throughout the whole of human history.

2. The Dominant Class

In this section, I present evidence in defence of the dominant moral norm thesis that focusses on the influence an economically dominant class can have over the means of intellectual production. Before I begin, it is worth clarifying that I am not trying to defend any conspiratorial view that an economically dominant class would *deliberately* propagate moral beliefs that are in their interest.[47] Marx and Engels never clearly defined what they were referring to by the 'means of intellectual production'. I broadly follow William Shaw's understanding that it involves 'the major institutions that educate and indoctrinate young people, acquire and transfer knowledge, and articulate and mold popular opinion, as well as the physical resources those institutions utilize'.[48] More precisely, I am interested in the major institutions that help to determine which beliefs become part of the dominant moral norm. I focus on three examples of institutions that I think play this role: the policy-planning network, the news media, and the education system.

2.1. *The Policy-Planning Network*

The most obvious way in which members of an economically dominant class could have a disproportionate influence in promoting moral beliefs that are in their interest is by directly advocating moral positions. One area in which this happens is in what William Domhoff has called the 'policy-planning network', which itself contains foundations, think thanks and policy discussion groups.[49] Of particular relevance to the dominant moral norm thesis are the activities of corporate foundations (such as the Wal-Mart Foundation, the J.P. Morgan Chase Foundation and the ExxonMobile Foundation), whose 'number and importance [has] increased greatly after

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46 Smyth 2017, 1133-41.

47 It is debatable whether Marx and Engels's articulation of the dominant ideology thesis is conspiratorial. For example, in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, it is not always clear whether ideologists are also fooled by the illusions they are propagating. For relevant passages, see Marx [1971] 1975b, 267; Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 203. On Marx, ideology, and conspiracy more generally, see Cohen [1978] 2000, 289-92; Dole 2019, 54-6; Meyerson 1991, 133-5; Larrain 1991, 11; Pines 1993, 57-8, 189-90; Sharp 1980, 91-3.

48 Shaw 1989, 433.

49 Domhoff [1967] 2014, 74-108.

the 1970s'.[50] Domhoff identified four ways in which corporate actors can maintain influence within the policy-planning network: *donations*, *free services* (like legal and accounting advice), *direct involvement* (for example as trustees) and by involving themselves in *daily activities* (for example through sending advisors).[51]

One of the more well-documented examples of corporate influence in the policy-planning network has been the activities of the Koch family and their respective foundations. The historian Thomas Frank has traced the influence that the brothers have had through their donations to think tanks such as the Cato Institute and the Reason Foundation.[52] Charles Koch was in fact a founding member of the former, which describes itself as 'dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, free markets, and peace'.[53] The institute has promoted opinions supporting the privatisation of 'almost everything', from NASA to public transport, and have opposed the minimum wage, further overtime regulations and the prohibition of child labour.[54] The Reason Foundation's co-founder Robert Poole is actually credited by the organisation for coining the term 'privatisation', and the organisation has a similarly 'libertarian' approach to economic policy.[55] The Koch family have also been active supporters of various right-wing political movements, particularly through their Americans for Prosperity advocacy group, which has helped to elect various Republican senators, and that has been alleged to be a source of support for the 'Tea Party' movement.[56]

2.2. *The News Media*

It is widely recognised that one of the key abilities of the news media is to influence our *moral agenda*.[57] As the means through which we learn about current affairs, it is intuitive that the media has the ability to shape the awareness we have of certain stories, the priority assigned to them and their salience in the public consciousness.[58] This role can often be seen most clearly in 'moral panics' that involve 'explosions of fear and concern at a particular time and place about a perceived

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50 *Ibid.*, 81.
51 *Ibid.*, 74.
52 Frank 2004, 81-5. See also Olsson-Yaouzis 2018, 829.
53 Cato Institute 2021.
54 Rahn 2013; Hudgins 1998; O'Toole 2010; Dorn 2013; Miron 2015; Powell 2014.
55 Reason Foundation 2021a; 2021b.
56 Zernike 2010.
57 The literature I reference here largely takes for granted the normative problem that elite influence over the news media poses. For an interesting work of political theory on the topic, see Baker 2006.
58 As Bernard Cohen (1963, 13) has written, 'the press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think *about*'.

threat'.[59] For example, the print media was found to have played an important role in promoting the threat of street crime in the UK during the 1970s.[60]

The most detailed study of how an economically dominant class could have disproportionate influence over the news media (and by extension, our moral agenda) can be found in Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's *Manufacturing Consent*. The book defends a 'Propaganda Model' that includes five 'filters' that are designed to explain media bias.[61]

Ownership. There has been a growing concentration of media ownership.[62] Ben Bagdikian famously observed in his 1983 book *The New Media Monopoly* that just fifty companies in the United States owned the majority of its media and updated his alarm in the book's 2004 edition by observing that Time Warner, The Walt Disney Company, News Corporation and Bertelsmann are responsible for the majority of coverage, according to Bagdikian giving each 'more communications power than was exercised by any despot or dictatorship in history'.[63] In the UK, 'just three companies - News UK, the Daily Mail Group and Reach - dominate 90% of the national newspaper market, up from 83% in 2019'.[64]

Advertising. Much of the news media's revenue comes through advertising. News outlets unable to receive significant advertising revenue are at greater risk of closing down, thereby increasing concentration by reducing the number of alternative outlets.[65] Herman and Chomsky have particularly emphasised the role this played in undermining 'working-class and radical papers'.[66] In addition, advertising provides an economic incentive for news outlets to cater their coverage to those with disposable income. For example, James T. Hamilton found that, in a study of news outlets, news programmes were likely to cater their coverage towards individuals with 'moderate-to-high incomes', in addition to younger individuals more likely to spend money.[67]

Access. There is an incentive for the media to remain uncritical to a dominant class in order to promote their own access. Relationships between reporters and sources are mutually beneficial, and overly critical writing can damage these links. Critical journalism is therefore often a costly

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59 Goode and Ben-Yudah 1994, 150.
60 Hall et al. [1978] 1982, 53-80.
61 Given that the latest edition of the book was published in 2008, it is unsurprisingly quiet about the role that the internet has played in altering the media landscape. A complete sociology of morals would evidently have to address this issue in more detail. For updated assessments of the propaganda model, see Pedro-Carañana, Broudy and Klaehn 2018.
62 Though I am using the propaganda model to organise my evidence, though I do not require readers to fully embrace the model. On media ownership, see also Alterman 2003; Chomsky 1989; Herman and Chomsky [1988] 2008; McChesney 1997.
63 Bagdikian [1983] 2004, 3.
64 Media Reform Coalition 2021, 2.
65 Bagdikian [1983] 2004, 120-2.
66 Herman and Chomsky [1988] 2008, 14-7.
67 Hamilton 2004, 97.

enterprise. Robert McChesney has argued that this demise can be noted when one looks at the increased reliance on public relations and press releases and at the decline in the proportion of the news that consists of investigative journalism.[68]

'Flak'. Critical reporting can be met with 'flak' from certain important groups. This involves 'negative responses to a media statement or program' and can come from a variety of different places from advertisers to government.[69] Naturally, flak from groups with the most resources will carry the most weight. Herman and Chomsky give examples of 'right-wing monitoring or think tank operations' they view as set up partly to provide flak, including 'the American Legal Foundation, the Capital Legal Foundation, the Media Institute, the Center for Media and Public Affairs, and Accuracy in Media'.[70] Through such organisations, members of the American elite help to discipline news outlets.

Control mechanisms. There are certain narratives that the media can use as 'control mechanisms'. When *Manufacturing Consent* was initially published in 1988, Herman and Chomsky's main focus was on 'anticommunism', which played up the threat of 'the ultimate evil' of communism as the 'specter haunting property owners'.[71] They claim anticommunism can explain elements of both domestic and international news coverage, in which 'the support of fascism abroad is justified as a lesser evil' and through which the views of right-wing politicians are promoted.[72] In *Manufacturing Consent*'s more recent editions, Herman and Chomsky have noted the de-emphasis on the threat of communism and a greater focus on the 'miracle of the market'.[73] On this theme, Thomas Piketty has recently argued that there exists a 'neo-propietarian ideology' composed of a number of different elements, 'including the story of communism's failure, the "Pandorian" refusal to redistribute wealth, and the free circulation of capital without regulation, information sharing, or a common tax system'.[74] He claimed that it is particularly prevalent within the European Union, and that it has been aided by the 'philanthropic illusion and the sacralization of billionaires'.[75]

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68 McChesney 2008, 40-1.
69 Herman and Chomsky [1988] 2008, 24.
70 *Ibid.*, 25.
71 *Ibid.*, 27.
72 *Ibid.*, 29.
73 Reagan in Herman and Chomsky [1988] 2008, xvii.
74 Piketty [2019] 2020, 705.
75 *Ibid.*, 713.

