

# The Concept of Ideology in Marx, Engels and Lenin

By

**Wanas Piyakulchaidech**

*Thesis  
Submitted to Flinders University  
for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**

College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences

June 2021

---



**Flinders**  
UNIVERSITY  
ADELAIDE · SOUTH AUSTRALIA

---

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.....	iii
List of illustrations .....	vi
Abstract .....	vii
DECLARATION .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	x
Introduction .....	11
Background .....	14
The Four Conceptions of Ideology.....	18
Methodological Difficulties .....	25
CHAPTER 1: MARX AND ENGELS' CONCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGY.....	29
Introduction .....	29
Marx and Engels' Conception of Consciousness.....	38
False Consciousness .....	39
Ruling Ideas .....	43
The Ideological Superstructure.....	47
Revolutionary Ideas.....	52
Compatibility between different conceptions of ideology.....	53
Chapter II: Lenin's and Gramsci's Conceptions of Ideology.....	57
Introduction .....	57
Lenin's Conception of Ideology.....	57
Ideology as a doctrine.....	61
Ideological Struggle .....	67
Marxism as a Scientific Ideology .....	69

Ideological Superstructure .....	73
Gramsci's Conception of Ideology .....	77
Ideology as an Adhesive Doctrine .....	80
Ideological Struggles.....	86
Marxism and Science.....	91
Ideological Superstructure .....	93
Chapter III: Althusser's conceptions of ideology .....	96
Introduction .....	96
Althusser's Conception of Ideology.....	100
Definitions of ideology .....	100
Ideological Superstructure .....	113
Chapter IV: The Scientific Status of Marxism and Its RELATIONSHIP with Ideology .....	119
Introduction .....	119
Engels' Conception of Science .....	120
Scientific Models and their relationship to Marxism .....	124
Empiricism .....	124
Falsificationism .....	127
Kuhn's Paradigm .....	130
Lakatos' Research Programme.....	133
Critical Realism.....	135
Marxism and its Scientific Explanation.....	137
Chapter V: Praxis and its relation to Ideology .....	147
Introduction .....	147
Three Aspects of Practice .....	149

Dichotomy between Theory and Practice.....	150
Epistemological Role of Practice.....	151
Idea Guidance Practice.....	158
Chapter VI: Reconception of Marx and Engels' Theory of Ideology.....	171
Introduction .....	171
Ideology: Creating Unity in a Group.....	172
Ruling Ideas: Concealing Social Conflicts and Contradictions.....	173
Ideological Superstructure, Ideas of the Ruling Class and Revolutionary Ideas.....	177
Marxism as a Scientific Idea for Exposing the Ideology of the Ruling Class .....	181
Marxism, Ideology, and Science: A Continuing Dispute.....	182
Chapter VII: Conclusion .....	185
Bibliography .....	192

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 4.1 The relation between structures, operations, and system.....	141
Figure 4.2 Relations between states at the global level.....	142
Figure 4.3 Ideological Superstructure and its components.....	143
Figure 5.1 The relation and process between new practices, revolutionary class, revolutionary ideas, and revolutionary practices.....	161

## ABSTRACT

The concept of ideology in Marxism is one of the most controversial terms, both theoretically and practically. The way the term is used in Marx and Engels' works and in the works of other Marxists varies between a negative and a neutral-positive sense. This thesis aims to present a more coherent concept of ideology and to provide a ground for Marxism as a scientific ideology.

The differences in the conception of ideology within the tradition create not merely disputes over the meaning of ideology, but also affect other terms that are associated with it, such as ideological superstructure and ideological struggle. This thesis aims to create a coherent conception of ideology. It presents ideology in the neutral sense as an idea that can unify human beings. When the conception of ideology is used, the question of whether it is negative or positive depends not on the concept itself, but rather on the class using the ideology. If the ruling class uses ideology to support and prolong its rule, that ideology will become a ruling ideology. On the contrary, if the subordinated class uses ideology to make a social revolution and create a new form of society, the ideology will become a revolutionary ideology. Ideological struggle is the struggle between these two kinds of ideology. And an ideological structure is the system of ideas that the ruling class uses to prolong its rule by legitimising and rationalising it.

To understand the different conceptions of ideology in the Marxist tradition and their respective strengths and weakness, this thesis traces the development of the concept from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Gramsci, and Althusser. In order to provide a possible ground for Marxism as a scientific theory, the thesis also suggests that Lakatos's idea of a research program and the idea of Critical Realism can be applied to Marxism. Marxism can then be perceived as a research program that present a real mechanism of the events, with its theory of capitalism as its core. Marxism can be further strengthened as a research program by developing more theories to further support its core. Interpreted along the lines suggested in the thesis, Marxism is both a scientific doctrine and a revolutionary ideology. Its scientific status can be used to ensure that its political practices do not become a form of secular faith. The fact that Marxism includes both theoretical and practical

aspects make it different from other philosophical theories that try to understand the world without changing it.

The future task is to develop new theories that support the Marxist research program's core, such as theories of social change and new schemas for other types of society. An increased understanding of other schemas and of the mechanisms for social change will revitalise the Marxist tradition and assert it as a productive research program.

## DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by any person, except when due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the university library, being available for loan and photocopying.

Wanas Piyakulchaidech, 5 December 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My first thanks to all of my supervisors, Associate Professor Ian Hunt, Dr Lina Eriksson and Associate Professor Ian Ravenscroft, who put endless efforts into commenting and giving me the motivation to improve and finish this thesis.

Thanks also to Associate Professor Pisanu Suntharaks, my former supervisor when I studied for the master's degree in Thailand, who introduced me to Gramsci's works, and now is a friend and colleague.

And also, to my late grandmother and my beloved Mint. I am sorry I couldn't fulfil my promise to graduate and meet them before they passed away.

Last but not least, many thanks to my partner who has encouraged me and used any means at her disposal to enable me to finish this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

One of the most concerning questions in political philosophy and political theory is how a given society can maintain or fail to maintain its current system of social order. One of the methods to maintain social order is to use violence or physical force; however, physical force alone is not enough to maintain long lasting social orders without transforming sheer physical force into legitimised force. Some Marxist theorists suggest that the way to transform sheer violence to authority is through ideology. With ideology, the ruling class or the ruling groups of a given society can prolong their rule without the frequent use of physical force that will diminish their authority and create more resistance. However, the conceptions of ideology within the Marxist tradition are too vague and sometimes seem to contradict each other.

Normally, contradictions among theorists, concerning concepts such as the state of nature, rights, justice and so on, are acceptable and common. However, Marxism is different in the way the tradition claims a unity between the theory and its application or practice as praxis. Theories are not just explanations of social phenomena but also action guiding plans for the socio-political goal of the tradition which is social revolution. Vague or obscure theories will lead to inappropriate application and sometimes end up in with the failure of the political aims and projects of the tradition. The conceptions of ideology in the Marxist tradition fall into this category. In this sense, the term 'ideology' has a dual aspect, one from the theoretical perspective and the other from the practical viewpoint of political activities. This dual aspect has existed in the nature of the word since its inception in Marxist writings. Especially within the Marxist tradition, this term can be complicated, because there are several different conceptions of ideology from the founders of the tradition. Without paying careful attention to the dual aspect of the concept, one might mix the goals of Marxism, confounding an understanding of social phenomena with the political aims. The term 'ideology' when used in political struggles, does not need to be clarified for present purposes. In the Marxist tradition, its purpose is just to elicit support or form an alliance with other social groups or to denounce particular ideas of the ruling class. When the term is used to explain social phenomena, it requires precise definition for the purposes of this study. The study of the idea of ideology is not the same as applying it in the political arena. This project only touches on the idea that there is still plenty of space in the theories of the tradition which can be developed, especially in regard to the idea of ideology. The idea of ideology can show why social revolution does not occur in the more advanced industrial societies but does occur in the less developed industrial societies, countering the assumption that the communist revolution will take place in the more

advanced capitalist societies if factories provide the opportunity for the workers to learn and unite themselves to struggle against the rule of the capitalist class.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the works in the Marxist tradition about ideology are written by theorists or revolutionaries who use the word in their political struggles. The nature of their usage tends to mix the dual aspects of the word together, resulting in confusion for readers. Apart from three works by Marx<sup>2</sup>, Althusser<sup>3</sup>, and Goran Therborn,<sup>4</sup> there are no other works that deal as directly as they do with the subject of ideology, and the tradition never presents any clear definition of the concept. The term is even more confusing for readers when it is defined for general use among the masses. For example, ideology is normally defined as 'a system of ideas and principles forming the basis of an economic or political theory'<sup>5</sup> or 'a set of beliefs, especially political beliefs on which people, parties, or countries base their actions'.<sup>6</sup>

From a theoretical perspective, the aim of this thesis is to clarify the seemingly vague and confusing concept of ideology in the Marxist tradition by arguing that even though there are some elements that contradict each other, there are other elements that can be used to present a more coherent conception of ideology. It is not possible to succeed in this aim without carefully investigating the conceptions of ideology within the tradition and presenting their similarities and differences. One important source of confusion about the ideology concept in Marxism is the claim that Marxism is a scientific theory. The question is, what is the relationship between Marxism as an ideological theory, on the one hand, and as a scientific theory, on the other hand. To answer this question, we need to investigate in more detail the sense in which Marxism can be said to be a scientific theory and what conclusions we should draw from the fact that the term has not quite developed as many Marxist theorists thought it would. I also propose that Marxism, at least in its theoretical aspect, is a scientific theory that can be improved or developed to be a fruitful explanation of social phenomena by arguing that there is at least one type of scientific explanation that suits Marxism.

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), vi, pp. 492–93.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The German Ideology', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v.

<sup>3</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971).

<sup>4</sup> Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: NLB, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> *The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, 9th edn (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 449.

<sup>6</sup> *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, ed. by John Sinclair, 3rd edn (Glasgow: Harper Collins, 2001), p. 774; see also, *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, ed. by Cambridge University Press, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 713.

The scientific aspect of Marxism as a science of society and its political aspect as a revolutionary doctrine have been used by Marxists since the beginning of the tradition. However, these two aspects do not share the same recognition from within and without the tradition. For example, Marxism has a long tradition of claiming to be a scientific doctrine; however, its claim to be a scientific doctrine faces several challenges, as will be shown in the fourth chapter. In contrast, the political aspect of Marxism has been more acceptable to both Marxists and Non-Marxists since the beginning of the tradition. The shift between those two aspects depends on the nature of the writing and the purpose of the authors. This may cause confusion if one disregards the significance of both aspects and considers only one of these two aspects as representing the tradition. On the one hand, if one considers Marxism merely as a science of society, it is no different from other social science disciplines that try to understand and explain social phenomena. On the other hand, if Marxism is considered to be only a political doctrine without its scientific aspect, its distinctiveness will be obscured and it will be impossible to differentiate Marxism from other political doctrines and movements that try to improve society, such as anarchism, feminism, etc. Moreover, the claim that Marxism is has both a scientific and a political aspect which serves as a guide to revolutionary practice makes the conception of ideology more complex. If the Marxist theory of capitalism is both a scientific theory and also a proletarian ideology, then we need to understand how a scientific theory can be an ideology. This thesis examines the relationship between the Marxist theory of the capitalist mode of production as a scientific theory and how ideologies can be used in political struggles.

To clarify that confusion and establish a reasonable relationship between science and ideology within the tradition, the whole project of this thesis is based on the idea that Marxism has two aspects. One is theoretical and the other is practical. Both aspects relate to each other, and the emphasis on both aspects makes Marxism different from a mere social or political theory which emphasises only the theoretical aspect to explain and understand social reality. However, this does not mean that a single instance of success or failure of its practical aspects can be used to guarantee or refute its theoretical aspects. The application of the theory can be used not only to evaluate it but also develop it into a fuller form. Failure of the application can be used as evidence to determine what is lacking in the theory, in its application, or in the relations between social realities in which that theory and its application operate. Any success in applying Marxism as a revolutionary ideology can be used to affirm the capacity of that ideology to unify the masses and organise them to make a revolution.

The presence of a dual aspect within Marxism includes the concept of ideology. Ideology in the tradition can be used to understand how the ruling class rules and reproduces itself through the reproduction of social relations. Ideology also can be used as an idea that combines several social

groups into one unified movement to make a revolution. Ideology, as a part of the Marxist theory of society and social change, is the object of inquiry. Our concern is to understand ideology as an aspect of social structure that is used to support the rule of the ruling class and its function in creating unity between the leader and the led. With this understanding, one can apply and use a proletarian ideology to make a revolution.

This introductory chapter will elaborate on the background of the concept. It will also summarise Marx and Engels' four conceptions of ideology. It will demonstrate other usages and contributions to the concept by some of the prominent Marxist thinkers. Differences between the conceptions reflect the dual aspects of ideology. One can use the term "ideology" for political projects, like Lenin and other revolutionaries; others may use it as an analytical tool for understanding class society. These different conceptions of ideology originate from Marx and Engels, and the usages of that term by subsequent Marxists raise the question of what is the most suitable and coherent conception for representing the Marxist concept of ideology. The project of this thesis is to present a more coherent conception of ideology that not only can integrate the dual aspects of the tradition but also tries to preserve the critical and political aspects that make the tradition different from other socialist movements, while retaining its status as a scientific theory. This thesis will argue that Marxism is a scientific ideology. The aim of the thesis is to show that the different strands of meaning of the term 'ideology' that spring in the Marxist tradition from Marx's and Engel's implicit and explicit conception of ideology can be reconciled to develop a more developed conception of ideology that reveals how Marxism can be both a science and an ideology.

## Background

It is common to see the term ideology combined with other words such as 'nationalist', 'liberal', 'fascist', 'conservative', 'feminist', etc.<sup>7</sup> to create extended terms like 'nationalist ideology', 'liberal ideology' or 'fascist ideology'. Used this way, the term 'ideology' can be associated with any political institution, e.g., political party, government, or regime. Ideology in this sense has a neutral connotation. The positive or negative sense (as desirable and undesirable) of the term depends on the other word which precedes it and on the political perspectives it serves. For example, from the standpoint of Marxism, when ideological ideas are associated with words such as fascist, conservative or racist, those ideas are used to condemn and criticise. Ideology can be used in the

---

<sup>7</sup> For example, James Donald and Stuart Hall, *Politics and Ideology: A R.*

positive sense when it associated with words, such as revolutionary, scientific. For instance, an idea that leads human beings to make a social revolution, can be called as a revolutionary ideology. Or if such an idea integrates scientific element, it can be described as a scientific ideology.

When one traces the history of the concept, the term 'ideology' can be seen to have had various meanings. The word 'ideology' was first coined by Comte de Tracy, the French aristocrat and philosopher (1754-1836). He uses the term for a 'science of ideas' which is a science that studies ideas by scientific empirical means without any prejudices. The aim of de Tracy was that this very new science would advance the human race by using it to organise the curriculum in educational institutions. This science of ideas could be used to educate the young and future generations of French society to eliminate the residue of past errors in the realms of religion and philosophy.<sup>8</sup> This shows that, at least at the outset of this term, it truly had a positive meaning. Not long after it was used for the first time by de Tracy, Napoleon Bonaparte twisted the meaning of the word to give it a completely negative sense. Napoleon, who had not yet ascended to the throne, gave the word a negative meaning by linking it to the word 'illusion' when he condemned the originator of this term as an 'ideologue'.<sup>9</sup>

The popularity of the word 'ideology' reached another significant level when the word was employed by Karl Marx (1818-1883), Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), and later followers in the name of Marxism. This general recognition and impact also come from the political practice of the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the first 'socialist' regime led by Lenin (1870-1924). Leninism or precisely Stalin's interpretation of Leninism that is the doctrine based on Lenin's thoughts and political practices, was adopted as a standard interpretation of Marxism by the Soviet Union at that time.<sup>10</sup> This doctrine influenced subsequent scholars and writers on the topics of Marxism and ideology and led some of them to describe particular conceptions of ideology used by Lenin himself as legitimised conceptions that could represent the whole tradition.

I propose to categorise the usages of the term 'ideology' into four groups. First, ideology taken as a form of false consciousness. Second, ideology as the ruling ideas of the ruling class which necessarily serve the interests of the ruling class. Third, a specific form of ideas which can be either ideas of the ruling class or ideas of the subordinated classes. Finally, ideas that make human beings realise their conflict and fight it out. Some scholars tend to combine one or two of

---

<sup>8</sup> See Emmet Kennedy, "Ideology" from Destutt De Tracy to Marx', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40.3, 353–68 (p. 356).

<sup>9</sup> Kennedy, p. 359.

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pt. 1, chapter 3.

these definitions together, while others use Marx's conception of ideology in one of the four senses.

For example, Lyman Tower Sargent presents Marx's concept of ideology in terms of false consciousness. For him, Marx's idea of ideology is a consequence of socialisation which is an inevitable process, whereby people learn about their place in society and which group (or class), and they cannot exactly apprehend the reality.<sup>11</sup>

In the case of ruling ideas, Leon P. Baradat claims that 'the dominant political ideas, or ideology, of any society would always reflect the interest of the ruling class'.<sup>12</sup> This claim obviously states that the ruling ideas must serve the interest of the ruling class.

Ideology can be used to describe a specific form of ideas that can be either ruling ideas or ideas of the oppressed classes. For example, W.H.C. Eddy, in his dialogue on ideology, insists that Marxism is an ideology, just like ideas of state, church and so on. But he sees Marxism as an ideology in a very specific sense, as a scientific ideology.<sup>13</sup>

Another similar interpretation is given by Rius in his glossary, where he uses the term to describe the ideas of the ruling class and subordinate classes as:

Ideology: Combination of ideas, assumptions, notions of determined concepts, representations. Politics, science, morality, art and religion are *forms* of ideology. All ideologies are reflections of social existence. In class-based society, ideology expresses and defends the interests of the classes in struggle. In bourgeois society, struggle develops between bourgeois and socialist ideologies. There is no intermediate term, since, as Lenin affirms, humanity has not elaborated a 'third' ideology.<sup>14</sup>

By this interpretation, ideology is a combination of various kinds of ideas in a given society. Science and Marxism or any other idea can become ideological ideas, if they are reflections of social existence and serve the interests of the two fundamental classes (bourgeois or socialist). Rius relates his interpretation to that of Lenin, arguing that there are no alternative ideologies in a modern class society; there are only bourgeois or socialist ideologies.

Interpretations of Marx's or other Marxists' concepts of ideology are increasingly obscured when interpreters merge two of the four above notions together. For instance, when there is a

---

<sup>11</sup> Sargent, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Leon P Baradat, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*, 5th edn (London: Prentice-Hall, 1994), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> W. H. C Eddy, *Understanding Marxism: An Approach Through Dialogue* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979), pp. 61–63.