2.3. *Education*

Governments have an important role in determining the education system, for example through school *funding decisions*, by being involved in the *employment of teachers*, by determining *professional qualifications* and through the *organisation of the curriculum*.[76] In this context, one might note the powerful lobbying abilities of business interests and Martin Gilens's research into the disproportionate influence economic elites can have in enacting their policy preferences.[77] The education of children is also particularly important given that their critical skills are often not fully developed, and given that teachers can become trusted voices of authority.[78]

That educational curriculums are often supportive of the status quo has been a particular charge against the tuition of racial issues in the United States. There have been ongoing concerns about an idealised historical curriculum through which students aren't taught about the extent of certain injustices and in which certain perspectives are emphasised over others.[79] Studies have found that inclusion of African American and indigenous groups in the curriculum is often superficial or even non-existent.[80] Under-estimating the extent of injustice would intuitively make people less likely to support corrective policies, such as reparations for slavery.

3. The Subordinate Class

Establishing the plausibility of 'top down' mechanisms to explain why an economically dominant class has disproportionate influence over any dominant moral norm is insufficient, however. It is intuitive that members of an economically dominant class will try to propagate beliefs that are in their interest, and it would be irrational for them not to. However, it is more surprising that people within a subordinate class would accept these beliefs against their interests. Part of Elster's criticism of the Marxist theory of ideology is that there is a lack of 'microfoundations' provided to

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76 Sharp 1980, 118. For a useful overview of ideology and education, see Backer 2020.

I have deliberately ignored the role that higher education might play in propagating ideology, in contrast to other Marxist thinkers that seem to have a particular problem with 'bourgeois practical philosophy' (Leiter 2015, 32). See also Finlayson 2013. This is mainly because the mechanism through which beliefs from the universities become popular is more difficult to establish than in earlier forms of education. As Shaw (1998, 428) has written, 'what matters for Marxism is not which ideas are endorsed by the leading minds of the time, but which ideas gain wide social acceptance'. In addition, survey data tends to suggest that university professors tend to be significantly more liberal than average (see Gross and Simmons 2014).

77 Gilens 2012. See also Schlozman, Verba and Brady 2012.

78 Much of the Marxist focus on educational institutions has been on the 'hidden curriculum', namely the by-products of certain systems of education (Jackson [1968] 1990, 34). The most famous example is in Althusser's ([1970] 1971a, 7) discussion of the importance of education in ensuring 'subjection to the ruling ideology or *mastery of its "practice"*'. Emphasis mine. See also Sharp 1980.

79 Kurtulmus 2020, 830. See also Delpit 1988; Stanley 2015; 237-42; Wright 2006, 168-9.

80 C.B. Anderson and Metzger 2012; Shear et al. 2015.

explain the individual acceptance of dominant beliefs.[81] Rosen gives a polemical articulation of this problem when he writes that:

> [Marx's account treats] those who live under the domination of the ruling class as passive victims, taking their ideas from those who control the 'means of mental production' like obedient chicks, with no critical reflection on their part as to whether the ideas are either true or in their own rational interests. This, it seems, is an almost paranoid view. Why should one suppose that the ruling class is capable of promoting its interests effectively, forming its ideas in response to those interests, whereas the dominated classes simply accept whatever is served up to them?[82]

The second part of Rosen's question, namely why 'dominated classes simply accept whatever is served up to them' is of particular relevance here.[83] Very simply, Rosen seems to be presuming that individuals in any 'dominated classes' are rational. However, there are a number of cognitive and motivated biases I highlight here that help to explain why individuals may accept dominant moral beliefs, even when it is in their interest not to do so.[84]

Cognitive biases involve an unjustified disposition to accept or reject a given proposition. Motivated biases result from the interference of our desires and interests in our reasoning process.[85] The distinction between cognitive and motivated biases roughly maps on to the distinction in my genetic condition in my conception of moral ideology articulated in Chapter 3. Beliefs arrived at through cognitive bias are often position-induced, and beliefs arrived at through mechanisms distorted by motivated reasoning are often interest-induced. I claimed in section 2 of

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81 Elster 1985, 473. Microfoundations could also be provided to explain why the dominant classes propagate beliefs that are in their interests. For example, Meyerson (1991, 49) has argued that members of the dominant class 'like to think well of themselves' and that they '*desire* to see their actions and motivations as unexploitative'. A complete sociology of morals would also highlight the variances amongst individuals based on certain characteristics such as their social dominance orientation (see Overbeck et al. 2004; Sidanius et al. 2001) and political beliefs (see Jost and Thompson 2000; Jost et al. 2001). In addition, it would highlight the sociological mechanisms that would encourage a subordinate class to accept the dominant moral norm, including group pressure (see Edwards 2018, 75-91; Haidt and Graham 2009).

82 Rosen 1996a, 182-3. See also Callinicos 2004, 159; Heath 2001, 164-9.

83 In some situations, there are of course reasons why it would be rational for members of 'dominated classes [to] simply accept what is served up to them'. Walter Lippmann famously argued in his *Public Opinion* ([1922] 1998) that citizens need to rely on the press and politicians as they do not have time to form detailed opinions about every issue. See Edwards 2018, 154-62.

84 One possible misconception about Marx is that he was not interested in psychological mechanisms. Though later Marxists have often focussed their discussions of ideology on sociological mechanisms, Marx was famously interested in the psychology of alienation. In *The Holy Family* ([1845] 1975a, 36), he affirms that members of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat experience 'human self-estrangement'. For discussion, see Cohen 1968. On the relationship between alienation and ideology in Marx, see Plamenatz 1975, 205-26.

85 Motivated biases are often known as motivated reasoning. In using the term motivated biases, I am following Edwards 2018, 53-7.

Chapter 3 that being either position-induced or interest-induced would be sufficient to label a moral belief as ideological. However, the biases I highlight here also operate to perpetuate a *status quo bias* because they make it more likely that people will accept beliefs supportive of the status quo.[86] Beliefs distorted through a status quo bias are often overdetermined in their ideological status, insofar as they are biased owing to social position or interest *and* have the function of sustaining illegitimate class relations. Acceptance of my broad definition of moral ideology is therefore not required for readers to accept that these biased beliefs are ideological.

3.1. *Cognitive Biases*

Anchoring effects. People often find it difficult to discount certain information.[87] In their famous study, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman asked subjects to estimate 'the percentage of African countries in the United Nations' after spinning a wheel of fortune that displayed arbitrary numbers to the subjects. They found that the numbers on the wheel had 'a marked effect' on the subjects' estimates.[88] Anchoring effects have also been shown to be operative in less artificial situations, such as in our perceptions of ourselves and others, in which first impressions really do seem to matter even after they have been discredited.[89] The reason that anchoring effects help contribute to a status quo bias is that people's exposure will be to the status quo, and they are likely to overvalue this information in their deliberation.[90]

Primacy effects. People are likely to overvalue initial information to which they are exposed. The effect has been demonstrated to have been operative in a number of real-world scenarios, such as in explaining why earlier memories are easier to recall, why voters might choose names higher up the ballot and even why decision-makers might support an inferior earlier choice that they consider.[91] It is particularly problematic when considered in conjunction with anchoring effects, as it would dictate that people use initial information as an anchor.[92] The status quo benefits from primacy effects because '[b]y definition, information based on the status quo comes first; it is the default that exists in the present'.[93]

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86 For another useful study on status quo bias that I do not discuss here, see Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1988.
87 Eidelman and Crandall 2009, 88.
88 Tversky and Kahneman 1974, 1128.
89 Ross, Lepper and Hubbard 1975.
90 Eidelman and Crandall 2009, 88.
91 Waugh and Norman 1965; Wright et al. 1985; Jones and Goethals 1972; N. Anderson 1996; Kahneman and D.T. Miller 1986; D.T. Miller and Gunasegeram 1990; Koppell and Steen 2004; J. Miller and Krosnick 1998; Russo, Carlson and Meloy 2006.
92 Eidelman and Crandall 2009, 88.
93 *Ibid.*, 87.

Accessibility effects. People are likely to recall information that is readily mentally accessible to them. This has been found to be true as people recall information that is easily understood. For example, E. Tory Higgins, William Rholes and Carl Jones found that subjects were likely to recall the personality traits they had been told about certain individuals after reading short profiles about them.[94] The status quo is readily accessible as people are evidently more frequently exposed to it (owing to their social position). It is much easier to recall than the *absence* of anything (e.g., equality), especially when we are conditioned to respond to certain stimuli.[95] Accessibility effects have been used to explain why people overvalue the stability of the status quo, and could help explain why individuals might be susceptible to the ideological technique of presenting certain social arrangements as everlasting.[96] In 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, Marx and Engels gave the example of the presentation of the 'separation of powers as an eternal law'.[97] In addition, that individuals are susceptible to being overly reliant on readily accessible information might also explain why people commit the ideological error of '*understanding the whole according to the logic of the part*'.[98] Fallacies of composition display this error, and are often ideological as position-induced beliefs. These involve the unfounded assumption that 'causal mechanisms valid for any particular member of a set in isolation must also be valid for all members taken as a whole'.[99] Parekh highlights that an ideologist can present 'what seems normal, natural or self-evident *to him* as normal, natural or self-evident *sans phrase*'.[100]

3.2. *Motivated Biases*

Dissonance reduction. People adjust their beliefs (or expectations) to restore equilibria and avoid self-contradiction.[101] Of particular relevance to status quo bias is research that has been performed assessing people's reactions to illegitimate oppression in Melvin and Lerner's work on the 'belief in a just world'.[102] The theory begins from the observation that people are motivated 'to believe

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94 Higgins, Rholes and Jones 1977.

95 The greater difficulty of subjects to recall the absence of anything has been called the 'feature-positive effect' and the propensity of subjects to respond to certain stimuli after repeated exposure has been called the 'classical conditioning effect'. For an overview of both, see Eidelman and Crandall 2009, 89-91. On the 'feature positive effect', see Jenkins and Sainsbury 1970; Newman, Wolff and Hearst 1980; Ross 1977. On the classical conditioning effect, see Bouton 2004; Kamin 1969; Rescorla and Wagner 1972; Sanbonmatsu, Akimoto and Gibson 1994.

96 Bargh, Lombardi and Higgins 1988; Tversky and Kahneman 1973; Lichtenstein, Fischhoff and Phillips 1982.

97 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 293, 59.

98 Elster [1982] 2016a, 146.

99 *Ibid.*

100 Parekh 1982, 9.

101 For a very useful discussion, see Edwards 2018, 55-8. For other examples of social structures benefitting from dissonance reduction, see Elster [1983] 2016b, 126-41; Kuran [1998] 2005.

102 For a useful overview, see Furnham 2003.

that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve'.[103] The most well-known manifestation of the belief in a just world is victim blaming, in which individuals reinterpret the outcome or cause of illegitimate oppression, or simply denigrate the character of the victim. Groups blamed are often particularly vulnerable, including the poor, the elderly, refugees, natural disaster victims, the chronically ill and sexual harassment victims.[104] Alternatively, people have been found to just deny illegitimate oppression has taken place or to reframe it (for example, as one of the 'temporary setbacks' involved in the progression to a just society).[105]

Stereotyping. '[P]eople will ascribe to themselves and others traits which are consonant with their social position'.[106] For example, working class individuals accepting of meritocratic beliefs might be more liable to accept stereotypes that the poor are lazy and undeserving, and the wealthy hard-working.[107] This can help to legitimate the status quo by encouraging the view that the people who benefit from existing hierarchies deserve to do so.[108] The particular example of meritocratic stereotyping is particularly relevant to Marxian discussions of ideology because it seemingly involves an '*ideal expression* of the dominant material relations'.[109] In practice, the status quo does not fulfil the ideals required for the stereotypes to be true, though presenting the status quo in such terms can help to legitimate it.[110]

Outgroup favouritism. People often display 'an evaluative preference for members of a group to which one does not belong'.[111] This has been claimed to be 'one manifestation of the tendency to internalize and thus perpetuate the system of inequality'.[112] For example, women have been found to 'believe that they deserve less money for their work than men do'.[113] Outgroup favouritism has also been linked to a sense of 'depressed entitlement' from oppressed groups.[114]

In this chapter, I argued that my dominant moral norm thesis is plausible. In section 1, I explained the nature of my dominant moral norm thesis. I showed how my thesis was related to the dominant

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103 Lerner and Miller 1978, 1030-1. One interesting explanation Lerner and Miller offer for the belief in a just world is that '[t]he belief that the world is just enables the individual to confront his physical and social environment as though they were stable and orderly', thereby allowing 'the individual to commit himself to the pursuit of long range goals or even to the socially regulated behaviour of day to day life' (*Ibid.*, 1031).

104 Campbell, Carr and Maclachlan 2001; Bègue and Bastounis 2003; Montada 1998; Napier et al. 2006; Correia and Vala 2003; De Judicibus and McCabe 2001. See also Edwards 2018, 56.

105 Lerner 1980, 22, 20-3.

106 Jost and Banaji 1994, 11.

107 Ashmore and McConahay 1974. See also Jost and Banaji 1994, 4.

108 See Hing, Bobocel and Zanna 2011, 434; Sandel 2020.

109 Marx and Engels [1932] in Carver and Blank 2014b, 176. Emphasis mine.

110 In contrast to abstraction, idealisation is usually understood to involve making false assumptions. See O'Neill 1987, 55; Reiman [1991] 1999, 159.

111 Jost, Banaji and Nosek 2004, 891.

112 *Ibid.*

113 Jost and Hunyady 2002, 121. See Callahan-Levy and Messé 1979; Major 1994; Major, McFarlin and Gagnon 1984.

114 Jost and Hunyady 2002, 121. See also Blanton et al. 2001; Pelham and Hetts 2001.

ideology thesis, pre-empted two possible misconceptions and explained my method for defending my thesis. In section 2, I evidenced three possible sociological mechanisms that have served and can serve the role required for the dominant moral norm thesis to be plausible by showing how members of an economically dominant class can exert disproportionate influence over the policy-planning network, the news media and education. I gave examples of how this influence can result in the dominant moral norm having the function of sustaining the status quo. In section 3, I evidenced possible psychological mechanisms in defence of the dominant moral norm thesis. I explained how the aggregate effect of these biases leads to a status quo bias and highlighted where there were examples of position-induced or interest-induced beliefs.

Chapter 5

The Epistemic Implications of the Dominant Moral Norm Thesis

In this chapter, I argue that some moral beliefs are ideological owing to the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis defended in Chapter 4. Following Olsson-Yaouzis's colloquial dichotomy from Chapter 4, I respond to a hypothetical '"So What?"— objection' by explaining why we should care about the dominant moral norm thesis. In section 2 of Chapter 3, I argued in favour of an epistemic conception of ideology that claimed that a moral belief is ideological if it has the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class hierarchy or if its acceptance is induced by the social position or social interest of the believer. I explain here why an ideological belief with these characteristics is unjustified.