<sup>14</sup> Rius, *Marx for Beginners*, trans. by Richard Appignanesi (London: Writers and Readers Pub. Cooperative Society, 1976), p. 149.

combination of false ideas and ruling ideas. Reo M. Christenson and others in their co-authored work assume that for 'the Marxist, ideology is merely the rationalisation of the economic class interest and political rule of the dominant class'.<sup>15</sup> For these authors, an ideology in the Marxist tradition is the ruling idea and it has the social function of justifying the interests of the ruling class. In a similar stance, John Schwarzmantel states that, for Marx and other Marxists, ideologies are 'distorted pictures of social reality, which seek to justify a particular type of society in the interest of a particular ruling group'.<sup>16</sup> These distorted pictures merge those two notions together. Ideologies not only misrepresent social reality but also justify the class rule of the ruling class.

Ian MacKenzie considers that when Marx and Engels use the term 'ideology' in *The German Ideology*, these ideologies 'are false precisely because they reflect class interests, in this case, the interest of the German middle class, rather than the interest of all'.<sup>17</sup> The falsehood of ideologies rests on the fact that they misrepresent the particular interests of the ruling class as a general interest of all classes. He also notices that other Marxists, such as Lenin, Gramsci and Althusser, use the word 'ideology' in their own ways.<sup>18</sup>

Taking a similar line of interpretation, Barbara Goodwin insists that Marx's conception of ideology rests on the idea of social conflicts between two antagonistic classes, e.g., the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; therefore, there is:

... a resolution of these contradictions *in the mind*: thus, capitalist ideology may 'resolve' class conflict by emphasizing the common interest and harmony between the classes, or the 'organic' nature of society, but this cannot alter the *real* antagonism between the interests of those classes. Because ideology tries to resolve the irresolvable, it gives an inaccurate and distorted representation of material reality.<sup>19</sup>

Goodwin also points out that Lenin's conception of ideology is different from that of Marx. For Lenin, 'all class knowledge is ideological'.<sup>20</sup>

As shown above, some authors interpret Marx's conception of ideology by using one of four definitions (or a combination of those four definitions). This kind of interpretation leads to three questions regarding to Marx's conception of ideology. First, interpretations that rely on one of these four definitions, or a combination of those definitions, oversimplify Marx's conception of ideology and also give rise to contradictions between interpretations. For example, how can the idea of

<sup>15</sup> Reo Millard Christenson and others, *Ideologies and Modern Politics*, 2nd ed (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975), p. 12.

<sup>16</sup> J. J. Schwarzmantel, *Ideology and Politics* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2008), p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> Ian Mackenzie, 'Introduction: The Arena of Ideologies', in *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> Mackenzie, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Goodwin, p. 19 (emphasis in original).

<sup>20</sup> Goodwin, p. 21.

Marxism as a scientific ideology (W.H.C. Eddy), that is used in a positive way for social revolution, be compatible with the idea of ideology as false consciousness (Sargent) that is used in a negative sense for criticising the existing system. Second, if those two senses are apparently in conflict with each other, does this mean there is a contradiction in Marx's conception of ideology? Third, one of the authors (Rius) bases his interpretation of Marx's conception of ideology on Lenin's conception. It can be asked is Lenin's conception of ideology similar to Marx's conception and to what extent? Moreover, as I suggest above, the nature of the concept of ideology in the tradition has two aspects: one as a conceptual tool for understanding societies and the other as the political tool for social revolution. The difference between those two aspects is their aims. One is used to understand social and political phenomena in order to change our understanding of society and the other is used to change the material world itself by bringing about a social revolution. The first aspect of ideology, as a conceptual tool to understand society, includes ideas such as the idea of false consciousness and ruling ideas. Those ideas are used to understand how certain ideas can be used to preserve the rule of the ruling class. However, to denounce false consciousness of specific ideas and understand the ruling ideas that help the ruling class rule is not enough to create the conditions for the subaltern class to overthrow a capitalist system. Subaltern classes do need a definite type of idea that can enable them to unify as a class and understand their tasks and aims for the revolution. The second aspect of ideology as a political tool can fulfil this condition and enable the subaltern classes to realise their task and goals and fight it out. Thus, ideology in this second aspect can be used as a political tool to unite subaltern classes and the masses in their struggle against the ruling class.

None of the authors mentioned above covers all these senses of the dual aspect of ideology in the tradition. Thus, I will show that the lack of a comprehensive conception of ideology originates from Marx and it is Marxists themselves who lead to the apparent contradictions between conceptions. However, if we keep in mind the point that those four senses fall within the dual aspects of the concept, it can help to develop a comprehensive conception of ideology, as will be shown in the sixth chapter. To explicate these three questions, this chapter will briefly show that the four senses of ideology are related to Marx's conception of ideology itself. And I also examine the work of Marxists such as Lenin and Gramsci in order to identify similarities and differences in their understandings of Marx's conception of ideology, in order to differentiate between them and avoid confusion between their views and those of Marx.

## **The Four Conceptions of Ideology**

False consciousness is one of the most famous conceptions of Marx and Engels' ideology. However, it is also one of the most obscured conceptions. To begin with, it was Engels rather than

Marx who first made an explicit use of the term “false consciousness”. This occurs in a letter from Engels to Franz Mehring, London, 14 July 1893, which was written ten years after Marx's death, and which depicts ideology as follows:

... ideology is a process accomplished by the so-called thinker consciously, indeed, but with a false consciousness. The real motives impelling him remain unknown to him, otherwise it would not be an ideological process at all. Hence, he imagines false or apparent motives. Because it is a process of thought he derives both its form and its content from pure thought, either his own or that of his predecessors. He works with mere thought material which he accepts without examination as the product of thought, he does not investigate further for a more remote process independent of thought; indeed, its origin seems obvious to him, because as all action is produced through the medium of thought it also appears to him to be ultimately based upon thought.<sup>21</sup>

Ideology as false consciousness refers to the process of making thinkers consciously think or theorise on the grounds of ‘pure’ thought. This ‘pure’ thought is independent from human beings and takes a role as a force driving history.<sup>22</sup> For Engels, the idea of thought alone governing human beings is false consciousness, because it neglects the economic basis of that thought as a product of human beings’ activities. It should be noted that even though Marx never used the term “false consciousness” explicitly, the notion of the term was developed by him and Engels in their work, *The German Ideology*.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels argue against the Idealist tradition of philosophy in Germany. They employ words like ‘inversion’ when they say that ‘if in all ideology men and their circumstances 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’.<sup>23</sup> This inversion occurs because those German ideologists think that ‘the real world of human beings has hitherto been dominated and determined by ideas, images, concepts, and that the real world is a product of the world of ideas’.<sup>24</sup> Marx and Engels attack the idea that thought governs material realities, not vice versa, and they establish their ideas of historical development based on the interaction process of human beings and their material realities. Ideas result from the interaction of human beings and their material realities; however, the philosophers of German idealism invert this process by stating that ideas—which for Marx and Engels are the results—are the causes that govern the historical process.

---

<sup>21</sup> Frederick Engels, ‘Engels to Franz Mehring, London, 14 July 1893’, in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895*, trans. by Dona Torr (New York: International Publishers), p. 511.

<sup>22</sup> Engels, p. 511.

<sup>23</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, ‘The German Ideology’, in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 24.

This inversion in the process of perceiving social reality as an illusion and the metaphor of a camera obscura lead without a doubt to the conclusion that ideology is a misrepresented idea. When it converges with Engels' concept of false consciousness, the false consciousness notion of ideology is the result.

Another definition of Marx and Engels' conception of ideology is found in *The Communist Manifesto*. Here the authors explain the production of ideas by intellectuals and ruling ideas in a class society and argue that these ideas 'have ever been the ideas of its ruling class'.<sup>25</sup> This passage obviously establishes the relationship between the class that rules and the ideas of that class.

Marx and Engels assert that the 'ruling ideas' of society necessarily serve the interests of the ruling class in the following passage:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently, also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.<sup>26</sup>

This passage explicitly states that the ruling ideas serve to create the power of one class over another class which is a necessary condition of being the dominant class. It also states that the reason why the subordinated classes are subjected to the ruling ideas is that they lack the means to develop their own ideas to express themselves.

The third conception of Marx's ideology or the ideological superstructure is found in the famous extract of the *1859 Preface*:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond *definite forms of social consciousness*.<sup>27</sup>

This passage describes a topological base-superstructure with the economic foundation as the base and the superstructures arising from its base. These superstructures can be divided into two

---

<sup>25</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), vi, p. 503.

<sup>26</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 59 (emphasis in original).

<sup>27</sup> Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix, p. 263 (emphasis added).

subgroups: one for legal and political superstructures and the other for definite forms of social consciousness. In this passage, Marx does not explicitly mention the term 'ideological superstructure' but this term was already used in *The German Ideology*.<sup>28</sup>

This leads to another question: which forms of social consciousness are represented in that superstructure. One can find the explanation in Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890:

The economic situation is the basis, but the various factors of the superstructure political forms of the class struggle and its consequences, namely constitutions set up by the ruling class after a victorious battle, etc., forms of law and, the reflections of all these real struggles in the minds of the participants, i.e., political, philosophical and legal theories, religious views and the expansion of the same into dogmatic systems all these factors also have a bearing on the course of the historical struggles which, in many cases, they largely determine the *form*.<sup>29</sup>

It is clearly stated in Engels' letter that those social forms of consciousness include political, philosophical and legal theories, and even religious views. Thus, an ideological superstructure is the structure of social consciousness, which includes legal, political, religious, artistic, and even philosophical ideas.

The fourth conception of Marx and Engels' ideology is also based on the *1859 Preface*:

... one can distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic, in short, *ideological forms* in which human beings become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.<sup>30</sup>

In this passage, it is apparent that through these ideological forms of consciousness, human beings can realise the conflicts in their socio-economic base and struggle against them.

The realisation of these forms of social consciousness plays an active role for the people in their class struggles. It means that human beings can have a 'true' knowledge of their actual positions, and they can fight against the current superstructures and begin the social revolution to transform those superstructures and the economic base. In other words, they can bring those structures of society under their control.

If human beings can comprehend their situations through ideological forms of consciousness, then one may ask: which forms of consciousness enable them to do that? One can

---

<sup>28</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 373.

<sup>29</sup> Frederick Engels, 'Engels to Joseph Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Engels 1890-92*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2001), XLIX, pp. 34–35.

<sup>30</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263 (emphasis added).

infer from the context that if Marx and Engels' writings enable their readers to understand their situations in this current class society, then Marxist ideas must be those ideological forms of consciousness.

The variation rests on the fact of that all four conceptions do not share the same explicit meaning of the term 'ideology'. For the first two, the notions of false consciousness and ruling ideas are explicit in Marx and Engels' own words. They use the notion of false consciousness or distorted ideas in the context of critiquing a particular form of idea, i.e., the German philosophical tradition of their time and the whole tradition of idealism.<sup>31</sup> Ideology in this sense is not just a misrepresented idea, but an idea that expresses an idealistic conception.

Marx and Engels use the notion of ruling ideas for analysing how the ruling class in a class society maintains its rule. These ruling ideas and distorted ideas can co-exist seamlessly because Marx and Engels show that ideological ideas must be hidden under the cloak of universal ideas and pseudo general interest.<sup>32</sup> By this reasoning, distorted ideas will support a particular class as a ruling class and support its existing power. The first two conceptions clearly present ideology in a negative sense. Ideology in this sense is not desirable, and it must be exposed or critiqued because it prolongs the existing class structure.

In contrast, the next two conceptions of ideology are not explicit in Marx and Engels' works. The concepts of ideological superstructure and ideological forms of consciousness, whereby human beings realise their conflicts and tasks, are indirectly inferred from their works. These four conceptions are in conflict with each other. For example, if ideological ideas are distorted or ruling ideas, how do those ideas make human beings realise their conflicts? Moreover, since the ideological forms of consciousness that make human beings realise their tasks require a 'true' understanding of their positions and conditions, how is this 'true' understanding compatible with the distorted ideas or ruling ideas that are supposed to misrepresent social reality and support the ruling class?

Another problem is the concept of the ideological superstructure. It must represent sets of ideas as shown above, but it is not clear whether or not this superstructure relates to class. Does it represent the all-inclusive ideas of social consciousness in a given society, or does it just represent specific sets of ideas? It is not quite clear what Marx and Engels mean in those passages, and this vagueness gives rise to neutral and positive conceptions of ideology when Lenin uses this term to represent the ideas of human beings about their existence.

---

<sup>31</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 24.

<sup>32</sup> Marx and Engels, v, pp. 60–61 and pp. 179-180.

Their [Marx and Engels] basic idea (quite definitely expressed, for instance, in the passage from Marx quoted above) was that social relations are divided into material and ideological. The latter merely constitute a superstructure on the former, which take shape independent of the will and consciousness of man as (the result) of the form of man's activity to maintain his existence.<sup>33</sup>

This quote from Lenin explicitly expresses the term *ideological superstructure* when he divides social relations into material and ideological relations. If all social relations can only comprise these two types, then how can one maintain the notion of false consciousness within the ideological relation or superstructure except to insist that the ideological superstructure or relation is totally false.

Lenin puts forward his conception by introducing the term 'socialist ideology'. He argues that there is no third ideology, and that capitalist society has only one choice:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology being developed by the masses of the workers themselves in the process of their movement the *only* choice is either the bourgeois or the socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for humanity has not created a "third" ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or above-class ideology. Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn away from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.<sup>34</sup>

The negative meaning of ideology is lost, and the ideological struggle is not a struggle against ideological ideas but against different class ideologies. For Lenin, Marxism is clearly an ideology; it takes the form of socialist ideology. By this passage, ideology can have a negative or positive meaning; it merely depends on the class with which it associates. From Lenin onward, the conception of ideology tends to focus on the political struggle between those fundamental classes which is the result of the political activities of the revolutionists.

Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist (1891-1937), is aware of the 'arbitrary' notion of the word but he uses the notion of ideological ideas that have a specific function to organise the masses, that is:

One must therefore distinguish between historically organic ideologies—that is, ideologies that are necessary to a given structure—and arbitrary, rationalistic, "willed" ideologies. Insofar as they are historically necessary, ideologies have a validity that is "psychological"; they "organize" the human masses, they establish the ground on which human move, become conscious of their position, struggle, etc. As for "arbitrary" ideologies, they produce nothing other than individual "movements," polemics, etc. (but they are not completely useless, either, because they function like the error that by opposing truth affirm it).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), I, p. 151.

<sup>34</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, p. 384 (emphasis in original).

<sup>35</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Joseph A Buttigieg, 5 vols (New York; [Chichester]: Columbia University Press, 2007), III, p. 171.

Gramsci suggests that historically organic ideologies can be used to unite the masses and enable them to realise their roles in social conflicts. On the other hand, ideologies that do not relate to their historical structure cannot be used to organise the masses.

Since Marx's *1859 Preface*, prominent Marxists and revolutionaries like Lenin and Gramsci have carried on using the term 'ideology' in the neutral-positive sense, and this has gradually diminished the importance of the notion of false consciousness. A subsequent French Marxist thinker, Louis Althusser (1918-1990), went on to merge the notion of a negative sense of false consciousness with the notion of a neutral sense and created his own formulation of the concept of ideology. Althusser uses Marx's topological base-superstructure and claims that the superstructure 'contains two "levels" or "instances": the politico-legal (law and the State) and ideological (the different ideologies, religious, ethical, legal, political, etc.)'.<sup>36</sup> Althusser's conception of ideology also introduces a new function, that of transforming an individual into a subject. This function makes an ordinary person an agent who can act, who is not just a passive organism in the social structure but an active subject who can reproduce their social relations. Althusser fuses the notions of false consciousness and ideological structure by using the term 'imaginary distortion' and explaining the function of ideology as:

In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognizes, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform.<sup>37</sup>

This function of the ideological superstructure is 'eternal'<sup>38</sup> and it cannot be overcome by any means. It will continue to exist for human beings like the unconscious in the theory of psychoanalysis.<sup>39</sup> Even though the ideological superstructure is the structure of distorted ideas, human beings need it to reproduce their social relations. We have no choice but to accept ideological ideas, even if they are distorted, because of their function. Thus, Althusser's conception of ideology is unlike the conception of false consciousness, in that we can reject and refute ideological ideas with other ideas, such as Marxism, and we can even try to replace them.

These various definitions and interpretations of Marx and Engels' works, and other Marxists' conceptions of ideology, give rise to problems with the concept. First, as shown above, there are two different understandings of the term 'ideology'. One has a negative meaning, and the

---

<sup>36</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), p. 134.

<sup>37</sup> Althusser, p. 168.

<sup>38</sup> Althusser, p. 163.

<sup>39</sup> Althusser, p. 161.

other has a neutral or positive meaning. Marx uses the word 'ideology' in a negative sense when he critiques particular forms of social consciousness which present themselves as abstracted or ruling ideas. Ideology in this sense is negative because it is untrue and serves the interests of the ruling class. Thus, it must be critiqued and exposed. On the other hand, Marx also uses the term in a positive sense, when he sees ideological ideas as forms of social consciousness that enable human beings to realise their social conflicts and fight it out. Ideological ideas are means for acquiring a clear understanding of social situations; in this sense ideological ideas are preferable. Human beings must acquire those ideas before they can make a social revolution. These two sets of conceptions lead to different understandings of the meaning of the word 'ideology'. The question is, which set of conceptions is a coherent one?

Second, these two sets of conceptions lead to two different roles for ideology. The neutral or positive conception of ideology can be used for the political project as it was used by Lenin in the Russian Revolution. This conception plays a crucial role in the Marxist-Leninist tradition. Ideology has a role in unifying people and organising them under the banner of the proletariat and the party. With this shared common world outlook, the party can lead the proletariat to the socialist revolution. In contrast, the negative conception of ideology can take the role of a critical and analytical tool to understand class relations in capitalist society.

These two applications of ideology affect the Marxist tradition as a whole, as a foundation for the formulation of theories of ideology in that tradition. Which one of these two applications represents the whole tradition of Marxism? Or does the difference between the two applications represent two different phases of political struggle to achieve political power. I will try to provide a plausible answer to this question in the sixth chapter.

## Methodological Difficulties

These two problems can only be addressed by carefully examining the works of Marx and Engels, Lenin, Gramsci and Althusser. There are just three specific treatises on ideology: Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology*, Althusser's *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* and Therborn's *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology*. Other Marxists, such as Gramsci and Lenin use the term "ideology" scatteringly throughout their writings. The words "ideology", 'ideologist' and 'ideological struggle' appear throughout their works, but they do not present or clarify their definitions. However, this lack of an explicit treatment of the idea does not make their works inconsistent.

This thesis traces the concept of ideology, beginning with Marx's works, to identify the source of this incompatibility. It assumes that, while those thinkers have a coherent formulation of

their concept, their usages of the word 'ideology' might contradict each other, even if there is an inner logical coherence at least in their own works. The task of this thesis is to reconstruct the outward diffusions of the concept and to present an orderly definition. Furthermore, it will describe and clarify the core definition and peripheral concepts which mark the differences between them.