This means that, as it proceeds in this chapter, my reconstruction of Marx's critique of morality is in further tension with Nielsen's view that 'Marx's remark about morality being ideology is a remark in the sociology of morals and not in moral epistemology or metaethics'.[1] Though I think Nielsen would be right to highlight that an important part of Marx's critique of morality is empirical (or sociological), according to my reconstruction, it is the epistemic implications of the Marxian empirical claims I defended in Chapter 4 that determine whether moral beliefs should be viewed as unjustified because they are ideological.[2] This is because I am trying to find out whether moral beliefs are ideological according to an epistemic conception of ideology. Even if an economically dominant class has disproportionate influence over a dominant moral norm and the dominant moral norm sustains the existing status quo, this *prima facie* does not tell us why any of our moral beliefs might be unjustified. To argue that any moral beliefs are ideological, then, as Wood has rightly observed, 'also requires some *philosophical* defence'.[3]

Such philosophical defence is, on the whole, not to be found in Marx's writings. In Chapter 4, to find textual licence to treat my dominant moral norm thesis as an empirical claim, I presented evidence showing Marx and Engels's positive attitude towards empirical study. As Brudney has noted, the flip side to this enthusiasm was an extremely pessimistic attitude towards the explanatory potential of philosophy.[4] Marx and Engels regularly contrasted their 'real, positive science' with 'empty phrases', instead claiming that 'when the [empirical] reality is described, a self-sufficient philosophy loses its medium of existence'.[5] They advocate that '[o]ne has to "leave

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1 Nielsen [1983] 1989a, 109.
2 The importance of empirical claims in Marx's critique of morality is also recognised in Leiter 2007, 754.
3 Wood [1981] 2004, 146.
4 Brudney 1998, 278-93. On Marx's anti-philosophy, see also Bender 1983; Edgley 1983, 262-7.
5 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 37. See Brudney 1998, 282-94.

philosophy aside", one has to leap out of it and devote oneself like an ordinary man to the study of actuality'.[6] I do not share Marx and Engels's hostility to philosophy, and I think it unfortunately leaves Marx's critique of morality incomplete.

My job here is to fill in the gaps in (the philosophical component of) Marx's critique of morality and to assess the result. This chapter is split into two main sections, each corresponding to a (sufficient) condition in my conception of moral ideology that I articulated in Chapter 3. I address whether the problem of ideology should encourage moral scepticism, which I treat as the view that none of our moral beliefs are justified.[7] In section 1, I discuss whether moral beliefs are ideological in virtue of their functional properties. I conclude that an important set of beliefs are unjustified owing to their role creating or sustaining illegitimate class relations. However, I conclude that not all moral beliefs are ideological in virtue of their functional properties. In section 2, I discuss whether moral beliefs are ideological in virtue of their genetic properties. I argue that moral beliefs solely justified through intuition are at particular risk of being ideological. However, I conclude that not all moral beliefs are ideological in virtue of their genetic properties.

1. Functional Properties

In this section, I do two things. Firstly, I explain why a moral belief that has the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations is unjustified. By doing so, I am addressing a common question in Critical Theory. In Geuss's words, I am attempting to explain 'the relation between the "falsity" of a form of consciousness and its functioning to support or legitimate oppression'.[8] Secondly, I assess which moral beliefs can be said to perform this function.

1.1. *Functional Properties and Reflective Equilibrium*

The method of reflective equilibrium has been widely adopted in the Rawlsian tradition, which has been dominated by the use of ideal theory. This is an approach to normative theorising that abstracts away from certain features of the real world, thereby allowing for a discussion of values divorced from empirical complexities.[9] For example, in developing his theory of justice, Rawls himself 'assumes [assumed] strict compliance and works [worked] out the principles that

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6 *Ibid.*, 236.

7 This definition is somewhat stipulative and there are many varieties of moral scepticism. For a useful overview, see Sinnott-Armstrong 2019.

8 Geuss 1981, 32.

9 Stemplowska 2008, 327–8.

characterise a well-ordered society under reasonably favourable circumstances'.[10] Owing to abstractions such as these (and in contrast to non-ideal theory), ideal theory often does not consider matters of political practice.[11] In practice, however, 'principles, when adopted, always take on a life of their own'.[12] For example, authors such as Iris Marion Young have argued that the ideal of deliberative democracy leads to the exclusion of certain groups from the public sphere.[13] The practical implications of our moral beliefs have often been neglected owing to the prevalence of ideal theory. This section sketches a modest proposal for incorporating a concern for the functional properties of moral beliefs within reflective equilibrium.

Moral beliefs that have the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations should be rejected.[14] If it was revealed to an individual that their belief(s) had an undesirable function, formally speaking, there would be a contradiction between the offending belief and their wider principle that moral beliefs shouldn't create or sustain illegitimate class hierarchy. The individual is now in disequilibrium. To return to equilibrium, the individual must either reject the moral belief performing the undesirable function or revise the principle.[15] It is more likely that the individual should reject the moral belief performing the undesirable function, because the principle is likely to be supported by a wider number of their other moral beliefs.

This (somewhat protracted) explanation illuminates how the functional condition in my Marxian conception of ideology relies on a normative criterion that determines what constitute illegitimate class relations. It thereby affirms Jack Balkin's view that '[t]he study of ideology necessarily has a normative dimension. It cannot be value free but must presuppose a view about what is good and bad, advantageous and disadvantageous, just and unjust'.[16] In his discussion of ideology, Balkin emphasises the virtue of justice by saying that '[i]deological effects are effects of cultural software that help create or sustain unjust social conditions, unjust social relations, or the unjust use of social power'.[17] In contrast, I have chosen a legitimacy criterion because I want to

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10 Rawls [1971] 1999, 216.

11 This is not to imply that ideal theorists would deny the importance of non-ideal theory. As Leopold (2012, 28) has succinctly noted, at least for Rawls, 'ideal and non-ideal theory appear as partners rather than rivals'. Though this is an important clarification, it seems necessary to also note that attention to (at least certain kinds of) non-ideal theory within mainstream political theory seems 'endlessly deferred' (Mills 2005, 179). See also Stemplowska and Swift 2012.

12 Welsh 2010, 424.

13 Young 1996, 122-5. See also Mouffe 2000, 45-9.

14 I agree with Balkin's (1998, 104) view that 'the phrase "help to create or sustain" in the definition of ideological effects must be understood in a limited way, for otherwise the definition is seriously overinclusive'.

15 For a clear exposition of the process of reflective equilibrium, see Cath 2016, 214-6.

16 *Ibid.*, 111.

17 *Ibid.*, 104.

leave open the possibility that class relations could be justified through appeals to virtues other than justice, such as economic efficiency.[18]

My explanation of why beliefs with an ideological function should be rejected in reflective equilibrium should become clearer through an example. In 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, Marx and Engels approvingly quote the following passage from a communist magazine:

> What is today called labour is only a miserably small part of the vast, mighty process of production; for *religion* and *morality* honour with the name of *labour* only the kind of production that is repulsive and dangerous, and in addition they venture to embellish such labour with all kinds of maxims — as it were words of blessing (or witchcraft) — 'labour in the sweat of thy brow' as a test imposed by God; 'labour sweetens life' for encouragement, etc. The morality of the world in which we live takes very good care not to apply the term work to the pleasing and free aspects of human intercourse. These aspects are reviled by morality, although they too constitute production. Morality eagerly reviles them as vanity, vain pleasure, sensuality. Communism has exposed this hypocritical preaching, this miserable morality.[19]

This is a passage that highlights the practical effects of moralising, and its tone bears similarities to Marx's attitude presented in Chapter 2. In this case, moral considerations are being introduced in an illicit way because they are being used to 'honour' and encourage 'repulsive and dangerous' labour, thereby sustaining (apparently) illegitimate class relations in which some individuals are performing a disproportionate amount of unenviable work. For illustrative purposes, we could imagine a (highly idealised) scenario in which those engaged in such 'preaching' accept the claim that their actions have this function and that they agree this is wrong. There is then a contradiction between their belief that they should engage in such 'preaching' and their other moral commitments. To return to equilibrium, they should reject their belief that they should engage in preaching.

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[18] On justice and legitimacy, see Cohen 2008, 302-8; Williams 2005, 4-6.
[19] Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 216.

1.2. *Functional Properties and Moral Scepticism*

In this section, I argue that only some moral beliefs should be rejected as ideological owing to their functional properties. This is because not all moral beliefs have the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations.

In doing so, I am arguing against (some) authors that have defended moral abolitionism. Moral abolitionism is the view that moral discourse should be abandoned. Some philosophers, such as Ian Hinckfuss and Richard Garner, have argued that moral abolitionism is the natural extension to endorsing moral scepticism.[20] In the Marxist tradition, Marxist anti-moralists often flirt with (rather than defend outright) moral abolitionism.[21] Two authors that do this are Wood and Miller, who, as I showed in Chapter 2, argued that Marx held a narrow conception of morality. Wood proclaimed that '[t]he unquestioned assumption that the highest values simply must be moral ones, is indefensible, misguided, and unhealthy' and Miller that non-Marxists 'should, then, conclude that morality is not an appropriate basis for political action and social choice'.[22] Collier asserted that we should 'treat morality as an ideology with a function in any society based on class exploitation', and Skillen that '[m]orality then, gets its driving force from antagonistic (and literally hate-generating) relations in society, the very relations it is ordained to order'.[23] Olsson-Yaouzis wrote that 'moral discourse and thought contribute to legitimizing the production of ideology that perpetuates a social order that is not in the best interests of historically disadvantaged groups' and that '[t]herefore, historically disadvantaged groups have prudential reasons to abolish moral discourse and thought from the political domain'.[24]

If the empirical claims these Marxist authors made were correct, then all moral beliefs would be ideological owing to their functional properties. However, not all moral beliefs have the function of creating or sustaining illegitimate class relations. An added motivation for distancing myself from moral abolitionism is that I want to temper a perceived worry about the introduction of a concern about functional properties into moral reasoning, namely regarding the 'creeping and corrosive tendencies' that results from functional ideology critique.[25] For example, in his discussion

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20 Garner 2019; Hinckfuss 2019.

21 Interpretation here is doubly difficult because the empirical weight of these claims is rarely made explicit, and because such claims are often presented in a polemical manner.

22 Wood 1985, 697; Miller 1984, 96.

23 Collier 1974, 9; Skillen 1974, 14. See also Skillen 2000.

24 Olsson-Yaouzis 2019, 183. For a useful treatment of the empirical claims of moral abolitionists, see also Isserow 2019.

25 Morris 2016, 15. This might reasonably be viewed as a particular concern for my Marxian critique of morality. If all moral beliefs were rejected for being ideological, this would mean that we should only be concerned about the ideological function of a small set of beliefs. Class relations could only be rendered illegitimate for non-moral reasons.

of Nietzsche, Habermas warned about the dangers of 'an ideology critique turned against itself' that sees only 'a binding of reason and domination, power and validity'.[26]

There are non-popular beliefs that do not sustain illegitimate class relations. For example, 'Ethical Marxism' has been used as an organising term to refer to Marxists that 'take the question of ethics seriously' and who have developed ethical (or moral) theories to argue against capitalism.[27] This could include figures from Max Adler and Otto Bauer to Cohen and John Roemer. Such beliefs challenge illegitimate class hierarchy. In addition, there are subordinate moral norms that do not create or sustain illegitimate class relations. The dominant moral norm does not include all moral beliefs.[28]

2. Genetic Properties

As defined by Bernard Williams, 'a genealogy is a narrative that tries to explain a cultural phenomenon by describing a way in which it came about, or could have come about, or might be imagined to have come about'.[29] It is an explanation that attempts to tell us more about a belief by revealing its genetic properties.[30] Following Williams, we may distinguish between 'vindicatory' genealogies and critical genealogies.[31] Vindicatory genealogies, such as David Hume's genealogy of justice or Nozick's genealogy of the minimal state, use a narrative to explain why a given phenomenon is valuable.[32] In contrast, critical genealogies, such as Nietzsche's genealogy of morality, use a narrative to cast doubt on our beliefs.[33]

Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* (1887) is regularly credited with coining the term genealogy in its critical sense.[34] The book famously concludes that the origin of Christian moral beliefs lies in 'hatred, envy, resentment and feelings of weakness or inadequacy'.[35] It is intuitive as to why, if Nietzsche were right, this would problematise the justification of Christian moral beliefs. On Geuss's interpretation, Nietzsche is making a point about the motivation of Christians rather

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26 Habermas [1985] 1998, 121.
27 Wilde 1998, 1.
28 Marx and Engels do not draw out the implications of the dominant ideology thesis in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts. In his study on the English working class, Engels ([1845] 1975b, 419-20) gave an example of the existence of subordinate norms when he noted that '[t]he workers speak other dialects, have other thoughts and ideals, other customs and moral principles, a different religion and other politics than those of the bourgeoisie'. See also Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner 1980, 8.
29 Williams 2002, 20.
30 The idea that revealing a belief's genetic properties tells us more about that belief is developed in Queloz 2020, 685–86.
31 Williams 2002, 36.
32 See Hume [1739] 1960, 477–573; Nozick 1974, 3–148.
33 See Nietzsche [1887] 2006, 1–120.
34 Williams 2002, 37.
35 Geuss 1981, 44.

than the (more demanding) historical claim that this is how the religion developed, widely viewed as 'highly speculative and probably mistaken'.[36] Christians cannot accept this point about origin and hold their current beliefs, because there is an evident contradiction between the motivations that Nietzsche posits and the 'central doctrine of Christianity' that requires that individuals hold more respectable motivations.[37] The important difference here, and the greater problem, for my Marxian critique of morality, is that it is not similarly intuitive why our moral beliefs stemming from a dominant moral norm might require us to reject them. That many people hold a given moral belief or that a given moral belief comes from an economic elite does not seem, intuitively, to alter its epistemic status.

Unlike Nietzsche, Marx is very rarely included in the tradition of genealogy.[38] However, in *The Holy Family* and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, Marx regularly offers genealogical explanations for different authors' opinions. For example, when discussing the True Socialists, Marx and Engels write that '[t]he conditions actually existing in Germany were bound to lead to the formation of this hybrid sect and the attempt to reconcile communism with the ideas prevailing at the time', and that such an outlook was 'the expression of a tendency which was bound to occur in a country so stagnant as Germany'.[39] In addition, as I highlighted in section 1 of Chapter 3, Marx and Engels do appear to appeal to a belief's genetic properties as cause to reject it, as in their discussion of Kant referenced in section 1 of Chapter 3. One of their main criticisms of Stirner's historical method (see Chapter 4) was that it 'leaves aside the individuals and *world conditions lying at the basis of the ideas*'.[40]

In analytical philosophy, there has been a marked change in attitude towards the epistemic importance of genetic properties.[41] The traditional attitude was one of dismissal; genetic properties were not believed to tell us anything about the epistemic status of a given belief. In 1934 Ernest Nagel and Morris Cohen coined the famous idea of the 'genetic fallacy', and in 1938, Hans Reichenbach directly distinguished between the 'context of discovery' and the 'context of justification' whilst arguing that epistemology should only be concerned with the latter.[42] However, as Amia Srinivasan has noted, 'things are shifting. Genealogical scepticism about philosophy, or at

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36 Prinz 2007, 217; Geuss 1981, 44.
37 Geuss 1981, 44.
38 Exceptions include Macdonald 2002; Olsson-Yaouzis 2018.
39 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 457.
40 *Ibid.* Emphasis mine.
41 For interesting examples of how genetic properties were treated before analytical philosophy, see Srinivasan 2015, 325–6; Srinivasan 2019, 128–9.
42 E. Cohen and Nagel 1934, 388–90; Reichenbach 1938, 6–7. As Srinivasan notes (2019, 129), Nagel and Cohen actually identify 'not one but *two* genetic fallacies'. The first is to assume 'what is logically simpler must be temporally earlier' (*Ibid.*, 129). The second is 'the supposition that an actual history of any science, art, or social institution can take the place of a logical analysis of its structure' (E. Cohen and Nagel 1934, 389–90).

least one or more of its domains, is increasingly common amongst philosophers'.[43] Various arguments have been constructed that purport to show the epistemic importance of the genetic properties of our metaphysical, ontological, mathematical, and moral beliefs.[44] Experimental philosophy is a growing sub-discipline whose relevance is grounded in exposing the genetic properties of philosophical beliefs.[45]

Critical genealogies often engage in the 'debunking' of our beliefs.[46] Roger White has distinguished between two kinds of debunking: undermining debunking and blocking debunking.[47] To illustrate the distinction, he uses Cohen's ('disturbing') realisation that (part of) the reason he believed in the philosophical distinction between analytic and synthetic propositions was simply because he was at Oxford rather than Harvard during the 1960s.[48] According to undermining debunking, a belief is debunked when the believer learns about the genetic properties of their belief.[49] In Cohen's case, '[i]t is only upon discovering that he would have believed otherwise had he gone to Harvard that he can no longer rationally maintain his conviction'.[50] In contrast, according to blocking debunking, a belief is debunked owing to the genetic properties about the belief, whether or not the believer realises this.[51] As White writes, '[o]n this picture Cohen does not *lose* his justification for his philosophical convictions upon learning the influence of his Oxford education'.[52]

This section mirrors the structure of section 1 of this chapter. Firstly, I explain why certain moral beliefs are ideological (and thereby unjustified) owing to their genetic properties. Secondly, I argue that not all moral beliefs are ideological owing to their genetic properties.