If the very terms used in an author's works are contradictory, it is the task of this thesis to point out these contradictions. An understanding of the differences in their conceptions of the term will be more fruitful to the study of the concept than harmful. It will provide the grounds for a new and more coherent conception of the term, even if the core definitions are totally different. The label *Marxism* as a scientific theory is necessary for *Leninism* as *Marxism-Leninism* only on the point of that one uses it as the guarantee of truth for his or her political practices or projects to legitimise those conducts and consequences.<sup>40</sup> This thesis will group different interpretations of the ideology concept in the Marxist tradition into two sets: one with negative connotations and the other with neutral or positive connotations. These two definitions, which can be traced back to Marx and Engels' works themselves, have their own strengths and weaknesses, as will be shown in the next three chapters.

The next three chapters deal with four topics, e.g., the four conceptions of ideology: first, false consciousness or distorted ideas; second, the ruling ideas; third, the ideological superstructure; and fourth, ideas that enable human beings to realise their social conflict and their roles to fight it out.

The first chapter emphasises Marx's usage of the concept of ideology. However, because Marx and Engels collaborated on numerous works together, this chapter will pay special attention to both Marx's and Marx and Engels' writings. The topics will elaborate on the various definitions of ideology, particularly in the famous polemic works like *The German Ideology* and the *1859 Preface* and other works. This first chapter will also examine the famous (or infamous) idea of 'false consciousness' and also elaborates on the relationship between the base and the superstructures. This affects the conception of ideology in the Marxist tradition and creates the room in which Lenin develops his concept of ideological class struggle.

The second chapter moves to Lenin and Gramsci. The structure of this chapter of these two authors begins with definition of ideology, the relation between truth, science and ideology, the class relation of ideology and the last section is the idea of ideological superstructure. The first part of the chapter starts with Lenin's conception of ideology in his renowned political writings, *What the*

---

<sup>40</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), I, pp. 327–28.

*"Friends of the People" Are and What is to be Done?* And the next part of Gramsci investigates the famous concept of Hegemony in the prison notebooks.

The third chapter turns its attention to Althusser who makes a substantial contribution to the concept (or cause a frustration). This chapter begins with Althusser who introduces the new term "ideological state apparatuses". The new term furthers the new direction towards the class and truth in relation to the neutral conception of ideology. This chapter also explores Althusser's effort to synthesise Marx's conception of ideology with that of Lenin's.

The fourth chapter presents the problem of the scientific status of Marxism and its relation to ideology. This chapter considers the origin of the claim to scientific status by presenting several models of science, such as empiricism, falsificationism, Kuhn's paradigm and the idea of Critical Realism. The chapter also presents the critics of Marxism from the perspective of the philosophy of science. This includes Karl Popper's view of Marxism as a falsified science and Lakatos's view of Marxism as a degenerative' research program. This chapter also presents alternative forms of scientific explanation, including Critical Realism. Marxism does not need to be a law-like explanation in order to be scientific.

The next two chapters are on the impact of those conceptions of ideology on the Marxist tradition. Chapter V begins with the idea of praxis (practice) and its relation to ideology. This chapter argues that practice plays an important role relating to ideology in two ways. First, practice can be used to evaluate theory. Thus, the idea of practice is used to improve the Marxist theory of history to make it more accurate and precise in its explanations. Second, from the theory of capitalism framework and the mechanistic view of scientific explanation, practice is presented as one of the mechanisms that produces a particular effect in a given society. Ideology can give rise to the practice of the ruling class to maintain its rule, or to the revolutionary practice of the revolutionary class to create a new form of society.

The sixth chapter aims to present a more coherent conception of ideology. The idea that ideology can be used in a neutral sense. It can be used to represent the ideas of the ruling class or the ideas of the new revolutionary class. More precisely, ideology in itself is not inherently negative. Ideology functions to create a unity within and outside a particular class. If ideology is used by the ruling class, its content will be negative because it supports domination by that class. However, if ideology is used by the new revolutionary class, then its content will be positive because it transforms the limit of the existing class relations and establishes new relations that are more compatible with the forces of production. The ideological structure does not include all ideas in a

given society, but a particular set of ideas that operate within that society to maintain and support the rule of the ruling class and accommodate the existing social relations.

The conclusion chapter summarises all the questions that the thesis attempts to answer and raises further questions that are left to be answered by another inquiry.

# CHAPTER 1: MARX AND ENGELS' CONCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGY

## Introduction

The term 'ideology' appears several times in the works of Marx and Engels, from Marx's earlier works in 1842 through to his economics treatise, *The Capital* in 1867. Marx uses the term 'ideology' for the first time in 1842 when he criticises legislators who use the term 'free will' arbitrarily in support of their interests in a 'rebellious emergence of ideology'.<sup>1</sup> The term often appears in *The German Ideology*, which was written in 1845 to expose the nature of German philosophy at that time. Another major work relating to the concept of ideology is the 1859 *Preface* in which Marx presents a condensed form of his theory of history. Marx's conception of ideology is most obvious in the latter two works.

Scholars have different and equivocal views about Marx's conception of ideology. We can categorise these different views into two groups. The first group interprets Marx's conception of ideology in a negative or pejorative sense and the second group interprets it in a neutral or positive sense. Scholars in the first group include Jorge Larrain, GA Cohen, Terry Eagleton and Bhikhu Parekh. Scholars who interpret Marx's conception of ideology in a neutral or sometimes positive sense include Alex Callinicos and Goran Therborn.

Larrain's interpretation of Marx's conception of ideology relies on the role of practice and a theory of idea formation. He emphasises the point that the structures of society, e.g., social relations or social institutions, have a specific role in the creation of ideological ideas. Ideological ideas cannot be merely identified by their meaning and content but must be understood in terms of their function in their corresponding social structures. For Larrain, ideas do not just 'reflect' their circumstances, but shape and transform social reality. He also insists that one cannot understand Marx and Engels' conception of ideology without understanding their theory of idea formation.<sup>2</sup>

Larrain explains the distorted views of German philosophers in Marx's time as a result of

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, 'Proceeding of the Sixth Rhine Province Assembly Third Article: Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: 1835-1843*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), I, p. 244.

<sup>2</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 19.

specific material practices:

If ideas in general are to be explained from practice, then the distorted or inverted ideas of German philosophers should also be referred to material practice. The importance of practice for the production of ideas derives from the more basic assumption that social reality itself should be conceived as practice.<sup>3</sup>

In Larrain's view, ideas are not only directly conditioned by social reality but are also mediated by practices. Through those practices, ideas can affect social reality and vice versa. Even if those ideas have a material basis, this does not mean that ideas, in general, are mere reflections of their material basis. On the contrary, people can use ideas to transform their outer world in order to sustain themselves and meet their further needs.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, ideas can be either passive reflections of social reality or active devices used to transform the outer world.

Social institutions, in Larrain's interpretation, also play a significant role in shaping ideology. For him, social institutions are created by people but become independent of them, and sometimes those institutions themselves become hostile to people.<sup>5</sup> This hostility between people and organisations created by them is a symptom of social contradiction.<sup>6</sup> For people to endure this alienating situation, there must be a particular form of the idea that serves this peculiar situation. For Larrain, this is the origin and function of ideology. He observes that by 'attempting to solve in consciousness contradictions which are not overcome in practice, ideology necessarily negates and conceals them'.<sup>7</sup>

By concealing social contradictions, ideology serves the interest of the ruling class because ideology legitimates the class structure and, in general, the whole social structure, thus it becomes indispensable for their reproduction. For this reason, it necessarily serves the interests of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 20.

<sup>5</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, pp. 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> There is a difference between a logical contradiction and a dialectic contradiction which is frequently used by Marx and Engels as a social contradiction. Marx and Engels used the term contradiction to describe the state of two contradictory things existing in the same place, such as a propertied class and an exploited class existing in the same society. The conflict between these two classes will lead to the transformation of an existing society into a new type of society. See Lawrence Crocker, 'Marx's Use of Contradiction', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 40.4 (1980), 558 (p. 588) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2106848>>; Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Poverty of Philosophy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, Collected Works, 6 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), p. 168.

<sup>7</sup> Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p. 46.

dominant class.<sup>8</sup> The function of ideology is to support and legitimise the existing social relations and institutions and reproduce them. Larrain interprets Marx's conception of ideology in a negative sense because ideological ideas need to be exposed and their support of the ruling class needs to be criticised.<sup>9</sup>

For Larrain, ideology is not an illusion, and it is not merely false consciousness or a distorted representation of social reality. He can avoid the problem of illusion by emphasising the way that practice shapes the social environment of human beings. To sustain his negative interpretation of Marx and Engels' concept of ideology, he must deal with the problem of the ideological superstructure which he identifies as a structure of all-encompassing ideas. If an ideological idea is an idea which has the specific function of concealing social contradictions, then an ideological superstructure must be a structure of those ideas for a given society. This obvious contradiction prompts Larrain to suggest using the term "ideational superstructure" for a structure that combines all forms of ideas in a particular society.<sup>10</sup>

Larrain claims that not all false representations are ideological, and that only those false representations that conceal social contradictions are ideological ideas. Thus, one cannot identify ideological ideas in terms of whether they are true or false representations of social reality but must identify the function of those ideas and their relation to social structures. Moreover, ideological ideas can lose their status if class situations change and there are different social contradictions to conceal. For example, in the European medieval ages, some Christian teachings on the topic of the relationship between the King, the Church, and their subjects, operated as ideological ideas. When European medieval society transformed to European modern capitalist society, some of those teachings lost their status as ideological ideas.<sup>11</sup> The idea of divine rule cannot be used in modern Western societies to justify rule and conceal the contradictions within that society as it did in the European medieval ages. In this sense, if the material conditions and class situations change, then ideological ideas must also change. Larrain explains that such ideological ideas develop in a field of 'limited practice'.<sup>12</sup> As long as practice in a given society has limited power to support all the needs

---

<sup>8</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 47.

<sup>9</sup> See Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 42; Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, p. 46.

<sup>10</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 172.

<sup>11</sup> Other parts of Christianity do survive and even incorporate the transformation of European Medieval societies into capitalist societies such as ideas of Protestant Ethics, see Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, Routledge Classics (London; New York: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>12</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 26.

of its members, then that society requires a particular form of ideas to convince its members to accept the way that society produces and unequally distributes goods and products. Ideological ideas cannot be completely refuted by combating them with other ideas but only by transforming the conditions on which they are based so that they have nothing to conceal.<sup>13</sup>

GA Cohen interprets Marx's concept of ideology quite differently when compared to Larrain. For Cohen, ideology is a set of ideas and he also use the science-ideology dichotomy by defining ideology as non-scientific idea.<sup>14</sup> He even points out that 'science is not ideology, since it is a defining property of ideology that it is unscientific'.<sup>15</sup> Neither science nor ideology, as sets of ideas, are superstructures of a given society. For Cohen, superstructures of a given society consist of 'legal, political, religious, and other non-economic *institutions*.' Institutions, as places where human beings organise themselves for one or several purposes and require certain types of behaviours, can include universities<sup>16</sup> as places that transmit and produce knowledge. This reading is clearly different from Larrain's idea of an ideational superstructure, and in this sense, for Cohen, there is no such thing as ideological superstructure.

Cohen also hints at the functions of ideology when he observes that historical works are not just 'ideological instruments whose only value is that they help to sustain class hegemony.'<sup>17</sup> He also refers several times to bourgeois ideology<sup>18</sup> but never mentions proletariat or working class ideology.<sup>19</sup> What we learn from Cohen is that:

1. Ideology is a set of idea or forms of consciousness<sup>20</sup>
2. Ideology is not science
3. Ideology is not an institution and cannot be an ideological superstructure
4. Ideology can function to maintain class hegemony in a given society.

Ideology in this sense is obviously interpreted negatively as a set of ideas that can help a particular class maintain or sustain the class rule in a given society.

---

<sup>13</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Princeton Paperbacks, 7. print., 1. expanded ed (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Cohen, p. 46.

<sup>16</sup> Cohen, p. 45.

<sup>17</sup> Cohen, p. 205.

<sup>18</sup> Cohen, pp. 125, 202, 241, 242, 245, 321.

<sup>19</sup> At least not in the famous work of *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*.

<sup>20</sup> Cohen, p. 376.

Another interpretation that relies on the role of social structures in shaping ideas and making them ideological comes from Terry Eagleton. Eagleton presents at least 17 definitions of ideology<sup>21</sup> but the definitions that relate to Marxism can be divided into two streams. The first is based on an epistemological conception of ideology and the second is based on a sociological conception of ideology. The epistemological stream relies on perceptions of truth and falseness and human learning; the sociological stream is based on the socio-political function of ideology in social life without regard to the distorting or twisting representation of ideology in social reality.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Eagleton shows that the epistemological conception of ideology is abandoned by several Marxist scholars.<sup>23</sup> Ideology for Eagleton is similar to literature in several aspects. For example, no one will judge the truth or falseness of the story of Jack and Jane who travelled to Alaska and went missing due to an Alien invasion. The point is that the content and the logical structure of the story should be more or less coherent, regardless of whether it is twisted or oversimplified or not.<sup>24</sup> Eagleton also presents six definitions of ideology ranging from the neutral epistemological definitions that are free from notions of truth and falseness to the narrower, pejorative sense of the definition. He starts from the idea of culture and progresses to worldview, ideas that legitimise the interest of social groups, ruling ideas, ruling ideas which are distorted, and finally to ideas that are distorted but do not originate from the ruling class but from the social structure itself. For the last definition, Eagleton refers to Marx's theory of fetishism of commodities.

This last definition (fetishism of commodities) is clearly a negative one in which the function of ideology is to make members of an unjust society 'believe that these injustices are *en route* to being amended, or that they are counterbalanced by greater benefits, or that they are inevitable, or that they are not really injustice at all'.<sup>25</sup> In this sense, the purpose of ideology is not to directly serve and protect the interest of the ruling class but to protect and maintain existing social structures which, of course, benefit the ruling class, which maintains the system of property and power in that society.

Bhikhu Parekh interprets Marx's conception of ideology by stating that Marx uses the term

---

<sup>21</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 1-2.

<sup>22</sup> Eagleton, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Eagleton, p. 11.

<sup>24</sup> Eagleton, pp. 23-24.

<sup>25</sup> Eagleton, p. 27, emphasis in the original.

in two senses: idealistic and apologetic.<sup>26</sup> In the first sense, an ideology presupposes a dualism of matter and spirit. Ideology is idealistic in the sense that the spirit or human consciousness is 'autonomous, free, self-determining, independent, inhabiting a realm of its own, guided and governed by its own principles and capable of being studied in its own terms'.<sup>27</sup> Matter, or material reality, becomes a subsidiary and is governed by the spirit. Ideology in this idealistic sense has dominated 'traditional ontology, epistemology, methodology, ethics, political theory, historiography, etc., and given rise to misleading theories'.<sup>28</sup> In the second sense, ideas human beings have about their nature and themselves cause them to accept the conditions in which they find themselves. Ideology in this second sense is apologetic because it can be used as an excuse or apology for human suffering and to relieve the pain of their social circumstances without changing them.

Parekh's conception of ideology in the idealistic sense is clearly at the epistemological level because it relates to how one perceives surrounding realities. Parekh may not use the term 'false consciousness' directly in his interpretation of Marx's concept of ideology, but he nevertheless still understands it in the negative sense, since ideologies distort social reality. The distortion of social reality occurs when one neglects the material basis of social reality and emphasises only the role played by ideas. Then social reality is governed solely by ideas without any interaction between ideas and their material basis.

On the other hand, the apologetic sense of ideology has the specific function of rationalising the social structures of the ruling class and making them acceptable by universalising or representing them as authentic and just structures for human beings.<sup>29</sup> For Parekh, idealistic ideas are the core of the rationalisation of ruling class social structures when they state that those social structures are the products of universal authentic ideas that are just and beneficial to human society. In this sense, ideological ideas are idealistic in their nature and apologetic in their function. Once the masses adopt these ideas, they have a reason to tolerate any difficulties they encounter in their lives.

Alex Callinicos interprets Marx's concept of Ideology as 'system of ideas'<sup>30</sup> when he

---

<sup>26</sup> Parekh, p. 1. Bhikhu C Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> Parekh, pp. 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Parekh, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Parekh, pp. 9-10.

<sup>30</sup> Alex Callinicos, *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (London: Bookmarks, 2004), p. 43.

describes the ideology that dominated Europe in Medieval times. He also associates the term ideology with social classes, such as feudal ideology,<sup>31</sup> ideological supremacy of the bourgeoisie in 17<sup>th</sup> Century England,<sup>32</sup> ruling ideology.<sup>33</sup> Sometimes he associates the term with social beliefs, such as sexist ideology or racist ideology.<sup>34</sup> The term is obviously more neutral when he quotes Marx's *Preface 1859* and suggests that 'ideologies—the systematic beliefs which people have about the world—can only be understood from the standpoint of their role in the class struggle.'<sup>35</sup> Callinicos also states that, in *Capital*, Marx presents the idea that ideology systematically distorts human beings' perceptions of the social reality around them.

Goran Therborn uses the term of ideology in the same neutral sense as Callinicos, suggesting that it 'will not necessarily imply any particular content (falseness, misrecognition, imaginary as opposed to real character), nor will it assume any necessary degree of elaboration and coherence.'<sup>36</sup> The falseness or misrecognition is not a property of being ideology itself but by the content of the ideology. In this sense, some ideologies misrepresent social reality, but others do not. Ideology operates by giving human beings meaning for their actions and ideological ideas make human beings actors.<sup>37</sup> For Therborn, Marx's conception of ideology can be categorised in two ways. The first is the same as Therborn's own conception of ideology: ideology gives meaning to human beings' actions and makes them actors.<sup>38</sup> The second relates to the difference between class and non-class ideology.<sup>39</sup> In this sense, Marx's conception of ideology relates to the notion of false consciousness. Ideology can be associated with either the bourgeois or the proletarian class; however, if ideology is false consciousness, it is not because of its association with any class but because it is contrary to science.<sup>40</sup>

All of the above scholars interpret Marx's conception of ideology in terms of the function of ideology at a society level. The differences between them rest on three points that can be found in Marx and Engels' works that will be shown later in this chapter.

---

<sup>31</sup> Callinicos, p. 45.

<sup>32</sup> Callinicos, p. 45.

<sup>33</sup> Callinicos, p. 45.

<sup>34</sup> Callinicos, p. 79.

<sup>35</sup> Callinicos, p. 97.

<sup>36</sup> Göran Therborn, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: NLB, 1980), p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Therborn, p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> Therborn, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> Therborn, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Therborn, p. 4.

All of the scholars who interpret Marx's conception of ideology in the negative sense, such as Larrain, Eagleton and Parekh, do directly use the term ideology as false consciousness. Ideology might be false, but falseness does not make all ideas ideological. All of these authors draw attention to the specific function that makes an idea ideological, such as concealing social contradictions for Larrain, and rationalisation to accept social order for Eagleton and Parekh. However, for the scholars who interpret the concept in the neutral sense, ideologies can be false consciousness or distorted depending on the content of those ideologies.