2.1. *Genetic Properties and Reflective Equilibrium*

Position-induced and interest-induced moral beliefs are unjustified in reflective equilibrium. These are moral beliefs whose acceptance can be wholly explained through reference to a deliberator's social position or social interest, rather than by the cognitive properties of the beliefs. As I noted in section 2 of Chapter 3, the genetic condition within my definition of ideology is (largely)

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43 Srinivasan 2015, 326.
44 See Ladyman and Ross 2007; Goodman 1978; Putnam 1981; Benacerraf 1973; Field 1989; Gibbard 1990; Harman 1977, 1986; Rosenberg 2011; Street 2006, 2008, 2011.
45 See Knobe and Nichols 2008; 2014.
46 See White 2010, 575.
47 White 2010, 575.
48 Cohen [2000] 2001, 18.
49 White 2010, 575.
50 *Ibid.*
51 *Ibid.*
52 *Ibid.*

borrowed from Elster. As Morris notes, Elster's conception of ideology 'can show that some beliefs rest on cognitively irrelevant grounds, upon some psychological interest or dubious source of authority, not upon well-formed reasons or justified epistemic trust'.[53] In short, revealing that a person's beliefs are position-induced or interest-induced reveals 'the absence of proper justification'.[54] This is important to make clear to show that my reconstruction of Marx's critique of morality is only reliant on *blocking debunking*. For example, in section 3 of Chapter 4, I gave examples of individuals that accepted beliefs from the dominant moral norm owing to motivated bias. It would make no difference to the fact that those beliefs were unjustified whether the deliberator in question *realised* that they were unjustified.

In reflective equilibrium, position-induced and interest-induced moral beliefs are (generally) unjustified because people do not think that an individual's social position or interest is a justifiable reason to hold a given moral belief. In such cases, it seems that morally irrelevant factors are determining whether we hold a moral belief. Although position-induced and interest-induced moral beliefs are unjustified, this does not preclude the possibility that a different justification could be given for the same beliefs. My genealogical debunking cannot prove that any moral belief is *wrong*. This is in contrast to beliefs rendered ideological in virtue of their functional properties. These beliefs should be rejected, because there is no possible justification to explain why creating or sustaining illegitimate class relations is legitimate. On the other hand, it might be possible to find a justification for a moral belief that was once solely supported owing to an agent's position or interest.

2.2. *Genetic Properties and Moral Scepticism*

One concern with genetic ideology critique, similarly to functional ideology critique, is that it is corrosive. Once we begin explaining our beliefs by their genetic properties, this might leave us with a sense of 'genealogical anxiety' in which we become aware that our beliefs are 'radically shaped by contingent facts' as much as by reasoned deliberation.[55] One particular variety of this worry focuses on the role of intuitions in reflective equilibrium. Those sceptical of the use of intuitions often end up admitting that they are legitimate as to avoid moral scepticism. For example, Singer concludes that 'we appear to be left with our intuitions, and nothing more. If we reject them all, we must become ethical skeptics or nihilists'.[56]

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53 Morris 2016, 9.
54 *Ibid.*, 8-9.
55 Srinivasan 2019, 127-8.
56 Singer 2005, 349.

In this section, I argue that not all moral beliefs are ideological in virtue of their genetic properties. However, I argue moral beliefs justified solely through intuitions are at particular risk of being ideological. I treat moral intuitions as *non-inferential*, *strong,* and *stable* attitudes towards a given moral proposition.[57] Intuitions are non-inferential because they are 'not inferred from one's other beliefs but arises [arise] on its own'.[58] Phenomenologically, we generally experience intuitions as being strong insofar as they are 'held with confidence and resist counter-evidence' and as stable insofar as 'they are not just temporary whims but last a long time'.[59]

The use of intuitions in normative philosophy has a long history, and they have been defined (and implicitly understood) in a variety of different ways. Intuitionism is the normative method through which beliefs can be justified through appeals to our intuitions alone. It has been derided as a 'conservative metaethic' and has been associated with appeals to common-sense morality.[60] W.D. Ross described the approach as recognising that '[t]he main moral convictions of the plain man seem to me to be, not opinions which it is for philosophy to prove or disprove, but knowledge from the start'.[61] '[T]he father of twentieth-century intuitionism', H.A. Prichard, claimed that the goal of moral philosophy was to carry through 'the process of reflexion [reflection] far enough to realise the self-evidence of our obligations', often thereby endorsing common-sense morality.[62]

Intuitions are still common currency in political theory, and genealogical skeptics about our moral intuitions have often attempted to portray reflective equilibrium as another form of intuitionism. Such genealogical skeptics emphasise that the genetic properties of our intuitions should give us sufficient reason to reject them for use in normative philosophy. In his review of *A Theory of Justice*, R.M. Hare wrote that 'Rawls does not call himself an intuitionist; but he certainly is one in the usual sense', and that '[t]he "equilibrium" they have reached is one between forces which might have been generated by prejudices, and no amount of reflection can make that a solid basis for morality'.[63] Singer emphasised the similarities between Henry Sidgwick's intuitionism and reflective equilibrium, and asked why we should not just see that 'all the particular moral judgments we intuitively make are likely to derive from discarded religious systems, from warped views of sex

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57 Part of the controversy in defining intuitions has been to determine what kind of attitude they involve, on which I think my thesis can remain neutral. Some philosophers have argued that intuitions are beliefs (e.g., Lewis 1983, x), whereas others have argued that they are closer to dispositions to believe (e.g., Van Inwagen 1997, 309) or *sui generis* mental states (e.g., Bealer 1998, 207). For two useful overviews, see Pust 2019; Railton 2014.

58 McMahan 2013, 105.

59 Sinnott-Armstrong, Young and Cushman 2010, 246.

60 For a history of intuitionism, see Audi 2004, 5–39.

61 Ross 1988, 21-2.

62 Huemer 2008, 368; Prichard 1912, 36.

63 Hare 1973, 31.

and bodily functions, or from customs necessary for the survival of the group in social and economic circumstances that now lie in the distant past?'[64] Brandt was similarly concerned that reflective equilibrium 'may be no more than a reshuffling of moral prejudices'.[65]

This suspicion has led some Marxist authors, such as Geuss and Brian Leiter, to dismiss reflective equilibrium entirely. Leiter endorsed Hare's 'basic criticism of Rawlsian intuitionism as sound', and Geuss claimed that it is a '[i]t is a bad idea to base one's political philosophy on our given intuitions'.[66] Reframed for my purposes, the Marxist concern is that moral beliefs justified through reflective equilibrium are ideological. Our moral intuitions are position-induced or interest-induced re-articulations of the dominant moral norm. I think that these genealogical skeptics are right to reject intuitionism, but that reflective equilibrium is not a form of intuitionism.[67] Moral beliefs justified through reflective equilibrium can be non-ideological.

Moral beliefs solely justified through our intuitions are at particular risk of being ideological because our intuitions are non-inferential. This means that it is not (initially) clear why a person holds a given intuition, and there remains a possibility that an intuition might be position-induced or interest-induced. Given the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis defended in the previous chapter, intuitions supportive of the status quo might reasonably be viewed as particularly untrustworthy. This is because they might have been accepted owing to a status quo bias contributed to by certain cognitive and motivated biases, meaning that the belief is position-induced or interest-induced. In addition, intuitions formed about salient issues in public debate might be particularly suspect, especially if there is an obvious mechanism (such as media bias) to explain the intuition. In contrast, intuitions formed about particularly abstract scenarios or through the use of certain techniques might be less suspect.[68]

Intuitionism should be rejected insofar as it does not allow for the revision of our intuitions. This is because we could have an ideological intuition that is unjustifiable (because it is position-induced or interest-induced) but that fails to be revised. In contrast, reflective equilibrium is not a form of (traditional) intuitionism because it involves the revision of our moral intuitions.