The differences between those scholars are their interpretations of the idea that makes men realise their tasks and fight it out (I will call this the revolutionary idea). For Larrain, not all ideology is false consciousness but only some ideologies are. Only an idea that functions to conceal social contradictions is ideological. Ideology as an idea that conceals social contradictions cannot be compatible with ideas that make human beings realise their tasks and fight it out. For Larrain, ideology can only be an ideology that helps the ruling class maintain its rule over all members of a given society. There can be a proletarian ideology that helps the proletariat to struggle against the current ruling class. Moreover, Larrain's approach is not compatible with the notion of an ideological superstructure. If Ideological ideas function to conceal social contradictions, and an ideological superstructure is the structure of a particular type of idea, then an ideological superstructure must be a structure of ideas that conceal social contradictions. Thus, this ideological superstructure must be a structure of definite forms—not all forms—of social consciousness.<sup>41</sup> However, if Larrain is to maintain the idea of a superstructure that includes all ideas in a given society, then he has to rename that superstructure the 'ideational superstructure'. With the new name and new content, that new superstructure can be a structure of all ideas in a given society. But how does Larrain cope when Marx uses the term 'ideological superstructure' in *The German Ideology*<sup>42</sup> or even the term 'idealistic superstructure'?<sup>43</sup> If Marx uses the term 'idealistic superstructure' to depict the structure of a specific type of idea, then this ideological superstructure is not a superstructure of all ideas but only a structure of a particular set of ideas.

In the case of Cohen, he shifts the notion of ideology to a set of ideas which are not scientific. It is not clear whether that ideology is false consciousness or not, but the notion that the

---

<sup>41</sup> See Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix, p. 263.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The German Ideology', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v, p. 373.

<sup>43</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 89.

function of ideology is to help the ruling class maintain its rule, leaves no room for a subordinated class ideology. However, this understanding of the function of ideology contradicts the idea of an ideology that can help human beings understand their tasks and their role in the political struggle against the ruling class. This is similar to Eagleton's interpretation. The function of ideology is not just to sustain the class rule of a given society but the society itself, even if that society exploits some particular classes for the sake of the ruling class. Eagleton's interpretation is still negative or pejorative; however, it is incompatible with the revolutionary idea that can help a particular class to struggle against the class rule and change society as a whole.

There are four points that should be noted from the above scholars' interpretations. The first concerns the relationship between ideology, false consciousness and science. Therborn points out that ideology is false consciousness because it is contrary to science. Cohen shares the same view but does not explicitly state the relationship between false consciousness and ideology. The second point concerns the problem of ideological superstructure. It could be asked whether ideology is just a set of ideas as Cohen suggests or whether it should be perceived as a superstructure (as an ideological superstructure or as Larrain's ideational superstructure). Third, ideology can be a revolutionary idea that leads people to make revolution or just an idea that serves to maintain the current social structures that mostly benefit the current ruling class. The fourth point concerns the relation between class and ideology. Is there a proletarian ideology as well as a bourgeois ideology?

This chapter aims to investigate the development of the conception of ideology to find the traces of those four points originating from Marx and Engels' works and show how Marx and Engels formulate their conception in relation to those four points.

Marx never gives a dictionary definition of the term 'ideology', but his meaning can be identified through the contexts of his words. His conceptions of ideology can be divided into four groups. First, he uses the term ideology to refer to a group of ideas presenting a false consciousness or distorted idea. Second, the term is used to refer to the ruling ideas or ideas of the ruling class. Third, it is used to refer to a form of the ideological superstructure. And lastly, the term ideology is used to refer to ideas that people use to inform revolutionary action. Ideology as a particular form of consciousness is an aspect of Marx and Engels' conception of consciousness. This chapter, therefore, addresses Marx and Engels' conceptions of consciousness in general and then addresses their conception of ideology in particular.

## Marx and Engels' Conception of Consciousness

For Marx and Engels, ideas and consciousness are not independent and cannot exist without the activities of people in the material world, where people transform their environment which simultaneously affects their thoughts and consciousness. The process of activity between human beings and their material environment impacts on their mental activities as follows:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men at this stage still appears as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc. – real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms.<sup>44</sup>

Marx reiterates his conception again in the 1859 *Preface* where he states that the 'mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of people that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness'.<sup>45</sup>

By proposing their theory of the formation of ideas, Marx and Engels suggest that ideas are conditioned by the circumstances or the material activities of people. Ideas in various fields such as politics, laws, morality and even metaphysics must be an expression of the interaction between people and their material surroundings (or in Marx's terms, 'the material intercourse of people'). People create or produce their tools or any means for satisfying their needs. Those tools or means are the interactions between their ideas, their will and their materials, and can enable them to create and transform their environment. For example, when tool smiths create axes to cut something, they need materials such as wood, iron and rubber etc. and an idea or plan to make them. This kind of creation or making is the manifestation of the unity between people's will, ideas and material conditions. All ideas are related to those activities.

This line of reasoning also applies to scientific ideas. If they are part of social consciousness, then they must be conditioned by the material activities of people, since 'where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this 'pure' natural science is

---

<sup>44</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The German Ideology', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v, p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix, p. 263.

provided with an aim, as with its material, only through trade and industry, through the sensuous activity of people'.<sup>46</sup>

The general forms of idea or social consciousness are conditioned by their material circumstances and the activities of people; no ideas exist by themselves. But Marx and Engels' theory of idea formulation does not mean that people just reflect on their circumstance and merely act according to those reflections:

Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species-being. Or it is only because he is a species-being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him. Only because of that is his activity free activity.<sup>47</sup>

For this reason, ideas are dependent, not independent, and are products of human activity. Ideas are not the primary drivers of history. Ideas relate to human activities when people consciously transform their circumstance for themselves. This line of argument is a prelude to Marx and Engels' *The German Ideology* in which they critique the Hegelian notion that particular forms of idea or consciousness are independent of their producers and become the driving cause of history.

## False Consciousness

One of the best-known aspects of the Marxist conception of ideology is the idea of false consciousness. As has already been shown in the introduction chapter. Marx never uses the term 'false consciousness', although some of his words can be understood to refer to a form of false consciousness. The term 'false consciousness' is used in a way that is about more than just misperceiving material reality. Their words show that while some ideas are misrepresented, not all misrepresented ideas are ideological. One of the particular forms of ideology in false consciousness sense is idealism which is an abstract idea which is not attached to perceptual experience of the material world.

Even before Marx and Engels began collaborating on their project, *The German Ideology*, Marx had already begun to critique particular forms of ideas. This can be seen in some of his early writing, for example, in his use of words like 'inverted' or 'illusion' to criticise religion as follows:

---

<sup>46</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-44*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), III, p. 276.

But man is no abstract being encamped outside the world. Man is *the world of man* – state, society. This state and this society produce religion, an *inverted world-consciousness*, because they are an *inverted world*. Religion is the general theory of that world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritualistic point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its universal basis of consolation and justification.<sup>48</sup>

And his use of the word 'illusion' in the following:

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in embryo the criticism of that vale of tears, the halo of which is religion.<sup>49</sup>

Marx states that, if religion is an inverted concept, because the social world constituting it is also inverted, then any idea that depends on material activities within such a society for its emergence must necessarily also take an inverted form. These inversions need illusions, such as religion and other ideas that reflect inversions in the social world. This line of argument is restated again in *The German Ideology* in which Marx and Engels criticise ideological ideas.

While Marx and Engels criticise German Idealism, they introduce their theory of ideas and consciousness formation as discussed above. Ideological ideas, like all social products, are conditioned by material activities. Marx and Engels elaborate the connection between ideological ideas and their circumstances by using words such as 'camera obscura' and 'inversion' as follows:

Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances 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.<sup>50</sup>

This inversion expresses the illusion that social reality is conditioned by ideas, not by human material activities. Ideas become the cause not the result of interactions between human beings and their material surroundings within society. If social reality is inversely presented, then the social consciousness of human beings will be inverted like an image produced by a camera. Marx and Engels describe subdivisions within the ruling class which act upon ruling class ideas, and as a result, these ideas appear to be the driving force of their conduct and the effect of their material conditions on their decisions is disregarded:

---

<sup>48</sup> Karl Marx, 'Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-1844*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), III, p. 175 (emphasis in original).

<sup>49</sup> Marx, 'Introduction to Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law', III, p. 176 (emphasis in original).

<sup>50</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 36 (emphasis in original).

In consciousness — in jurisprudence, politics, etc. — relations become concepts; since they do not go beyond these relations, the concepts of the relations also become fixed concepts in their mind. The judge, for example, applies the code, he therefore regards legislation as the real, active driving force.<sup>51</sup>

This passage clearly expresses the point that within a class, the judge assumes law and regulation as real material drive cause not just their own interpretation of that regulation. Marx and Engels include amongst these occupations in jurisprudence and politics or careers like those of clerics, jurists, politicians, moralists<sup>52</sup>, theorists, philosophers<sup>53</sup>, lawyers and even soldiers<sup>54</sup>. These people carry out their occupations in the belief that the ideas that inform their practice are based on reality. For example, when a judge thinks about the law as a ‘true’ concept and a driving force of society, then this is an ideological idea.<sup>55</sup>

This understanding can also be found in very early pages of *The German Ideology* when Marx and Engels begin their project of critiquing ideology in general and German ideology in particular. They start by stating that:

There is no specific difference between German idealism and the ideology of all the other nations. The latter too regards the world as dominated by ideas, ideas and concepts as the determining principles, and certain notions as the mystery of the material world accessible to the philosophers.<sup>56</sup>

The ideas and concepts in the tradition of German idealism and ideology in all other nations share the view that ideas are independent and function as driving forces in history.

One can find the same conception of ideas as the determining forces of history in various other fields of human thought, not only in political, juridical and philosophical fields but in the field of economics also, as Marx states in the *Grundrisse*:

...the exchange of exchange values is the real productive basis of all *equality* and *freedom*. As pure ideas, equality and freedom are merely idealised expression of this exchange; developed in juridical, political and social relations, they are merely this basis at a higher level.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 92 (emphasis in original).

<sup>52</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 92.

<sup>53</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 62.

<sup>54</sup> Karl Marx, ‘Capital: A Croque of Political Economy Volume 1’, in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. 1*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), xxxv, p. 449.

<sup>55</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 92.

<sup>56</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 24.

<sup>57</sup> Karl Marx, ‘Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft of 1857-58) [First Instalment]’, in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (Lon: Lawrence & Wishart, 1986), xxviii, p. 176 (emphasis in original).

In the field of economics, the concepts of freedom and equality are based on the concept of exchange. If one accepts the ideas of equality and freedom in their pure form without taking into account the differences in the capacity of purchasers in an existing society, then those ideas are ideological. Presented in an idealised way, they also share common properties with ideological ideas in other social relations. For example, religion is an ideological idea because it 'is from the outset consciousness of the transcendental arising from *actually existing forces*'.<sup>58</sup> The existing forces or the productive forces which are the main driving forces of social change in history are secondary to that transcendental idea. In this context, the transcendental is without doubt God, and this transcendental being seems to be the driving force of history in several religions.

From Marx and Engels' points of view, this view must be changed by associating those ideas with their real foundation—the material world of production. They observe that:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. That is to say, not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but setting out from real, and active men, and on the basis of their real life-process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises.<sup>59</sup>

By grounding those ideas and concepts in the material activities of people, those forms of consciousness lose their independence and become historical ideas and concepts:

Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the form of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their actual world, also their thinking and the products of their thinking. It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.<sup>60</sup>

Marx and Engels suggest changing our understanding of the relationship between the idea and the world, from the notion that ideas govern the world to the notion that ideas are a result of interactions between human beings' actions and their world. In this sense, Marx and Engels insist on returning the inverted presentation of false consciousness to its original form.

In summary, Marx and Engels' conception of false consciousness is used in a derogative or negative sense. Ideological ideas are not desirable and must be criticised because these ideas detach themselves from the material basis of society and take the form of being 'independent',

---

<sup>58</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 93.

<sup>59</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 36.

<sup>60</sup> Marx and Engels, v, pp. 36–37.

‘true’ and ‘ahistorical’, and falsely appear to be the driving force of society and history. Ideological ideas can be theorised or conceptualised in various fields of human activity such as economics, philosophy, religion, politics, and jurisprudence. When ideas and conceptions take those forms, they will invert and distort perceptions of social reality. This is the reason why Marx and Engels use the term *camera obscura*. This conception of false consciousness is linked to the following conception of ideology as the ruling ideas of the ruling class.

## Ruling Ideas

Marx's conception of ruling ideas is expressed in the famous passage in *The Communist Manifesto*: 'The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class.'<sup>61</sup> The term ‘ruling ideas’ is clearly explained in *The German Ideology* as follows:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, consequently, also controls the means of mental production, so that the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relations, the dominant material relations grasped as ideas; hence of the relations which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.<sup>62</sup>

Other classes are subjugated by the ruling class because they lack means of mental production equal to those of the ruling class. The dominated classes typically can only adopt particular ideas initiated by the ruling class. Ruling ideas are not only ideas generated by the ruling class or ideas that serve the interests of that class, but they are ideas that establish that class as the 'ruling' one. The concept of ruling ideas is linked with the concept of false consciousness by the fact that the ruling ideas must be seen as eternal law:

The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the extent and compass of an historical epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in its whole range, hence among other things rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age: thus, their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch. For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy, and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an “eternal law.”<sup>63</sup>

In a capitalist society, if ideas were accurately represented to material reality, they would present

<sup>61</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, ‘Manifesto of the Communist Party’, in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), vi, p. 503.

<sup>62</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 59 (emphasis in original).

<sup>63</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 59.

or depict the oppressed classes' situation. These depictions would enable the dominated classes to understand their situation, and this would undermine the power and status of the ruling class. For this reason, ruling ideas are given the form of abstract ideas by their producers. The producers of ideas are ideologists who generate abstract ideas and concepts which come to be seen as the core ideas that govern the society of those ideologists. Core ideas or in Marx's term 'ruling ideas' can be different in different epochs and different societies; however, these ideas must be presented by ideologists of their society as 'eternal, unchanged' or even 'universal' truths in order to claim the support of the masses. Ideas, such as the separation of powers or government by consent, become the goals and boundaries of political struggles. In a given society, the hardship of the lives of the subordinated classes results from the government failing to operate according to those ideas. Thus, the struggle of any class is not to change the system of power within the society but to make them function according to those ideas as ideal goals for human beings. Such ruling ideas, when they are widely accepted, turn the goal of the political struggles of the subordinated classes into a struggle for reforms within the existing system of power. With these abstract ideas, the ruling class can maintain its power. By presenting their ideas as eternal laws, there is no question about whose interests those ideas serve or about the system of power that those ideas support, because they appear to be so-called self-evident values for all human beings, such as the right to liberty, the right to pursue happiness, etc.

Marx and Engels describe the relations between ruling ideas, philosophers (or ideologists), ideology, and the system of domination as follows:

From the ideological standpoint, certain personal relationships of dependence... appears in the consciousness of individuals themselves to be the rule of ideas, and the belief in the eternal validity of these ideas, i.e., of those relationships of dependence, is OF COURSE in every way reinforced, sustained, drummed into people by the ruling classes.<sup>64</sup>

This passage clearly declares that those responsible for supporting class rule are ideologists and when the majority of people have no alternative way of understanding their society, they necessarily adopt the view that society is governed by eternal law. In this passage, Marx and Engels explain that the ruling ideas operate to prolong and maintain the system of domination of the ruling class.

The ruling ideas can vary from time to time, depending on the content and development of

---

<sup>64</sup> Marx, xxviii, p. 101 (emphasis in original).

the relations of production which are in turn conditioned by developments in the productive forces of society. Marx and Engels describe the ruling ideas of different ages as follows:

When the ancient world was in its last throes, the ancient religions were overcome by Christianity. When Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas, feudal society fought its death battle with the then revolutionary bourgeoisie. The ideas of religious liberty and freedom of conscience merely gave expression to the sway of free competition within the domain of knowledge.<sup>65</sup>

Christianity, which was the source of legitimacy for lords, kings and emperors in the middle ages, crumbled when it encountered the ideas of freedom of religion, conscience and free competition with the rise of the *bourgeoisie*. Different ruling ideas in different ages support and maintain the supremacy of the different groups and classes.

While maintaining this supremacy over classes or groups, the ruling class must be seen to be working not only for its benefit and interests but for those of other groups and classes as well. The ruling ideas not only take the form of eternal law; they also appear as the 'state'. The state, which is created by the ruling class, presents itself as being for the benefit of all members. However, those benefits and interests only appear to be common to all; they are in fact not aggregate individual interests. Rather, they tend to be abstract and illusionary interests that serve existing class relations.<sup>66</sup>

For each new class which puts itself in the place of one ruling before it, is compelled, merely in order to carry through its aim, to represent its interest as the common interest of all the members of society, that is, expressed in ideal form: it has to give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones<sup>67</sup>

The common or general interest for Marx and Engels is an illusion. Rule of the ruling class is not in the interest of everybody; the common interest is not for anyone but the ruling class:

The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class. It can do this because, to start with, its interest really is more connected with the common interest of all other non-ruling classes, because under the pressure of hitherto existing conditions its interest has not yet been able to develop as the particular interest of a particular class. Its victory, therefore, benefits also many individuals of the other classes which are not winning a dominant position, but only insofar as it now puts these individuals in a position to raise themselves into the ruling class.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>65</sup> Marx and Engels, VI, p. 503.

<sup>66</sup> Marx and Engels, V, p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> Marx and Engels, V, p. 60.

<sup>68</sup> Marx and Engels, V, pp. 60-61.

When the development of the productive forces creates more and more differences between the new ruling class and its allies, these differences transform the initial common genuine interest into an illusion. But the new ruling class that prefers to perpetuate its interest must continuously present this interest as a genuine common interest that should be defended.<sup>69</sup> Marx and Engels describe this illusion and its ability to unify people as 'the existence of any political or religious nonsense which would especially hold people together'.<sup>70</sup> By maintaining their ruling status through these illusions (ideas of the state and religion), the ruling class unifies people and subjugates them under its class rule.

Marx gives an example of ruling ideas when he denounces an article in a French newspaper that supports the new 'republican' government after the 1848 revolution in France:

The *Réforme* knows no better way of changing and abolishing these contradictions than to disregard their real basis, that is, these very material conditions, and to withdraw into the hazy blue heaven of republican ideology, in other words, into the poetic February period, from which it was violently ejected by the June events.<sup>71</sup>

Marx considers that the ideas of republicanism after the 1848 revolution were mere 'illusions of the republicans who cling to the traditions of 1793'.<sup>72</sup> In 1793, four years after the French revolution, there were two political documents representing those traditions, one being the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen* of 1793 and the other being the *French Constitution* of 1793 that formed the foundation for the republican government. These illusory ideas serve as an ideology when they support an existing ruling class as they did in the case of the French revolution. They supported and gave rise to the *bourgeoisie* as the ruling class.

It should be noted that in particular situations, when the existing relations of production and the productive forces are in sharp conflict, ruling class interests cannot be concealed and are clearly visible:

Finally, in times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the progress of dissolution going on within the ruling class, in fact within the whole range of old society, assumes such a violent, glaring character, that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands. Just as, therefore, at an earlier period, a section of the nobility went over to the bourgeoisie, so now a portion of the bourgeoisie goes over to the proletariat, and in particular, a portion of the bourgeois ideologists, who have

---

<sup>69</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 47.

<sup>70</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 43.

<sup>71</sup> Karl Marx, 'The Paris *Réforme* on the Situation in France', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1848*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1977), VII, p. 495 (emphasis in original).

<sup>72</sup> Marx, VII, p. 493.

raised themselves to the level of comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole.<sup>73</sup>

Some bourgeois ideologists turn against their class and support the new revolutionary class. Marx and Engels themselves might have been former ideologists of the bourgeois ruling class, who switched sides and supported the proletariat, once they acquired a better understanding of capitalist society.

In this conception of ideology, the ruling ideas are without a doubt negative. Ideological ideas in this sense are ideas that support class rule. Marx and Engels wrote at length in *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto* to expose the nature, content, mechanisms and agents of the ruling ideas. These ruling ideas are always presented in an abstract fashion and are used to convince the other members of society to accept them as being in their interest. For example, when the ruling class or ideologists of that class in capitalist society present the concept of justice in civil law, they propose the equal treatment of anyone under the same law, which arguably benefits everyone; however, they disregard the inequality that exists within a system of property in which the capitalist class benefits the most.

These first two conceptions of ideology both have negative meanings: the first conception refers to abstract and distorted ideas; the second conception refers to the social function of sustaining class rule in a class society. The social function of ideology is to subjugate the masses to the ruling class, and this subjugation is accomplished by the intellectuals, who are the ideologists or producers of ideas. This abstract and pseudo general interest is a manifestation of the false consciousness described above.

The next two conceptions of ideology are not explicit in Marx and Engels' writings, but they are nevertheless implicit. These are the ideological superstructure and ideas that make people act to resolve their conflicts.

## The Ideological Superstructure

Compared to the first two conceptions, the conception of the ideological superstructure is more problematic because Marx and Engels themselves, and other Marxists after them, use the term in different ways. The difference between them rests on the understanding that a

---

<sup>73</sup> Marx and Engels, vi, p. 494.

superstructure represents a form of social consciousness. For some, this refers to a general form while for others, it refers to specific forms of social consciousness.

To explain this concept and why it is problematic, this section begins with Marx's writings, continues by discussing the interpretations of some subsequent Marxists who use this term, and concludes by describing Marx and Engels' understanding of this concept.

The relation between ideology and the superstructure is associated with the base-superstructure metaphor. This metaphor is used by Marx to explain the relations between the economic conditions and other structures in any given society. These relations can be inferred from the famous passage of the 1859 *Preface* as follows:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond *definite forms of social consciousness*.<sup>74</sup>

This passage depicts the relationship between the forces of production, social relations, the economic structure, the legal-political superstructures of society, and the forms of social consciousness which correspond to it. The forces of production determine the social relations of people and these social relations form the structure of society. This structure can be divided into two parts: the economic base which serves as the foundation of society, and two superstructures, one being the legal-political superstructure and the other being a set of different forms of social consciousness.

The question is, how does the structure of social consciousness connect with ideology? One can find the details and content of these definite forms of social consciousness in *the Eighteenth Brumaire*, as follows:

Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of different and distinctly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual, to whom they are transmitted through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point of his activity.<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>74</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263 (emphasis added).

<sup>75</sup> Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1851-53*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1979), xi, p. 128.

This superstructure comprises forms of social consciousness—sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and even views of life—and all of them are based on social relations and their material foundations. This superstructure transmits the past and traditions to individuals and gives meaning to their activities. It represents general forms of social consciousness which includes any ideas of that particular age or society. However, Marx does not attribute the term ‘ideological superstructure’ to it, but merely says that there is a superstructure that includes various forms of social consciousness.

The combination of the words ‘ideology’ and ‘superstructure’ to form the term ‘ideological superstructure’ is based on the following famous sentence from the 1859 *Preface*. This sentence is extremely important because this single sentence illustrates two conceptions of Marx's ideology, one being the ideological superstructure and the other being the ideas that make people realise their situations. The sentence reads:

In considering such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic, in short, *ideological*, forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.<sup>76</sup>

In this passage, Marx distinguishes between the economic conditions of production and the various forms of ideological ideas. If there is an ideological superstructure that represents definite forms of social consciousness, then that superstructure can comprise the various forms of consciousness, e.g., the legal, political, religious, artistic, philosophical and also it can include sentiments, illusion, modes of thought and even views of life.

Some Marxist authors interpret the content of this superstructure as general ideas or general forms of social consciousness whether they use the term ‘ideological superstructure’ or not. For example, when Kautsky refers to the ideological superstructure, he includes science and religion<sup>77</sup>, and Jorge Larraín interprets the term in the sense of an ‘all-encompassing level of consciousness’.<sup>78</sup> The notion of an all-encompassing level of consciousness includes all ideas in a specific age of society.

---

<sup>76</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263 (emphasis added).

<sup>77</sup> Karl Kautsky, *Thomas More and His Utopia*, trans. by H.J. Stenning (New York: Russell & Russell, 1959), p. 229.

<sup>78</sup> Jorge Larraín, *Marxism and Ideology*, Contemporary Social Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983), p. 172 Larraín changes the phrase from ‘ideological superstructure’ to ‘ideational superstructure.’

According to both Kautsky and Larrain, an ideological superstructure can include all forms of social consciousness, even those ideas that are in conflict with each other. For example, the ideological superstructure of a given capitalist society can comprise Marxism that presents the interest of the working class, or the idea of free trade that supports the interest of the ruling class, and even the egalitarian ideas of the peasant class that originate from the former type of society. The concept of the ideological superstructure dominates interpretations of base-superstructure relations from Lenin onwards, as will be shown in the next chapter.

It should be borne in mind that Marx never explicitly uses the term 'ideological superstructure' in the 1859 *Preface* and, when he does use the term, it is not in the sense of an all-encompassing idea as that described above. The term 'ideological superstructure' first appeared in *The German Ideology*. *The German Ideology* was never acknowledged by other Marxist thinkers until Bernstein published some parts of it in 1903-1904.<sup>79</sup> The term was used for the first time in the following passage:

The great revolution of society brought about by competition, which resolved the relations of the bourgeois to one another and to the proletarians into purely monetary relations, and converted all the above-named "sanctified goods" into articles of trade, and which destroyed for the proletarians all naturally derived and traditional relations, e.g., family and political relations, together with their entire *ideological superstructure*...<sup>80</sup>

In this passage, Marx and Engels claim that the transformation of society into a new form that emphasises competition and changes relations between human beings into monetary relations, destroys any social relations that fetter competition, e.g., family, political relations and even the *entire* 'ideological superstructure. Authors who insist on the idea of the structure of all-encompassing ideas, must address the question, how can such a structure be destroyed? At least from Marx and Engels' view, an entire ideological superstructure can be destroyed once it obstructs the further development of the relations of production within that given society.

The idea that an ideological superstructure can be destroyed by trading competition has parallels with Marx's theory of history which suggests that the material activities of people determine their mental activities. If this superstructure represents all-encompassing ideas and general forms of social consciousness, then how it can be destroyed by trading competition? The transformation of circumstances can modify and change the grounds and foundations of ideas, and

---

<sup>79</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 587, note 7.

<sup>80</sup> Marx and Engels, v, pp. 372-73 (emphasis added).

yet numerous ideas from the past, or forms of social consciousness of an outdated society, are still alive. Marx and Engels state in *The Communist Manifesto* that several religious, moral, philosophical, and juridical ideas have been modified in the course of historical development. But religion, morality, philosophy, political science, and law, constantly survived this change.<sup>81</sup> Only some ideas can be destroyed when the circumstances are changed. This destroyable superstructure must, therefore, represent only particular forms of ideas, not all-inclusive ideas or general forms of social consciousness. In other words, a superstructure that can be destroyed is a superstructure of a particular class that uses and gets benefit from that superstructure when the circumstances change, and the superstructure of that class cannot be maintained and is eventually destroyed.

It will be even more challenging for one who insists to interpret ideological superstructure as a superstructure of all-encompassing ideas, because Marx and Engels use the term 'idealistic superstructure' as a superstructure of a definite type of social consciousness, when they describe the origin of civil society:

The term "civil society" emerged in the eighteenth century, when property relations had already extricated themselves from the ancient and medieval community. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organisation evolving directly out of production and intercourse, which in all ages forms the basis of the state and of the rest of the *idealistic superstructure*, has, however, always been designated by the same name.<sup>82</sup>

In this passage, civil society, the state and an idealistic superstructure is described as having arisen alongside the emergence of the *bourgeoisie* itself. This passage used the term "idealistic superstructure" to that superstructure. Is this idealistic superstructure an ideological superstructure or is it another kind of superstructure? If we accept that there are one structure base and two superstructures in any class societies: a structural base, a legal-political superstructure, and a superstructure that corresponds to definite forms of social consciousness. This idealistic superstructure must be a superstructure that corresponds to definite forms of social consciousness whether it is assigned to the term "ideological superstructure" or "idealistic superstructure." Moreover, this idealistic superstructure arose side by side with the emergence of a particular economic class, means that it cannot include all ideas, but it was a structure associated with the particular ideas of a particular class situation.

---

<sup>81</sup> Marx and Engels, VI, p. 504.

<sup>82</sup> Marx and Engels, V, p. 89 (emphasis added).

## Revolutionary Ideas

The fourth of Marx and Engels' conceptions of ideology is the most problematic because it relies only on a very short phrase in the 1859 *Preface*, where Marx refers to 'ideological forms in which people become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.'<sup>83</sup> This phrase suggests that people gain an understanding of the conflicts and decide to fight it out, through particular (ideological) forms of consciousness. For an understanding of this conception, it is necessary to identify the conflicts which people come to realise and the character of those forms of consciousness.

Marx explains that these conflicts are between the productive forces and the existing relation of productions:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or --- what is merely a legal expression for the same thing --- with the property relations within the framework of which they have hitherto operated. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. At that point an era of social revolution begins.<sup>84</sup>

In the above passage, Marx suggests that once people have a proper understanding and awareness of their current situation, then they will have true knowledge of their material conditions. If the existing relations of production conflict with the productive forces, this true understanding will be the condition for a social revolution to abolish the existing relations of production.

The question is whether or not true understandings are ideological forms of consciousness. If these true understandings are ideological forms of consciousness, then that suggests that ideological ideas can represent real material activity, not just abstract ideas or false consciousness. Ideological forms of consciousness in this sense not only become the proper source of knowledge for people but also empower them to act to transform the circumstances and bring them under their control.

It should be noted that the true understanding of the current social situations and the class consciousness are two different things. For example, if one has the concept of class consciousness in his mind, one will be easily tempted to interpret this true understanding as the formation of the communist consciousness, as described in the following passage of *The German Ideology*:

In the development of productive forces there comes a stage when productive forces and

---

<sup>83</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263 (emphasis added).

<sup>84</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263.

means of intercourse are brought into being, which, under the existing relations, only cause mischief,... a class is called forth, which has to bear all the burdens of society without enjoying its advantages, which is ousted from society and forced into the contradiction to all other classes; a class which forms the majority of all members of society, and from which emanates the consciousness of the necessity of a fundamental revolution, the *communist consciousness*, which may, of course, arise among the other classes too through the contemplation of the situation of this class.<sup>85</sup>

In any society, there are several forms of social consciousness, some of which represent material reality in a distorted form while the others do not. Some of these ideas enable people to understand their situations and conflicts and, with these ideas, people can be united as a class through class consciousness. The true understanding of the social conflicts and the class situations can occur in any class society, in this sense, this understanding needs not to be a communist class consciousness, but only in the true understanding of the capitalist society, the proper representations, ideological forms of consciousness and class consciousness become the same entity by this example of communist consciousness.

## Compatibility between different conceptions of ideology

This final conception of ideology is similar to the third conception since both of them share a neutral and positive meaning when compared to the first two conceptions (false consciousness and ruling ideas). This raises the problem of incompatibility between the first two conceptions and the second two.

For example, if one tries to maintain the conception in the 1859 *Preface* that through ideological forms of consciousness people have a better understanding and clearer class-consciousness, then how does one deal with this passage from *The German Ideology*:

But in a country like Germany — where philosophic phrases have for centuries exerted a certain power, and where, moreover, *communist consciousness* is anyhow less keen and determined because class contradictions do not exist in as acute a form as in other nations — it is, nevertheless, necessary to resist all phrases which obscure and dilute still further the realisation that communism is totally opposed to the existing world order.<sup>86</sup>

This passage states that the philosophic phrases that dominate the German philosophical tradition have the power to prevent 'communist-consciousness' in Germany from grasping the total opposition between communism and the existing world order, and that the less acute forms of class conflict in Germany also weaken communist consciousness. Marx and Engels devote their

---

<sup>85</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 52 (emphasis added).

<sup>86</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 469 (emphasis added).

effort in *The German Ideology* to reducing the power of those phrases or the power of 'The German Ideology'. It can be inferred that, through criticism and exposure of the nature of those philosophical ideas, the difference between communism and the German state will become clearer and the communist consciousness will become stronger and more critical as class conflict grows. Therefore, ideological ideas that weaken the communist consciousness in this context cannot be the same ideology that makes people aware of their conflicts and fight them out.

To attempt to solve the problem of the seeming incompatibility between these four conceptions of ideology, one might, first of all, explain that Marxists, especially in the Second International, could not access *The German Ideology* because it was only published in part in 1903-1904, while the whole book was not published until 1932.<sup>87</sup> Many Marxists in that period neglected the idea of ideology in *The German Ideology* because they followed Engels's statement that:

The section dealing with Feuerbach is not completed. The finished portion consists of an exposition of the materialist conception of history which proves only how incomplete our knowledge of economic history still was at that time. It contains no criticism of Feuerbach's doctrine itself; for the present purposes, therefore, it was useless.<sup>88</sup>

The section on Feuerbach that Engels mentions is the first part in *The German Ideology*. For this reason, Engels decided not to publish that work<sup>89</sup> but to write another work by himself, called "*Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*." Therefore, the negative conceptions of ideology in *The German Ideology* were lost.

The rise of a neutral and positive sense of the conception of ideology can be traced to the condensed passages of the 1859 *Preface*. If we accept that prior to a social revolution, the socialist movement needs a particular form of social consciousness that can help the movement organise and create unity within the movement and between the masses and the movement, the ideas in the 1859 *Preface* fit that need. Ideology is a less negative idea in the 1859 *Preface* when compared to *The German Ideology*. One can start to use the term 'proletarian ideology' as a synonym for 'communist consciousness', as those Marxists of the Second International did as the prelude to Lenin's formulation of his usage of the term Marxist ideology. This type of interpretation is

---

<sup>87</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 587, note 7.

<sup>88</sup> Frederick Engels, 'Preface to the Pamphlet Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-1889*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi, p. 520.

<sup>89</sup> Engels, xxvi, p. 520.

predominant in Lenin's conception of Marx's ideology and leads to the neutral and positive conceptions of ideology dominating Marxism from that period onward, as will be detailed in the next chapter.

Secondly, some of the contemporary authors who see 'ideological superstructure' in neutral or positive terms as representing general forms of social consciousness and ideas making people aware of their conflicts, can dismiss the whole work of *The German Ideology*, by condemning it as a non-Marxist theory of ideology. An example is Althusser, who writes: '...*The German Ideology* does offer us, after the *1844 Manuscripts*, an explicit theory of ideology, but ... it is not Marxist'.<sup>90</sup> He describes it as 'a chapter of the cultural history'.<sup>91</sup> By destroying its credibility in the Marxist tradition, the seeming contradictions between the texts and their interpretations can be overlooked, and the coherence of one's interpretations remains preserved.

Thirdly, some scholars, such as Larrain, who try to keep the notion of negative conceptions of ideology and do not want to bother with the term 'ideological superstructure'. They avoid the problem by replacing the phrases 'ideological superstructure' or 'idealistic superstructure' with 'ideational superstructure'.<sup>92</sup> By using this tactic, one can keep Marx and Engels' negative conception of ideology in *The German Ideology* by creating the new term 'ideational superstructure' and putting other positive or neutral connotations of 'ideology' into that structure.

Those authors adopting the second and third solutions accept the notion of general forms of social consciousness, but they differ over the meaning of ideology. These differences cause them to use different terms, one for the 'ideological superstructure' and another for the 'ideational superstructure'.

Finally, one can avoid this seeming incompatibility by arguing that Marx (along with Engels) uses the term 'ideology' in a negative sense in their conception of false consciousness and ruling ideas, since false consciousness and ruling ideas are particular forms of social consciousness and they are parts of the ideological superstructure. Every time Marx critiques a particular set of ideas (such as the German philosophy, religion, or economic theory) within the ideological superstructure,

---

<sup>90</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), p. 158, emphasis in original.

<sup>91</sup> See Joe McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology* (Brighton; Atlantic Highlands: Harvester Press; Humanities Press, 1980), p. 82.

<sup>92</sup> Larrain, p. 172.

he criticises the content of that structure. In this sense, the ideological superstructure is not an all-encompassing level of social consciousness but a structure of a set of ideas that support the rule of the ruling class. The aim of this thesis is to create a more coherent interpretation of the Marxist conception of ideology. This will be presented in greater detail in the sixth chapter.

## CHAPTER II: LENIN'S AND GRAMSCI'S CONCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

In contrast with Marx, who uses the term 'ideology' mostly in a negative or critical sense and only sometimes in a positive or neutral sense, both Lenin and Gramsci explicitly use the term in a neutral sense. Marxism as a revolutionary social movement became globally famous after Lenin's success in leading the Russian Revolution. Like Marx, Lenin and Gramsci never provide a definite meaning for the term ideology, but Lenin consistently employs words or phrases like 'ideologists'<sup>1</sup>, 'ideological social relations'<sup>2</sup>, 'ideological unity'<sup>3</sup>, etc. Lenin's usages of the term lead to different interpretations of his conception.

This chapter aims to present Lenin's and Gramsci's conceptions of ideology from their usages of the term and to present them in a more coherent form. This chapter also explains how Lenin's and Gramsci's political practices serve as the main source for their neutral understanding of ideology in the Marxist tradition. Lenin's revolutionary practices and Gramsci's political practices affected the way the concept developed. The problem of the relationships between Marx's, Lenin's and Gramsci's conceptions of ideology will be discussed in the sixth chapter when the Marxist conception of ideology will be reconstructed.

The aim of this chapter is also to show the strengths and limitations of Lenin's and Gramsci's conceptions and how they affect the later Marxists and cause some confusion and contradictions when their conceptions of ideology are merged with that of Marx. The chapter is divided into two sections: one for Lenin's conception of ideology and the other for Gramsci's conception of ideology. The first section begins with Lenin's idea of ideology as a doctrine and explains Lenin's concept of ideological struggle and Marxism as 'scientific ideology'. The second section presents Gramsci's conception of ideology as an ideological superstructure representing all-inclusive social forms of consciousness.