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64 Singer 1974, 516.

65 Brandt 1979, 22.

66 Leiter 2015, 31; Geuss 2008, 92.

67 Here I follow Daniels 2020. As I noted in section 2 of Chapter 3, reflective equilibrium is compatible with a number of different moral epistemologies. Some authors (e.g., McMahan 2013, 111-5) have defended reflective equilibrium within a foundationalist epistemology, meaning that there are some beliefs that are justified non-inferentially and that are not open to revision. However, it is more commonly defended as part of a coherentist epistemology (e.g., Daniels [1980] 1996b). For two useful overviews of the topic, see DePaul 1986; Sayre-McCord 1996.

68 The most famous technique to deal with bias in moral reasoning is probably Rawls's ([1971] 1999, 118-23) 'veil of ignorance', in which deliberators imagine that they 'do not know certain kinds of particular facts' (such as their 'class position') when choosing principles of justice. On thought experiments and reframing, see Gendler 2007, 80-6. On an interesting proposal specifically aimed at removing status quo bias, see Bostrom and Ord 2006.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, we reach reflective equilibrium when our moral beliefs are coherent and mutually supporting. This means that intuitions that are not coherent with our other moral beliefs have to be revised.

In addition, wide reflective equilibrium can include consideration of our non-moral beliefs. This is in contrast to narrow reflective equilibrium, which focuses on achieving coherence between our moral beliefs and principles.[69] As Daniels has written, wide reflective equilibrium involves 'collecting the [a] person's initial moral judgements and filter [filtering] them to include only those of which he is relatively confident and which have been made *under conditions conducive to avoiding errors of judgement*'.[70] This is important for the critique of ideology because wide reflective equilibrium allows deliberators to include consideration of the genetic properties of their beliefs. This allows us to check whether an intuition is justifiable.[71]

If we do not do this, we cannot be sure of the reasons we have a certain intuition. In order to articulate this state of ignorance about the genetic properties of our beliefs, Shelby has given the example of someone who 'would like to believe that she accepts a given belief (solely) because of the epistemic considerations in favor of it, but, as a matter of fact, she accepts it (primarily) because of the noncognitive motives that operate, as Marx was fond of saying, "behind her back," that is without her conscious awareness'.[72] Reflective equilibrium is a framework that allows for the 'conscious awareness' of the genetic properties of our moral beliefs. If, in the process of making our intuitive judgements more considered, we find that there is nothing suspicious about the genetic properties of a given belief, then there is no reason to think that belief might be ideological owing to its genetic properties.

In this chapter, I have argued that some moral beliefs are ideological owing to the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis defended in Chapter 4. In section 1, I argued that moral beliefs that have the function of creating or sustaining illegitimate hierarchy should be rejected for being ideological. This is because beliefs performing this function contradict with our other, more deeply held, moral commitments. In section 2, I argued that moral beliefs justified through intuition alone are at particular risk of being ideological. However, I argued that not all moral beliefs are ideological owing to their genetic properties. If a moral belief retains 'reflective stability' after serious scrutiny of its functional and genetic properties in wide reflective equilibrium, then it is not ideological.[73]

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69 Daniels 2020.

70 Daniels [1979] 1996c, 22. Emphasis mine. On wide reflective equilibrium, see also Rawls 1974-5, 7-10; Peffer 1990, 291-4.

71 For alternative means of checking intuitions, see Huemer 2008, 381-2.

72 Shelby 2003, 170.

73 Harcourt 2000, 2. See also Williams 2000.

Chapter 6
Concluding Thoughts

In closing, I do three things. Firstly, I deal with a potential objection to my thesis by clarifying its scope. Secondly, I highlight the implications of my thesis. Thirdly, I recap my reconstruction.

1. A Realist Objection

In Chapter 5, I concluded that moral beliefs justified through reflective equilibrium that includes considerations of the functional and genetic properties of our moral beliefs need not be ideological. However, a realist might respond that it is unlikely that individuals will be reflective in this way.[1] In particular, ideological beliefs have been portrayed as very intransigent. In fact, Jason Stanley has claimed that '[t]he philosophical puzzle of ideological belief has always been to explain how we could come to have beliefs that are resistant to evidence'.[2] It might seem that my conclusion ignores this puzzle and assumes that individuals are easily able to reflect on and change their ideological beliefs, which is not realistic.

I think this is a useful critique to address because it allows me to clarify the scope of my thesis. To answer the question of whether moral beliefs are ideological, I only needed to provide a *formal* conception of ideology. Unlike substantive conceptions, formal conceptions do not advocate for ameliorative strategies to help people give up their ideological beliefs.[3]

However, a realist might respond that epistemic conceptions of ideology (like mine) are committed to trying to persuade individuals that their beliefs are unreasonable using rationalistic deliberative methods.[4] It is for this reason that Kieran Sankaran recently criticised Haslanger, Stanley and Robin Celikates because their '*meliorative* project of ideology critique is guilty of excessive rationalism'.[5] Such authors assume that, when the genetic and functional properties of their beliefs are revealed, individuals will revise them. However, we realistically know that this is not going to be the case. To make matters worse, Srinivasan is right to note that philosophers have

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1 By realist, I am not referring to a political realist (in distinction to political moralist, for example).

2 Stanley 2015, 178. See also Bianchin 2020, 325-33. Indeed, Tamar Gendler (2008, 552) has argued that (certain) ideological beliefs can more usefully be categorised as 'aliefs' that involve 'an innate or habitual propensity to respond to an apparent stimulus in a particular way'.

3 Sankaran 2020, 1454.

4 Rationalism is roughly taken here to rely on the effectiveness of changing people's minds through appeal to reasoned argument, often through the techniques of analytical philosophy.

5 Sankaran 2020, 1448. Similar criticisms have been made of the ability of Habermas's epistemic ideology critique to deal with ideology. As Lynn Sanders has written 'prejudice and privilege do not emerge in deliberative settings as bad reasons, and they are not countered by good arguments […] one cannot counter a pernicious group dynamic with a good reason'. For discussion, see McNay 2008. See also Bagg 2018.

a vested interest in promoting rationalistic ameliorative strategies. As she remarks, '[i]t would be really nice for philosophers […] if what was needed was better and more careful argumentation in order to rationally persuade ourselves out of bad ideology'.[6] In selling the tools of analytical philosophy for the project of ideology critique, have I not simply propagated 'one more legitimation myth of which we should be suspicious'?[7]

Indeed, it might be thought particularly ironic if a *Marxian* conception of (moral) ideology fell into the trap of promoting a rationalistic ameliorative strategy.[8] In *The Holy Family*, Marx ridiculed the approach of 'Critical Criticism', as practiced by Bauer.[9] One of Marx's relevant complaints was that, in Bauer's hands, 'the act of transforming society is reduced to the *cerebral activity* of Critical Criticism'.[10] In contrast, in 'The German Ideology' manuscripts, Marx and Engels emphasise that 'forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism […] but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gives rise to this idealistic humbug'.[11]

However, I do not think there is anything within my formal epistemic conception of ideology that would commit it to any particular ameliorative strategy. To reduce the prevalence of beliefs that have the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class hierarchy, it would obviously be helpful to remove the preconditions required (e.g., inequality) for such illegitimate oppression to take place. To reduce the number of position-induced and interest-induced moral beliefs, non-rationalistic strategies might be particularly helpful. For example, Elizabeth Anderson highlighted the important role that social movements played in promoting moral progress. They can help in 'vividly conveying information about the needs and interests of others' to those that may not think about oppressed groups ordinarily.[12]

2. Implications

At the beginning of Chapter 1, I wrote that 'the question of whether moral beliefs are ideological has important implications for philosophy and society'. Before offering a summary of my conclusions, I wish to briefly point to what I think those implications are.

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6 *Ibid.*
7 *Ibid.*
8 See Shelby 2003, 174.
9 Marx and Engels [1845] 1975a, 78, 78-87.
10 *Ibid.*, 86.
11 Marx and Engels [1932] 1975b, 54.
12 Anderson 2014, 9. See also Anderson 2015.