### Lenin's Conception of Ideology

Scholars take two different perspectives on Lenin's conception of ideology. The difference between them is based on their conceptions of relations between Marx and Lenin. The first group presents Lenin's conception of ideology as departing from Marx's original conception, while the

---

<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), I, p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Lenin, I, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Step Back', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), VII, p. 415.

second group depicts Lenin's conception as complementary to it and suggest that it developed in a similar direction to that of Marx.

The scholars who present Lenin's conception of ideology as departing from Marx include Martin Seliger,<sup>4</sup> Jorge Larrain,<sup>5</sup> David McLellan,<sup>6</sup> Kai Nielsen,<sup>7</sup> and Howard Williams.<sup>8</sup> They all share the view that Lenin's conception is neutral or positive, while Marx's conception is negative. They also think that the meaning of ideology is based on the role of the conscious element for making a social revolution at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Organising and disciplining the masses requires a particular form of consciousness to unite the leaders and those they lead in their political struggles. For Lenin, this form of consciousness is ideology, and this leads him to use the term for revolutionary ideas as well as in criticism of ruling class ideas, where his concern is mainly with advocacy of political struggles rather than in criticising ruling class ideas as Marx does.<sup>9</sup>

Martin Seliger states that the difference between Marx's and Lenin's conceptions of ideology is that, for Marx, ideology is false consciousness and Marx uses it in a derogative sense to critique,<sup>10</sup> while Lenin uses the term in a neutral and positive sense. In the neutral sense, ideology can represent either proletarian or bourgeois class within capitalist society.<sup>11</sup> Seliger also points out that the conception takes on a more positive connotation when Lenin emphasises the conscious element of ideology in leading the proletariat class struggle against the bourgeoisie.<sup>12</sup>

Howard Williams shares the same view as Seliger, stressing that Marx uses the term ideology mostly in the negative sense. He observes that it is only in a small paragraph in the *Preface 1859* that the term can be interpreted in a neutral sense. For Williams, there is no good ideology from Marx's perspective, but there is from Lenin's perspective. In a capitalist society, there can be capitalist ideology as well as socialist ideology. A good ideology enables a socialist class to create its leader to struggle against the bad ideology of the ruling class that support the current rule.<sup>13</sup>

Similar to Seliger, Kai Nielsen points out that when comparisons are made between Marx

---

<sup>4</sup> Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay*, International Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> Jorge Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, Contemporary Social Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> David McLellan, *Ideology*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Pr, 1986).

<sup>7</sup> Kai Nielsen, 'The Concept of Ideology: Some Marxist and Non-Marxist Conceptualizations', *Rethinking Marxism*, 2.4 (1989), 146–73 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08935698908657894>>.

<sup>8</sup> Howard Williams, *Concepts of Ideology* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books [u.a.], 1988).

<sup>9</sup> See Seliger, p. 5, Larrain, p. 63, McLellan, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Seliger, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Seliger, p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> Seliger, p. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, pp. 17–18.

and Lenin, they both share the same understanding of the class element in the term ideology, but Lenin rarely uses the term in a negative or pejorative sense as Marx does. For example, Lenin uses the term ideology to refer to the ideas of both the subordinated class and the ruling class.<sup>14</sup> Nielsen states that the Leninists' conception of ideology tends to ascribe positive or progressive connotations to their ideology and negative or pejorative connotations to their opponent's ideology.<sup>15</sup>

Jorge Larrain and David McLellan also present Lenin's conception of ideology in the neutral and positive sense. It is in the neutral sense that ideology can be for either a dominant or a dominated class, depending on the class interest that ideology serves.<sup>16</sup> Ideology in itself is not necessarily false consciousness or a misrepresentation of social reality that serves the interest of the dominant class.

Larrain uses the negative, neutral and positive senses of ideology to show the contrast between Marx's and Lenin's conceptions of ideology. For Larrain, ideology is used in the negative sense to refer to distorted ideas.<sup>17</sup> The neutral sense 'refers to the fact that this notion of ideology no longer passes judgement upon the validity or adequacy of ideas.'<sup>18</sup> Lastly, ideology in the positive sense 'expresses the political ideas and interests of all classes in society, or, in other versions, the objective level of society which encompasses the totality of forms of social consciousness.'<sup>19</sup> However, the way Larrain differentiates between negative, neutral and positive senses is quite unusual. He uses the negative sense to describe distorted ideas but uses the positive sense to describe all forms of ideas. The dichotomy between negative and positive is not between ideas of which we disapprove (negative) or approve (positive), but between distorted ideas (negative) and all ideas (positive). In this sense, there is no real opposition between the negative and positive senses in Larrain's usage. Only Larrain's neutral sense—referring to ideas that do not involve reaching verdicts or passing judgements—is understandable.

For Larrain, Lenin's conception of ideology combines the ideas of science and class consciousness into one concept. Ideology can be a form of class consciousness, such as bourgeois ideology or proletarian ideology, and the ideology of some particular class can also be a scientific ideology. Thus, scientific ideology can be differentiated from non-scientific ideology.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Nielsen, pp. 148–49.

<sup>15</sup> Nielsen, p. 149.

<sup>16</sup> See Larrain, p. 64; McLellan, p. 24; Williams also presents Lenin's conception of ideology in the neutral sense; however, he does not go beyond the neutral sense into the positive sense like Larrain and McLellan do. See Williams, pp. 14–15.

<sup>17</sup> Larrain, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 239, note 73.

<sup>19</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 239, note 73.

<sup>20</sup> Larrain, p. 68.

Larrain's interpretation of Lenin sees Marxism as a scientific ideology and also as a true proletarian ideology of the working class.

The problem with the first group is that they neglect Marx's *1859 Preface*. Lenin's usage of the term ideology in the neutral sense is quite different from Marx's usage which, as has already been shown in the first chapter, sees as it an idea that enables human beings to understand their situations and fight it out through ideology. This is clearly not ideology in the negative sense but in a neutral or even positive sense, as ideology is not distorted (if this idea was distorted, how would it enable human beings to understand their conditions and fight it out?).

There is another interpretation of Lenin's conception of ideology that portrays it as not deviating from Marx's conception. Joe McCarney interprets Lenin's conception of ideology as an idea that serves a particular class interest.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it can be bourgeois ideology, but it can also be proletarian ideology, as Lenin suggests. The lack of proletarian ideology in Marx's usages of the term is because his main concern is to critique bourgeois ideology as a ruling idea. Marx uses the term mostly in the negative sense, as he tries to unveil the mystifying character of bourgeois ideology.<sup>22</sup> McCarney's view is more plausible than the alternative view—that Lenin's usages of ideology depart from and is different from Marx—as this interpretation fits well with Marx's ideas in *1859 Preface*.

To avoid confusion between the usages of the term in the negative, neutral, and positive senses, I propose that the term ideology should be used in the negative sense to describe something undesirable that should be criticised. It should be used in the negative sense as synonymous with pejorative, referring to such ideas as sexism and racism. It should be used in the neutral sense to describe ideas without passing judgement on them; those ideas can be desirable or undesirable depending on the contexts, such as nationalism or globalisation. Lastly, it should be used in the positive sense to describe ideas that we desire, or that make us glad when we possess them or act in accordance with them. For instance, the idea that we should live according to moral principles, or we should avoid harming innocents. This way of using these three senses preserves the dichotomy between the positive and negative.

The negative (undesirable, pejorative), neutral (non-judgemental) and positive (desirable, preferable) senses of ideology will be used in this way in the following chapters of the thesis. For instance, the negative sense of ideology can refer to distorted ideas, ideas that the ruling class uses to maintain their rule. The neutral sense of ideology can refer to ideas of any class, whether a ruling class or a subordinated class. Ideology in the neutral sense cannot be judged or evaluated in

---

<sup>21</sup> Joe McCarney, *The Real World of Ideology* (Brighton; Atlantic Highlands: Harvester Press; Humanities Press, 1980), p. 113.

<sup>22</sup> McCarney, p. 110.

terms of the ideology itself but must be evaluated by its contexts and contents. The positive sense of ideology should refer to ideologies that we prefer to possess and in accordance with which we willingly admit to acting. The positive sense of ideology will be discussed in the third chapter.

From the above, it is clear that these writers share a common view of Lenin's conception of ideology: namely, that Lenin uses the term in the neutral sense, and that ideology can represent any class idea and not only that of the ruling class. Some scholars (Seliger and Larrain) point out the positive aspects of the conception, as when Lenin emphasises the role of ideology for organising the subordinated class to struggle against the ruling class. However, the usage of ideology to organise political parties in political struggles can apply to any class and this role of ideology is not limited to the subordinated class; the ruling class also can form its party by using ideology to maintain its rule over the great masses of a given society. Thus, the role of ideology in the positive sense for organising a political party is misleading. In this regard, I agree with Williams' interpretation of Lenin's conception of ideology: the idea that the function of ideology is to create and organise the political party should be evaluated in a neutral rather than a positive sense. Moreover, none of the above authors refers to Lenin's idea of ideological superstructure. There is a gap that I shall try to fill when I present Lenin's ideological superstructure in the following section.

The differences between the various authors' views concern how they perceive the connection between Marx's and Lenin's use of the conception of ideology. Most of the above authors, except for McCarney, interpret Marx's conception of ideology in a negative sense and see Lenin's conception as different from that of Marx, but McCarney interprets both Marx and Lenin in the neutral sense and does not assert differences between their respective conceptions of ideology. In this chapter, I show the way Lenin's use of the term ideology leads to the birth of the neutral sense of ideology in the tradition. This neutral sense is also uninterruptedly developed by Antonio Gramsci in his famous idea of hegemony and the role of the intellectual in the political struggle.

### **Ideology as a doctrine**

Lenin points out that there are several kinds of trade union ideologies existing in the German working class, such as Catholic and monarchist, English trade-unionist, and Social-Democratic.<sup>23</sup> It must be noted that, at that time, the Social-Democratic ideology was an ideology of the Social Democratic party, which Lenin supported and to which he committed himself.

---

<sup>23</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, pp. 385–86.

However, he opposed many others. For example, he criticises the Narodnik ideology,<sup>24</sup> an ideology of the Russian social movement, which tried to elevate the living standard of the peasants by borrowing programs and concepts from the bourgeoisie. Lenin also criticised a letter by the 'Economist', published in *Iskra*, No.12, arguing that the ideas of the 'Economist' would turn the working-class movement away from the path of socialism towards *bourgeois* trade-unionism or to 'clerical and gendarme ideology'.<sup>25</sup> His concern was that the working class movement must avoid such programs and actions or else it will fall into the hands of the bourgeoisie. This sense of ideology is not just an idea; it contains programs and plans of action connected to that idea.

Lenin continues to use the term in the sense that ideology contains a conscious and planning element when he contrasts the material and ideological elements of the movement:

The authors of the letter fall into the very same fundamental error as that made by Rabocheye Dyelo (see particularly issue No. 10). They are muddled over the question of the relations between the "material" (spontaneous, as Rabocheye Dyelo puts it) elements of the movement and the ideological (*conscious, operating "according to plan"*).<sup>26</sup>

Hence, the difference between the material and ideological elements is that the ideological element refers to the conscious operating plans, while the material element refers to spontaneous responses to the material environment. Both of these elements refer to different types of ideas that affect the goal and operations of the political movement. For those who emphasise the material elements of the movement, this element of spontaneous reflection is sufficient for the movement to engage in class struggle.<sup>27</sup> This dichotomy between the material and ideological is reminiscent of the passage from Marx's *1859 Preface*:

In considering such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic, or philosophic, in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.<sup>28</sup>

The material refers to the circumstance that we already have and live in, and the ideological refers to the means by which people can have action plans that transform their circumstances through social movements. Lenin's emphasis on the conscious element of ideology is based on that very

---

<sup>24</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), xiii, p. 295.

<sup>25</sup> Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', v, p. 385. The gendarme in Lenin's context is a policeman of the tsarist regime.

<sup>26</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, pp. 315–16, emphasis added.

<sup>27</sup> See below in the section of ideological struggle.

<sup>28</sup> Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix, p. 259.

condensed passage in Marx's *1859 Preface*. From this perspective, people do not just simply reflect their material circumstances; rather, they become consciously aware of their situations through ideology, and this guides them to change and transform their situations.

Lenin uses this dichotomy when he criticises the program of agrarian reform of the Narodniks to suggest that a material moment alone is not enough. He also provides a hint of his conception of ideology as a doctrine in this critique:

Naturally, the peasants would certainly prefer a democratic solution of the agrarian problem. This democratic solution, even if all the land is transferred to the peasants without compensation, does not and cannot in the least encroach on the foundations of capitalist society -- the power of money, commodity production, and the domination of the market. The peasants, for the most part, have a rather hazy idea of the matter and the Narodniks have created a complete ideology, a whole doctrine, which gave that haze something of a "socialist" hue, although there is nothing socialist even in the most radical agrarian revolution.<sup>29</sup>

As with any doctrine which offers goals and a plan of operation to achieve that goal, the Narodniks ideology offered an acceptable price pasture program to the peasants and made them satisfied with their current situation. Lenin was concerned that this program might confuse the peasants' understanding of their class position and lead them to think that the Narodniks program was a socialist ideology.

When Lenin argues against the national ideology, he assumes that ideology contains plans of action or programs.<sup>30</sup> Lenin reproved national ideologists, whom he called traitors of socialism, for using national ideology to gain support from the masses for the First World War. This nationalist ideology was used by the bourgeoisie when that class struggled against the feudal system, and it was used as a tool for establishing an imperialist policy toward other countries. It diverted the working-class movement from its struggle against the existing bourgeois system towards a war that protected the interests of the bourgeoisie. Lenin uses several phrases in this sense, such as 'the ideology of national movements'<sup>31</sup> or 'the old ideology of a national war'.<sup>32</sup>

In the other places, he criticises Tolstoyism or the doctrine of Tolstoy as 'an ideology of an Oriental, an Asiatic order'.<sup>33</sup> For Lenin, Tolstoyism represents an abstract systematic set of ideas

---

<sup>29</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The Campaign for the Elections to the Fourth Duma', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), xvii, p. 381.

<sup>30</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Group Abroad', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), xxi, p. 160.

<sup>31</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Under the False Flag', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), xxi, p. 142.

<sup>32</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Position and Tasks of Socialist International', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), xxi, p. 39.

<sup>33</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Lev Tolstoy and His Epoch', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), xvii, p. 51.

of the feudal or Oriental order:

But such a definite, concretely historical presentation of the question was something absolutely foreign to Tolstoi. He reasons in the abstract, he recognises only the standpoint of the "eternal" principles of morality, the eternal truths of religion, failing to realise that this standpoint is merely the ideological reflection of the old ("turned upside down") order, the feudal order, the way of the life of the Oriental peoples.<sup>34</sup>

This is reminiscent of Marx and Engels' argument against particular forms of German idealism in which they claim that the material activities of men, rather than ideas, turn out to be the determinant forces of history. Lenin criticises Tolstoyism as an ideology which misrepresents reality. Ideology can be true as well as false, depending on its content. Thus, Lenin supports particular forms of ideology if they represent the current situation and assist the proletariat in organising its movement but, on the other hand, he argues against another kind of ideology which misrepresents and mystifies reality, preventing the proletariat from understanding their circumstances. In this sense, ideology does not necessarily represent only a distorted consciousness.<sup>35</sup> He therefore uses phrases like 'false ideology' of the Narodniks<sup>36</sup> or 'erroneous ideology' as follows:

We must study the objective conditions of the peasant agrarian revolution in capitalistically developing Russia; on the basis of this objective analysis, we must separate the *erroneous ideology* of the different classes from the real content of the economic changes, and determine what, on the basis of those real economic changes, is required for the development of the productive forces and for the proletarian class struggle.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, an ideology in itself is not necessarily false, and only a 'false' ideology must be criticised, exposed and abandoned. Therefore, the working-class movement should only adopt a 'true' ideology. This concept of a true ideology will be discussed later in the section on Marxism as scientific ideology.

From these examples, it is apparent that Lenin use ideology in a neutral sense. Ideologies in this sense can be any more or less systematic set of ideas or plans of action, and they can take several forms, such as trade-unionism, Narodism, nationalism, Tolstoyism, etc. This neutral trend becomes more explicit when Lenin points out that in a class society, there can be only two possible ideologies at any given time. One is the ideology of the ruling class, and the other is the ideology of the subordinated class. For example, when he describes ideologies in the capitalist society, there

---

<sup>34</sup> Lenin, 'Lev Tolstoi and His Epoch', xvii, p. 50.

<sup>35</sup> If ideology necessary represents a distorted consciousness, there is no need to add another qualifier like 'erroneous' or 'false' and these terms become redundant.

<sup>36</sup> See Lenin, xiii, pp. 242, 318.

<sup>37</sup> Lenin, xiii, p. 259, emphasis added.

are two ideologies, one for the bourgeoisie and another for the socialists:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the *only* choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology).<sup>38</sup>

However, it seems that this passage fails to take into account the existence of the ideologies of other classes and reveals a contradiction in Lenin’s conception. He himself refers to the peasant ideology as follows:

As for the reactionary origin (or character) of the peasants' idea of land nationalisation, well, even the idea of a general redistribution of the land has undoubted features not only of a reactionary origin, but also of its reactionary character at the present time. There are reactionary elements in the whole peasant movement, and in *the whole peasant ideology*, but this by no means disproves the general revolutionary-democratic character of this movement as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

The peasantry is a distinctive class, and it has its own ideology. Therefore, it seems there are more than two ideologies in any given society.

One can argue that there are only two ideologies in capitalist society in the sense that ideological conflict is based on the class antagonism between the two fundamental classes, the bourgeois, and the proletarian. All ideologies are subsumed under these two main ideologies. Other classes (peasant, feudal lord, etc.) must be subsumed under those of the two fundamental classes. Several passages from Lenin’s works suggest this. For example, Lenin criticises the ‘Narodniks’ ideas and the authors of those ideas, who claim to be the ‘friends of the people’. Even if the Narodniks’ ideas and programs support the interests of the peasantry, they are not ideologists of the peasantry. The ‘friends of the people’ in Lenin’s perspective are petty-bourgeois ideologists.<sup>40</sup> For Lenin, Narodnik programs which comprise equalised distribution of land without abolishing the market system, help to destroy the residue of the feudal system in Russian. However, the remaining market system helps the petty-bourgeoisie to accumulate wealth and will destroy the equalised distribution of land in the end.<sup>41</sup> In this sense, Narodnik programs represent

---

<sup>38</sup> Lenin, ‘What Is to be Done?’, v, p. 384.

<sup>39</sup> V. I. Lenin, ‘Revision of The Agrarian Programme of The Workers’ Party’, in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), x, p. 180, emphasis added.

<sup>40</sup> V. I. Lenin, ‘What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat’, in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), i, p. 234, emphasis in original; the same accounts can be found in Lenin, ‘What the “Friends of the People” Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat’, i, pp. 217–18, 284, 293.