Firstly, I think that the problem of ideology challenges the traditional understanding of moral deliberation as an individual activity. This poses a particular problem for the common understanding of reflective equilibrium called 'private reflective equilibrium'.[13] In private reflective equilibrium, the individual focusses on reaching equilibrium by ensuring their own beliefs are coherent and mutually supporting. The problem is that certain individuals may not be able to identify the effects of their moral beliefs. Sally Haslanger has linked private reflective equilibrium to 'status-quo bias' and resists 'the idea that moral theory should be undertaken by an individual deliberating about what is right or what to do'.[14]

It is not always easy to determine whether a given moral belief is part of a sustaining belief set.[15] For example, some racist moral beliefs evidently have the effect of legitimating class hierarchy. However, it can be difficult to identify racist beliefs. Firstly, what constitutes a racist belief changes over time. According to Shelby, this happens 'in response to shifts in the cultural, political, and economic context and also, importantly, in response to social criticism'.[16] He highlighted that 'explicit beliefs about the inherent biological inferiority of non-White racial groups were more widespread in the past, during the eras of chattel slavery, Jim Crow, apartheid, and colonialism', but that 'beliefs and implicit judgements about the cultural backwardness or behavioural pathology of non-White racial groups are [now] more common'.[17] In addition, some individuals can less easily identify when a given moral belief is performing an ideological function. In the case of implicit bias, deliberators can be unaware of their own beliefs. For example, research on racism and implicit bias has found that even white individuals that proclaim egalitarian values are still likely to hold subconscious prejudicial attitudes towards black people.[18] Such evidence supports research on standpoint theory, according to which certain oppressed groups have 'privileged epistemic access to certain truths'.[19] According to standpoint theory, it is not easy for

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13 Wolff and De-Shalit 2007, 41. For examples of this traditional understanding, see Rawls [1971] 1999, 44; Scanlon 2002.

14 Haslanger forthcoming, 9.

15 Indeed, examples of moral beliefs that we think of as 'common sense' could perform this role. For example, David Graeber (2011, 381-7) argued that the moral belief that we should pay back our debts has helped to sustain illegitimate class relations.

16 Shelby 2014, 66.

17 *Ibid.*, 66–7.

18 Gaertner and Dovidio 1986. See also Dovidio and Gaertner 2004; Wilson, Lindsey and Schooler 2000.

19 Srinivasan 2017, 599. See also Mills 2007, 11–38. Interestingly, feminist standpoint theory has an intellectual heritage in Marxism. In her famous book chapter 'The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism', Nancy Hartsock positions herself as able 'to take over much of Marx's approach' after referencing certain 'metatheoretical' parts of Marx's (and Engels's) writings (from the '1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts' to *Capital*), though she does recognise at certain points that 'on a strict reading of Marx, of course, my enterprise here is illegitimate' (1987, 158, 163). That Marx and Engels recognised the importance of an individual's social position in determining their beliefs is clear from their genealogical explanation of the True Socialists referenced in section 1 of Chapter 5.

certain privileged groups to determine whether a given moral belief is part of a legitimating belief set because they will likely be less aware of the function of the belief.

In addition, I think that the problem of ideology encourages a pluralist approach to political theory. Many different methods can each play an important role in the critique of ideology. As I highlighted in section 1 of Chapter 5, normative political theory will be required to determine when ideological beliefs are performing an indefensible function. In addition, there are already established philosophical methods that highlight the genetic and functional properties of our moral beliefs. Firstly, there is the method of genealogy. In section 2 of Chapter 5, I gave examples of how genealogies can highlight the genetic properties of our moral beliefs. In addition, Matthieu Queloz's notion of 'pragmatic genealogy' has demonstrated how genealogies can help to highlight the functions of our concepts throughout history.[20] In contrast to a traditional genealogy, a pragmatic genealogy 'answers the question of why we came [come] to think as we do by reverse-engineering the points of ideas, tracing them to their practical origins, and revealing what they do for us when they function well'.[21] Queloz shows how the method can help to reveal the (possible) function of even very abstract concepts, such as truth and justice.[22] Secondly, there is the method of descriptive ideology studies. Authors in this tradition emphasise the genetic properties of our beliefs. For example, Freeden has ably demonstrated that characteristics of certain political theories, such as their emphasis on finality and on de-contesting certain aspects of the human experience, may make them more liable to be accepted.[23] Thirdly, there is intellectual history. Intellectual history can help to contextualise the origin of ideas and the role they have played.[24] For example, there has been a recent trend in political theory in linking the rise of liberal analytical political theory to its historical conditions and preoccupations.[25]

3. Summary

In this thesis, I reconstructed and assessed Marx's critique of morality to answer the question of whether moral beliefs are ideological. I concluded that not all moral beliefs are ideological, but that moral beliefs justified solely through intuition are at particular risk of being ideological.

In Chapter 1, I detailed the structure, method and scope of my thesis. In sections 2 and 3, I explained that my main method was rational reconstruction and why I only focus on *The Holy*

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20 Queloz 2021.
21 *Ibid.*, 3.
22 See *Ibid.*, 71-89, 132-154.
23 Freeden 2013, 22-5.
24 On intellectual history and ideology critique, see also Stråth 2006.
25 See Forrester 2019; Smith 2021; Smith, Bejan and Zimmermann, 2021.

Family and 'The German Ideology' manuscripts. In section 4, I identified the literature to which I thought my thesis could make a useful contribution.

In Chapter 2, I argued that my Marxian critique could justifiably use a conventional understanding of morality. After articulating this understanding in section 1, I used evidence from Marx's discussion of Sue and Marx and Engels's criticisms of Stirner as examples of where Marx's criticisms of moralism were compatible with and suggestive of this conventional understanding in sections 2 and 3.

In Chapter 3, I reconstructed and defended a Marxian conception of moral ideology. In 3.1, I used evidence from 'The German Ideology' manuscripts to argue that my epistemic conception of ideology can reasonably be called Marxian, by showing that Marx did not use the term ideology in a (wholly) epistemically neutral manner (1.1) and that he implied a belief's functional and genetic properties to be relevant to it being ideological (1.2). In section 2, I articulated a conception of ideology according to which a belief is ideological if it has the function of helping to create or sustain illegitimate class relations or if it is held owing to the social position or social interest of the believer.

In Chapter 4, I constructed and defended a Marxian thesis about the development of moral beliefs I called the dominant moral norm thesis. In section 1, I explained the nature of the thesis. In 1.1, I showed how restricting the scope of the dominant moral norm thesis relied on a legitimate inference from the dominant ideology thesis. I also argued that my dominant moral norm thesis was legitimately weaker on the understanding that the dominant ideology thesis could reasonably be understood as an empirical claim and that my dominant moral norm thesis could legitimately include a functional claim by making explicit the functional implications of the dominant ideology thesis. In 1.2, I explained that the dominant moral norm thesis is not an attempt at a sociology of morals nor an attempt to explain why bad social arrangements persist. In 1.3, I explained that my method in the chapter would be to identify plausible mechanisms in defence of the dominant moral norm thesis and that my defence did not rely on the legitimacy of functional explanation. In section 2, I detailed three possible mechanisms that can serve and have served the role required for the dominant moral norm thesis to be plausible. These were that an economically dominant class could have disproportionate influence over (and thereby propagate beliefs that are in their interest through) the policy-planning network (2.1), the news media (2.2) and education (2.3). In section 3, I highlighted six possible psychological mechanisms that can serve and have served the role required for the dominant moral norm thesis to be plausible. These included three cognitive biases (3.1) and three motivated biases (3.2).

In Chapter 5, I argued that some moral beliefs are ideological owing to the plausibility of the dominant moral norm thesis. In 5.1, I claimed that a moral belief that has the function of creating or sustaining illegitimate class hierarchy should be rejected insofar as it conflicts with our other moral beliefs but clarified that not all moral beliefs have this function. In 5.2, I claimed that a moral belief held solely owing to a deliberator's social position or interest is unjustifiably biased. I also claimed that moral beliefs justified solely through intuition are at particular risk of being ideological.

In Chapter 6, I offered a number of concluding thoughts about my thesis. In response to a possible realist objection, in section 1, I clarified that my epistemic conception of ideology is formal rather than substantive and is therefore not committed to any particular ameliorative strategy. In section 2, I also highlighted that my conclusions problematised the assumption that moral deliberation is an individual activity and that they support a pluralistic approach to political theorising.

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