<sup>41</sup> V. I. Lenin, ‘A Comparison of the Stolypin and the Narodnik Agrarian Programmes’, in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), xviii, 143–48 (p. 147).

the interests of the petty-bourgeoisie more than those of the peasantry (not to mention the proletariat). In other places, Lenin keeps up his attack on these 'friends of the people' by saying that these petty-bourgeois ideologists misunderstand the social struggle and try to reconcile the interests of the working class and the bourgeoisie into a 'neutral and above-class' state.<sup>42</sup>

Lenin's conception of ideology has two aspects. First of all, ideology refers to a doctrine or more or less systematic set of ideas. This doctrine can be any set of ideas, and thus can be either true or false, so that neither truth nor falsity is a criterion for ideology. Second, an ideology necessarily has a class character. In a capitalist society, there are several ideologies, but they fall under one of the two fundamental class ideologies, either proletarian (socialist) or bourgeois.

At first glance, those two aspects seem to contradict each other, but if ideologies are depicted as floating around two poles of a bar magnet, and one of those two poles represents the ruling class and the other represents the subordinated classes such as the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, then all doctrines can be drawn toward one pole or the other through the works of ideologists who make use of, or criticise, the content of those doctrines to support one of the two fundamental classes. For instance, ideology of other classes, such as peasant or feudal lord, also float around that bar. Sometimes they might float around the north pole and function in the same way as the ideology of the ruling class or sometimes they might float around the south pole and operate in the same way as the ideology of the subordinated class.

Lenin's second understanding of ideology leads to the notion of ideological struggle. For example, if one propagates the doctrine that represents the old way of life, as Tolstoy does, and emphasises the role of eternal moral laws that detach people from their material life, then this propagation prevents the proletariat from forming their correct doctrine or realising their true consciousness. If the proletariat fails to achieve a true understanding of their situation, they will not engage in the struggle against the ruling class and the existing bourgeois system of domination will continue. Another example of ideology leading to an ideological struggle is when concepts from the economic doctrines developed by Adam Smith and David Ricardo are taken and used for the sake of the proletariat, as Marx did when he developed his theory of surplus value based on the traditional theory of labour value of Smith and Ricardo. These doctrines can be merged and integrated into the proletarian ideology as Marx and Engels did in their works. This second aspect and the role of ideologists are discussed in the next section, which examines Lenin's idea of ideological struggle.

---

<sup>42</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 286.

## Ideological Struggle

Lenin's conception of ideological struggle is a crucial contribution to Marxist doctrine. It can be divided into two parts. One is the struggle against bourgeois ideology and the other is the struggle within the working class itself to create a proper proletarian class consciousness. These two fronts work together to unite the working-class movement. To create an ideological unity within the working-class movement, bourgeois ideology must be rooted out.

In Lenin's conception of ideology, the power of the proletariat is a result of its strength and the organisational and ideological unity of the movement:

In its struggle for power the proletariat has no other weapon but organisation. Disunited by the rule of anarchic competition in the bourgeois world, ..., the proletariat can, and inevitably will, become an invincible force only through its ideological unification on the principles of Marxism being reinforced by the material unity of organisation, which welds millions of toilers into an army of the working class.<sup>43</sup>

Marxism, in Lenin's perspective, serves as a vehicle that unifies the great masses of the working class. But Marxism cannot spontaneously emerge among the masses by itself. To unify the great masses, agents must infuse or propagate Marxism. This is the major role of proletarian ideologists or socialists.

The role of socialists is to take leadership of the proletarian movement by creating a true proletarian or socialist consciousness. This socialist ideology must be brought to the proletariat from outside because when the consciousness of the workers results only from spontaneous reflection on the current situation, the result is domination of bourgeois ideology in the working class movement.<sup>44</sup> The reason for this domination is that their material reality binds them to interests which correspond to their everyday needs, such as income and welfare. According to Lenin, their spontaneous consciousness only leads them to battle for peripheral goals such as higher wages, reduction of working hours, or better working conditions. If the working-class movement aims only for those objectives, the structure of domination of the bourgeois class will remain intact.

Another reason for developing the true consciousness of the proletariat class is that without an alternative view of their social reality, the proletariat class has no choice but to adopt the far more developed existing bourgeois ideology for themselves, and to use that ideology to interpret their world. Lenin explicates the reason why workers necessarily fall under the domination of the bourgeoisie, which is 'that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is

---

<sup>43</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'One Step Forward, Two Step Back', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), VII, p. 415.

<sup>44</sup> Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', v, p. 386.

more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination'.<sup>45</sup> Without the proper theory and understanding of its ideological agents, the working-class movement will eventually be subjugated under the bourgeois ideology.

The proper understanding of their conflicts and situations which can lead the working-class movement to engage in the struggle is the true consciousness of the proletariat, which does not come from everyday experiences but from outside. As Lenin explains:

We have said that there could not yet be Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It could only be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, ... The theory of Socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories that were elaborated by the educated representatives of the propertied classes, the intellectuals... In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia.<sup>46</sup>

No doubt this passage legitimises the reason for educating workers in Marxism, as the founders of the doctrine, Marx and Engels, and Lenin, are not workers by occupation. Lenin introduces Marxism as an ideology for the proletariat to raise their level of awareness of the unsatisfactory nature of their situation and to encourage them to fight, not just for peripheral goals, but to go as far as possible towards the goal of socialist revolution. This suggests that class consciousness is not necessarily the result of being a worker. On the contrary, anyone can join the working-class movement and have a proletarian class consciousness without necessarily being a worker, as Marx, Engels, and Lenin themselves show.

By creating a true socialist consciousness for the working class, the ideologists of the working class make Marxism popular by establishing organisations which are suitable for propagating the Marxist doctrine and unifying the workers as a political force. The party, as the vanguard of the proletariat,<sup>47</sup> also needs a means for propagating its ideas and doctrine. Lenin emphasises this requirement:

This is the main cause of the crisis which Russian Social-Democracy is now experiencing. The mass (spontaneous) movement lacks "ideologists" sufficiently trained theoretically to be proof against all vacillations; it lacks leaders with such a broad political outlook, such revolutionary energy, and such organisational talent as to create a militant political party on the basis of the new movement.<sup>48</sup>

---

<sup>45</sup> Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', v, p. 386.

<sup>46</sup> Lenin, 'What Is to be Done?', v, p. 373.

<sup>47</sup> Lenin, 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', v, p. 319.

<sup>48</sup> Lenin, 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', v, pp. 316–17; See also Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 320, emphasis added.

It is important for ideologists to create ideological unity between the party and the masses. To lead the working-class movement, its competent ideologists must propagate the Marxist doctrine to the masses. In Lenin's time, the organ of the party was a newspaper for all Russian people.<sup>49</sup>

Lenin points out that the role of the media is to propagate ideas and bring about political awareness among the workers and the movement. For Lenin, the first and foremost task of the movement is to establish the frequency and regularity of the newspaper and ensure that it is consistent with Marxist principles. The newspaper must be an all-Russian newspaper,<sup>50</sup> not just a local newspaper, and its aim was to take the movement to the national level so as to attract more audiences and supporters.

To sum up, Lenin portrays ideological struggles as struggles between bourgeois ideologists and socialist ideologists,<sup>51</sup> each attempting to create unity in their own class by propagating their class doctrine and destroying the unity of the other. They do this by critiquing and exposing the real interests which they claim the other doctrine represents. If this doctrine is absorbed by various strata of society and they adopt it to interpret their own situations and form their own world outlook, then that class consciousness will gain a grasp on the minds of the masses. Those who succeed in this will lead the masses to their objectives of either maintaining the existing structures for the bourgeoisie or attaining the socialist revolution for the working class. These struggles are struggles between doctrines. They take place through agents (ideologists) and media (newspaper, pamphlets, books, articles, etc.).

According to Lenin, ideologists of the party themselves must have a vivid understanding of their political situations in order to lead the masses. A particular form of knowledge or doctrine (ideology) is needed to fulfil this requirement and to ensure that the movement does not lose track of the socialist revolution. This doctrine is Marxism, taken as a scientific ideology.

### **Marxism as a Scientific Ideology**

In Lenin's conception of ideology, ideologies refer to doctrines, which can be either true or false, progressive, or reactionary, more or less systematic, depending on their content. Varieties of ideologies range from the most abstract, as in philosophical doctrines, to concrete political action plans and programs. When the bourgeois and proletarian ideologists in capitalist society wage ideological struggles, how can one ensure that Marxist doctrine the proletarian ideology, is more

---

<sup>49</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Where to Begin', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, pp. 20–21.

<sup>50</sup> Lenin, 'Where to Begin', v, p. 21.

<sup>51</sup> For roles of bourgeois ideologists to create the unity between their class and the mass, see note 8 above; for the cases of national ideology and "the friends of the people" see notes 18 and 20 above.

convincing than its opponent, bourgeois ideology? Lenin answers this question by connecting Marxist doctrine with scientific knowledge. If Marxism represents the true proletarian ideology and takes the form of scientific knowledge, then it is not just an ordinary doctrine reflecting class interests, but also a form of truth, as it is scientific knowledge. This section will begin with Lenin's view of the character of scientific knowledge and its relationship with Marxism, and his view of Marxism as a true scientific ideology.

Lenin compares Marx's theory of history (or in Lenin's term 'sociology') with Darwin's theory of evolution, by identifying both theories as scientific knowledge:

Just as Darwin put an end to the view of animal and plant species being unconnected, fortuitous, "created by God" and immutable, and was the first to put biology on an absolutely scientific basis by establishing the mutability and the succession of species, so Marx put an end to the view of society being a mechanical aggregation of individuals which allows of all sorts of modification at the will of the authorities (or, if you like, at the will of society and the government) and which emerges and changes casually, and was the first to put sociology on a *scientific basis* by establishing the concept of the economic formation of society as the sum-total of given production relations...<sup>52</sup>

According to Lenin, the theories of both Marx and Darwin seek to explain fundamental processes, one social and the other biological. In this scientific view of Marxism, the development of society does not depend on the will of the government or people but rests on the economic basis that directs its course of development. This scientific development process can be called 'dialectic':

What Marx and Engels called the dialectical method as against the metaphysical is nothing else than the scientific method in sociology, which consists in regarding society as a living organism in a state of constant development (and not as something mechanically concatenated and therefore permitting all sorts of arbitrary combinations of separate social elements), an organism the study of which requires an objective analysis of the production relations that constitute the given social formation and an investigation of its laws of functioning and development.<sup>53</sup>

The view of society as living organism means that there are interactions between various parts of society and there are some sorts of law that govern the direct the way of the interaction that cause organisms or societies adapt, develop, and survives. Lenin also compares the process of history with the idea of evolution in the field of biology. In Marxism, the law of economic life rests on the fact that its conception is not the same as the law of physics or chemistry which are static and mechanic, but is evolutionary:

A more thorough analysis shows that social organisms differ among themselves as fundamentally as plants or animals. Setting himself the task of investigating the capitalist economic organism from this point of view, Marx thereby formulates, in a strictly scientific

---

<sup>52</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 142, emphasis added.

<sup>53</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 165.

manner, the aim that every accurate investigation into economic life must have. The scientific value of such an inquiry lies in disclosing the special (historical) laws that regulate the origin, existence, development, and death of a given social organism and its replacement by another and higher organism.<sup>54</sup>

One can use Marxist scientific method to understand the process of society by conceiving of it as an organism that evolves. It is only possible to understand the process of society by the analysis of the productive forces and the relations of production. For Lenin, Marx's materialism is not simply a scientific conception of history, but the only scientific conception of history. He explains as follows:

... since the appearance of *Capital* the materialist conception of history is no longer a hypothesis, but a scientifically proven proposition... another attempt just as capable of introducing order into the "pertinent facts" as materialism is, that is just as capable of presenting a living picture of a definite formation, while giving it a strictly scientific explanation until then the materialist conception of history will be a synonym for social science. Materialism is not "primarily a scientific conception of history," as Mr. Mikhailovsky thinks, but *the only scientific conception of it*.<sup>55</sup>

Lenin claims that the scientific status of Marx's materialism expressed in *Capital* is not just a scientific hypothesis; it is a proposition that has already been proven. A hypothesis can be right or wrong depending on what it is trying to explain and predict, but a proven proposition is always right. The point for Marxists or proletarian ideologists is to use Marxist ideas to change social reality. This is apparent in Lenin's explanation of the revolutionary character of Marxism:

Marx, on the other hand, considered the whole value of his theory to lie in the fact that it is "in its essence critical and revolutionary." And this latter quality is indeed completely and unconditionally inherent in Marxism, for this theory directly sets itself the task of disclosing all the forms of antagonism and exploitation in modern society, tracing their evolution, demonstrating their transitory character, the inevitability of their transformation into a different form, and thus serving the proletariat as a means of ending all exploitation as quickly and easily as possible... Is it not a fact that the task of theory, the aim of science, is here defined as assistance for the oppressed class in its actual economic struggle?<sup>56</sup>

It should be noted that in this paragraph Lenin does not mean that all scientific doctrines have to assist the oppressed class in their struggles against the oppressors; it merely states that Marxism, as a science of history, has a special role to do this. Marxism, as a conceptual framework, combines two aspects: first, as a valid scientific theory and second, as a revolutionary doctrine that can be used to disclose any exploitation or oppression of the masses by the bourgeoisie. For

---

<sup>54</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 142, emphasis added; see the same line of argument in Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 145.

<sup>56</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, pp. 327–28.

Lenin, the critical and exposing power of Marxism attracts intellectuals (in other words, socialist ideologists), unites them with the oppressed masses, and guides all of them towards the socialist revolution.

In Lenin's conception of ideology, not only can class position be attributed to ideology, but also the true and false dichotomy. If there are false or erroneous ideologies, for example, the 'false ideology' of the Narodniks, then the possibility exists that there must also be a true ideology. For Lenin, this true ideology is Marxism:

From the standpoint of modern materialism, i.e., Marxism, the limits of approximation of our knowledge to objective, absolute truth are historically conditional, but the existence of such truth is unconditional, and the fact that we are approaching nearer to it is also unconditional. The contours of the picture are historically conditional, but the fact that this picture depicts an objectively existing model is unconditional.<sup>57</sup>

Lenin's view of the relationship between knowledge and truth can be sum up like this the quest of knowledge is the pursuing toward the unconditional and unchanging truth. However, the knowledge can be changed and be developed. In this sense, Lenin's view of knowledge and its relationship to truth is similar to the process of Popper's falsification in some respects.<sup>58</sup> If Marxism is a scientific ideology, it will be changed during the development of its theory. There is no longer a belief in unconditional truth in scientific knowledge, but only in more or less tentative theories. Thus, being a scientific theory no longer guarantees acceptance as a true ideology.

Marxism as a scientific ideology is vital to Lenin's thoughts. He puts his effort into demonstrating that Marxism is the only scientific theory for the proletarian movement when compared to other utopian proletarian alternative theories. If we combine Lenin's conception of ideology and the notion of Marxism as a scientific theory for the proletariat, then, in the end, we have Marxism as the scientific proletarian ideology. This ideology has a critical and revolutionary character that can eventually be used by socialists or 'the ideological leaders of the proletariat in its struggle against actual and real enemies who stand in the path of social and economic development'.<sup>59</sup> This will lead the masses to abolish the old oppressive regime through a socialist revolution. The roles of proletarian ideologists are summarised by Lenin as follows:

It must be expressed in our leadership of every aspect and every manifestation of the great struggle for liberation that is being waged by the proletariat, the only truly revolutionary class in modern society. Social-Democracy must constantly and unswervingly spread the influence of the labour movement to all spheres of the social and political life of contemporary society. It must lead, not only the economic, but also the political, struggle of the proletariat. It must never

---

<sup>57</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), xiv, p. 136, emphasis added.

<sup>58</sup> Karl R Popper, *Unended Quest* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 152–53.

<sup>59</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 298.

for a moment lose sight of our ultimate goal, but always carry-on propaganda for the proletarian ideology the theory of scientific socialism, viz., Marxism guard it against distortion, and develop it further.<sup>60</sup>

The proletarian ideologists, as leaders of the proletariat, propagate Marxism to the various sectors or strata of society. At the same time, those ideologists must protect Marxism from being distorted to a simple view of struggle that concentrates on wages and economic goals by a bourgeois ideology that contaminates the aims and programs of the proletarian class consciousness. That distortion will divert the revolutionary character of the proletarian movement and eventually support the rule of the existing ruling class.

### **Ideological Superstructure**

Compared with his effort and clarity on the scientific and class character of Marxist ideology, Lenin's notion of the ideological superstructure of society is sketchy and quite obscure. He uses the term 'ideological superstructure' but does not give any clear explanation or definition of it. Lenin explicitly uses the term 'ideological superstructure'<sup>61</sup> or 'superstructure of ideological social relations'<sup>62</sup> when he describes the base-superstructure relationship after quoting from Marx's *1859 Preface*<sup>63</sup>:

Their [Marx and Engels'] basic idea (quite definitely expressed, for instance, in the passage from Marx quoted above) was that social relations are divided into material and ideological. The latter merely constitute a superstructure on the former, which take shape independent of the will and consciousness of man as (the result) the form of man's activity to maintain his existence.<sup>64</sup>

Lenin divides social relations into two kinds: material relations and ideological relations. The ideological social relations form superstructures. These superstructures comprise social, juridical, political, and ideological ideas.<sup>65</sup>

From the above passages, it is apparent that ideological social relations construct superstructures, but what does Lenin really mean by this? His understanding of ideological social relations can be found in his proposal that the proper explanation for history 'must be sought not in

---

<sup>60</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Political Agitation and "the Class Point of View"', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, p. 342.

<sup>61</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'The Economic Content of Narodism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), i, p. 444.

<sup>62</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', i, p. 180.

<sup>63</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', i, pp. 138–39.

<sup>64</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', i, p. 151.

<sup>65</sup> Lenin, 'The Economic Content of Narodism', i, p. 444.

ideological (e.g., legal or religious), but in material relations'.<sup>66</sup> In another passage, Lenin uses the term 'ideological social relations' to refer to people's consciousness or 'the consciousness of social relations', when he compares the materialist method of understanding the structure of society with the idealist method, which sees social structure as based on ideas which '... pass through man's consciousness'<sup>67</sup> and have prevented people from seeing 'recurrence and regularity in the social phenomena of the various countries, [so that] their science was at best only a description of these phenomena, a collection of raw material'.<sup>68</sup>

In another passage, Lenin elucidates the relationship between people's knowledge and his reflections on nature as follows:

Just as man's knowledge reflects nature (i.e., developing matter), which exists independently of him, so man's social knowledge (i.e., his various views and doctrines philosophical, religious, political, and so forth) reflects the economic system of society.<sup>69</sup>

This passage follows the same line of reasoning as that of Marx's *1859 Preface*. In this reasoning, social knowledge is a reflection of man's activities and this social knowledge represents ideas in various fields such as philosophy, religion, and politics. If ideology means consciousness and social knowledge is a form of consciousness, then ideology will include various kinds of idea from different fields and doctrines. In this sense, ideology means social ideas in any given social condition. It refers to ideas that men have in common, not to any individual's ideas. In short, ideology is a form of social consciousness rather than an idea of the individual. The social aspect of ideology leads to another concept of social structure, that is ideological superstructure.

Ideological superstructure in Lenin's conception is the superstructure that represents social ideas or consciousness under certain social conditions. This superstructure can include various social ideas depending on the economic base. If ideologies are doctrines or systematic sets of ideas that are action-orientated, then an ideological superstructure in this sense can include several ideologies. Thus, there are two levels of ideology: the ideological superstructure that combines all ideological ideas and doctrines, and the ideological doctrines that represent the fundamental classes.

We can summarise Lenin's conception of ideology as follows: the term 'ideology' refers to a more or less systematic doctrine. This doctrine guides and helps people to interpret and

---

<sup>66</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 150.

<sup>67</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 140.

<sup>68</sup> Lenin, 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', I, p. 140, emphasis added.

<sup>69</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Three Component Parts of Marxism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), XIX, p. 25.

understand their environment and know how to interact with their environment. Ideology as a doctrine can be true or false, depending on its content. The content of ideologies can be grounded in various fields, including economics, religion, political thought, and philosophy. But in a class society, all ideologies represent a particular class. In the case of a capitalist society, there are only two main ideologies—the bourgeois and the socialist. For Lenin, while there are many different socialist ideologies, the scientific ideology of Marxism is the only true proletarian ideology.

Ideologists of the proletariat have two fundamental tasks in their struggle against the bourgeoisie. First, they must expose the erroneous ideas of the bourgeois ideology through the scientific method of Marxism. This first task will reduce the power of the bourgeoisie and give rise to another task, that is, the consolidation of the working-class movement. Through Marxism, socialist ideologists create unity, first between the intellectuals of the party (the vanguard), and then between the vanguard and the masses. They do this by making the proletariat aware of their historical tasks and encouraging them to adopt their true class consciousness. Once they understand their situation, they are ready to begin the struggle.

Lenin's conception of ideology is obviously neutral in some ways and positive in others. Ideology as a doctrine can be either true or false, depending on its content. His emphasis on the conscious element of ideology enabling people to understand social situations and take action tends to bring out the positive connotations of the concept. However, this positive connotation is also problematic because the power to unite the masses can be used either by the ruling class or by the dominated class. The conscious element clearly gives it a positive connotation when compared to the idea of ideology as false consciousness. However, it is not an ideology that enables the masses to understand their conditions. For Lenin, only a truly scientific social consciousness, such as Marxism, enables the masses to realise their conditions. Some scholars, like Larrain and McLellan,<sup>70</sup> tend to attribute to Lenin a positive conception of ideology based on the idea of total forms social consciousness, i.e., an ideological superstructure. The question is, if a structure of total forms of social consciousness includes any kinds of ideas (positive, negative, and neutral) regarding the power of structure within that society, how can the sum of those ideas be positive? It is impossible for any human being to perceive and evaluate all forms of ideas in a given society; therefore, we cannot say of all forms of ideas in any society that they are totally negative or positive.

There is a remark to be made on Lenin's conception of ideology. That is his emphasis on the role of the party and ideologists can be seen as paternalistic, and second, his concept of science is a traditional one. Lenin's paternalistic model is a result of his view that a true proletarian consciousness must be introduced to the proletariat from outside, and that task is the responsibility

---

<sup>70</sup> See footnote 16 above.

of the party and the socialist ideologists. The masses cannot understand their situation by themselves, and they need intellectuals to interpret their material circumstances and lead them to the socialist revolution. This top-down model creates a dependent relationship between the masses and their ideologists and the party. How can it be guaranteed that the party will unwaveringly represent the true interests of the masses and not transform from a revolutionary party to an oppressive party that enslaves the masses for its own interests?

The role of ideologists and the party might have been necessary for Lenin's time and political context because there was no alternative way that an uneducated proletarian class could understand their situation and start their struggle against the existing capitalist system other than through Lenin's interpretation of Marxism. Lars T. Lih suggests that in Lenin's time, the role of a party and its organ, such as a newspaper, did not seem to be paternalistic. For Lih, Lenin's objective of the revolution was to bring political freedom to Russia and destroy the Tsarist regime.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Pravda (the USSR official newspaper) as the organ of the party in the period before Stalin, used rational and critical arguments for opposing other ideologies rather than becoming a faithful medium of the party. For example, one of Pravda's authors argues against a member of the communist party who abused his power against peasants in the village of Podkhodzheye<sup>72</sup> and against Bertrand Russell's view of the revolution.<sup>73</sup> Leninism leaned towards paternalism from Stalin's regime onward.<sup>74</sup> It seems that, to some extent, the communist party and its organ tended to be rational and had a critical attitude during the time that the party struggled for revolution and consolidated its power. However, Lih's suggestion cannot remove an inherent trend to top-down rule within the party which required all members to follow the decision of the leaders. This requirement leads to a tendency for power within the party to be exercised from top to bottom, even if top positions in the party come from an election as required by its doctrine of democratic centralism.<sup>75</sup> The critical and rational atmosphere in Lenin's time seemed to be based on Lenin's personal attitude to the party and its organ, and it withered away after his death.

The beginning point of the proletarian struggle against the capitalist system might have been the introduction of the proletarian ideology from outside by intellectuals like Marx, Engels, or Lenin; however, the development of class consciousness of the proletariat could not rely only on those intellectuals. The top-down model and the leadership of the party over the masses can be avoided today, provided not only Lenin's interpretation of Marxism but also alternative Marxist ideologies

---

<sup>71</sup> Lars T. Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to be Done? In Context*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Chicago, Ill. : [Minneapolis, Minn.]: Haymarket Books ; Distributed by Consortium Book Sales, 2008), p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> L. Sosnovsky, 'Examining Communists', *The Living Age*, 1 October 1921.

<sup>73</sup> Carl Radek, 'Bertrand Russell's Sentimental Journey', *The Living Age*, 12 February 1921.

<sup>74</sup> Lih, pp. 398–99.

<sup>75</sup> *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939), p. 198.

are presented, and the proletarian class has a better opportunity to refine and develop its own class consciousness than it had in Lenin's time.

Lenin's salient contribution to the conception of ideology in the tradition is that he makes it possible to assign a negative meaning to the ideology of a particular class (a ruling class) and still have the neutral usages of the term in the *1859 Preface*. Lenin's neutral conception of ideology proposes a way out of this seeming contradiction by introducing the concept of class ideology. Even though Lenin uses the term in the neutral sense more frequently than Marx, who mostly uses it in the negative sense, this does not mean that Lenin's usage of the term departs from and is different from Marx, as some of the abovementioned authors claim. Moreover, Lenin's usage of the term is in line with Marx's usage and contributes some elements that Marx does not explicitly mention, such as the role of the party, scientific ideology, and ideological struggle. This trend towards a neutral conception of ideology is further developed by Antonio Gramsci. The next part of this chapter will show how Gramsci advances the neutral conception of ideology by assigning an adhesive function to ideology and associating ideological ideas with the struggle for supremacy of one class over another in the form of hegemony.

## Gramsci's Conception of Ideology

From Marx and Engels' negative sense and Lenin's neutral sense of ideology, other theorists have continued to develop their conceptions of ideology. Their efforts make substantial contributions to the tradition and enable us to understand how states and societies can manage the crises and retain their rule without using physical force. These contributions can be traced to Gramsci's political practices as one of leaders of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) and his study of the Italian situation after the First World War and the rise of the Fascist regime during his imprisonment. During his imprisonment, Gramsci's study on various topics, such as the Italian historical problem and especially the Italian Unification (Risorgimento, 1848-1871), the problem of party organisation, the intellectual, the concept of ideology, the philosophy of praxis, the theory of political society and civil societies, etc.<sup>76</sup> However, most of Gramsci's ideas were written into disorganised notebooks that he used during his imprisonment. Thus, various scholars have different interpretations of Gramsci, and even similar interpretations can differ in terms of their degree of similarity.

---

<sup>76</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971); Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, European Perspectives, 5 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), II; Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Joseph A Buttigieg, 5 vols (New York; [Chichester]: Columbia University Press, 2007), III.

Scholars interpreting Gramsci's conception of ideology take three different views. The first view puts the emphasis on the function of ideology as cement to unify various social groups; the second view sees ideology as an organisational tool of the political party for class struggles; and the third view interprets ideology as superstructure. Different scholars interpret and emphasise these three views differently. For example, Roger Simon interprets Gramsci's conception of ideology in terms of its function as cement and the materialised organisation of those ideological ideas. For Simon, Gramsci's ideology makes human beings unify and solidifies them into groups; such groups can be religious groups, trade unions, political parties, etc. Those groups that are created by ideological ideas can be perceived as the materialisation of ideological ideas in the material world.<sup>77</sup>

Some scholars combine the three views. For example, Larrain emphasises the first view when he interprets Gramsci's conception of ideology as organic ideology, that is, ideas that function to cement or unify the whole social bloc<sup>78</sup> but also proposes that ideology must be studied as a superstructure of the reflection of all social relations in a given society.<sup>79</sup> Ideology as a superstructure is not a particular form of social consciousness, such as false consciousness or distorted ideas, but a superstructure that can affect and govern members of a given society at a given time.<sup>80</sup> McLellan interprets Gramsci mainly by focusing on the first and second views, that is, the role of organic ideology that can organise the masses and lead them in their class struggles.<sup>81</sup> It should be pointed out that both Larrain and McLellan use the same term "organic ideology" but in different ways. Larrain sees organic ideology in terms of the first view, as the cement or unifying function, but McLellan takes the second view and sees it in terms of the organisational function of ideology for political struggles. Both Larrain and McLellan also state that Gramsci's concept of ideology is neutral,<sup>82</sup> or at least not purely negative.<sup>83</sup>

Some scholars, such as Selinger and Mouffe, interpret Gramsci's conception of ideology in terms of the second view, that is, in terms of the organisational function of ideology for class struggles. For instance, Selinger critically states that Gramsci follows Lenin's voluntarism and avant-gardism which are ideas that emphasise the will of the people and the organisational elements in the struggles for the social revolution.<sup>84</sup> The idea of voluntarism is normally used to

---

<sup>77</sup> Roger Simon, *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*, 1st publ (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), pp. 59–60.

<sup>78</sup> Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, p. 81.

<sup>79</sup> Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p. 80, note 48.

<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that in Larrain's later work, he changes the view of neutral sense of ideology as superstructure to a positive sense. See Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, pp. 78–79, note 129.

<sup>81</sup> McLellan, p. 29.

<sup>82</sup> McLellan, p. 28.

<sup>83</sup> Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, p. 80.

<sup>84</sup> Seliger, p. 113.

describe any ideas that regard the role of social consciousness as more important than the role of the structural base of society in class struggles. Ideology, in Selinger's interpretation of Gramsci, plays an important role in organising the party in the class struggle. Mouffe also interprets Gramsci's in terms of the second view; however, her starting points is quite different from that of Selinger. She states that we should interpret Gramsci on the basis of the idea that human beings acquire their roles and positions through their class struggles. This view seems similar to Marx's *1859 Preface*, but Mouffe also states that ideology functions as the terrain in which the human beings acquire those goals, purposes and means to achieve their goals. Such terrain can be any ideas, such as philosophical ideas or religious ideas, as long as they can make human beings aim for their goals and their means in their class struggles.<sup>85</sup>

All of the abovementioned authors view Gramsci's conception of ideology in either the neutral sense or the positive sense. The cement and organisational functions of ideology can be used by any class, not just the ruling class or the subordinated class. The fact that these are ideological ideas is not sufficient reason to reject or criticise them. The reason for their rejection lies not in the ideological ideas themselves but in the content of those ideas that support particular classes. Moreover, the third view of Gramsci's conception of ideology, as the superstructure of a given society, is much harder to categorise as negative. As superstructure, ideology governs human beings to act and follow a particular set of rules and orders. As long as societies need this kind of superstructure to operate and govern human beings, we can reject or criticise particular rules or social orders but cannot reject the structure that is the result of combinations of those ideas, unless we assume that we can abolish this kind of structure in a particular type of society, such as a classless society.

The interpretations of the abovementioned authors have the following limitations. The first two views can be easily merged together by combining the cement and organisational functions together. For example, ideas that can cement or unify human beings into groups also give them purpose, goals and means in their class struggles. However, the first two views are not compatible with the third view. How does a particular idea that can unify human beings or give them means, reasons and goals for their class struggles become the superstructure of a given society (or exactly ideological superstructure)? If the (ideological) superstructure of a given society governs human beings to act and set their goals according to particular sets of rules, then are the ideas of the subordinated class in this ideological superstructure or not? Is the superstructure in this sense a superstructure of all ideas or just of particular ideas?

In this section, I will examine Gramsci's own works and try to present a more coherent

---

<sup>85</sup> Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. by Chantal Mouffe (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 185–86.

interpretation of his conception of ideology that can avoid the above contradictions (between the first two views and the third view). Thus, I begin with Gramsci's definition of ideology as an adhesive doctrine, the idea of ideological struggle, the relations between Marxism and science, and the usages of the term 'ideological superstructure'.

### **Ideology as an Adhesive Doctrine**

Unlike Lenin, Gramsci is explicitly aware that there are two notions of ideology in the Marxist tradition. One is in the negative sense of the term, and the other is in the non-negative sense. He endorses the non-negative sense of the term by stating that:

Indeed, the meaning which the term "ideology" has assumed in Marxist philosophy implicitly contains a negative value judgement and excludes the possibility that for its founders the origin of ideas should be sought for in sensations, and therefore, in the last analysis, in physiology. "Ideology" itself must be analysed historically, in the terms of the philosophy of praxis, as a superstructure.<sup>86</sup>

Not only does he identify the differences, but he also traces the origin of the term ideology" to de Tracy, who encourages the study of ideas by reference to sensations.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Gramsci argues against the term in the negative sense, which he summarises the negative sense of ideology in three points:

1. ideology is identified as distinct from the structure, and it is asserted that it is not ideology that changes the structures but vice versa.
2. it is asserted that a given political solution is "ideological" i.e., that it is not sufficient to change the structure, although it thinks that it[ideology] can do so; it is asserted that it is useless, stupid, etc.;
3. one then passes to the assertion that every ideology is "pure" appearance, useless, stupid, etc.<sup>88</sup>

These three features of ideology, to which Gramsci attributes a negative sense, present ideology as determined by the economic structure of society; it does not have the capacity to change the structure, and lastly ideology presents itself in the form of 'pure appearance' 'useless' and 'stupid' ideas. Gramsci, who follows Lenin's conception of ideology, emphasises the conscious element of ideology, the idea that with ideology human beings can understand their situations and make a social revolution. This idea brings us back to the problem of relations between Marxism, ideology

---

<sup>86</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 376.

<sup>87</sup> See Gramsci, p. 375. Gramsci uses the term 'Philosophy of Praxis' and 'Marxist philosophy' interchangeably. For a further investigation of 'Philosophy of Praxis', see the fifth chapter.

<sup>88</sup> Gramsci, p. 376.

and superstructure, and these problems will be elucidated in the following three sections. The first considers Gramsci's definition of ideology as a doctrine, the function of which is to organise social groups. The second section considers the relations between Marxism, ideology, and science. And the last section considers the problem of the ideological superstructure.

Gramsci's usage of the term 'ideology' comes close to that of Lenin,<sup>89</sup> who based his conceptions on Marx's *1859 Preface*.<sup>90</sup> There are various types of ideology depending on their content. There can be ideologies on the topic of economics, like free-trade ideology;<sup>91</sup> or on the topic of religion, such as puritan ideologies;<sup>92</sup> or even on the topic of politics, like Fascist ideology<sup>93</sup> or the dictatorial ideological current of the Right.<sup>94</sup>

Like Lenin, Gramsci never provides a clear definition of his conception of ideology but, in several places throughout his writing, he gives hints, as when he describes the basis of ideology as follows:

...we feel ourselves linked to men who are now extremely old, and who represent for us the past which still lives among us ... which is one of the elements of the present and one of the premises of the future. We also feel ourselves linked to our children, to the generations which are being born and growing up, and for which we are responsible. (The cult of tradition, which has a tendentious value, is something different; it implies a choice and a determinate goal that is to say, it is the basis for an ideology.)<sup>95</sup>

This 'cult of tradition' is the idea that people link themselves to the past and take this link as a guide for action in the present and of their expectations for future generations. For Gramsci, ideology comprises at least two components. The first is its historical attachment which links people to their historical situations and the second is its role in guiding conduct and helping people achieve their goals.

In his argument with the famous sociologist, Robert Michels, Gramsci proposes that we

---

<sup>89</sup> Gramsci uses the terms 'ideology or doctrine' when criticising Bukharin's work. See Gramsci, p. 439. Bukharin or Nikolai Bukharin (1888-1938), the Bolshevik, is the author of *Popular Manual* in which Gramsci argues against Bukharin's attempt to adopt a particular method from natural science into Marxism. Bukharin participated in the beginning of the Russian revolution. He gained the considerable power after the death of Lenin, but he lost the power struggle in the party to his rival, Stalin. And that incident led to his death and to the rise of Stalin.

<sup>90</sup> Gramsci, pp. 162-64.

<sup>91</sup> Gramsci, p. 159.

<sup>92</sup> Gramsci, p. 299.

<sup>93</sup> Gramsci, p. 120.

<sup>94</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Joseph A Buttigieg, 5 vols (New York; [Chichester]: Columbia University Press, 2007), III, p. 108.

<sup>95</sup> Gramsci, p. 147.

should examine political organisation by asking 'how it comes into existence, the first groups which constitute it, the ideological controversies through which its program and its conception of the world and of life are formed?'<sup>96</sup> Gramsci also explains that ideology is 'an intermediate phase between philosophy and day-to-day practice'.<sup>97</sup> In both cases, he is suggesting that ideologies are conceptions of the world that translate philosophies into courses of action. It should be noted that in Gramsci's understanding, philosophy, religion, and common sense are different conceptions of the world, and they differ regarding the level of coherence in their reasoning. Philosophy has the most coherence, and common sense has the least.<sup>98</sup>

In political parties or organisations, ideological controversies include problems of programs and conceptions of the world. In this sense, ideology has at least two levels of operation: one for individuals and another for organisations. Ideology not only refers to historical attachment and guidance for individuals but also comprises programs or courses of action and conceptions of the world for organisations. Gramsci advances this conception of ideology to explain the formation of political organisations, such as a political party or even the state.<sup>99</sup>

He also presents various criteria to differentiate ideologies. The first criterion is the distinction between the bad and the good sense of the word, by reference to its content and its capacity to transform ideas into social institutions. In the bad sense of the word, ideology takes the form of 'a dogmatic system of eternal and absolute truths'<sup>100</sup> or 'blind ideological fanaticism'.<sup>101</sup> It should be noted that a dogmatic system of eternal truth and a blind ideological fanaticism are two different things: one is identified by the content; the other is identified by the way in which believers adhere to their belief. Those two features of ideology in the bad sense of the word can occur either concurrently or independently. In contrast, some forms of philosophy that perform as cultural movements can be defined as ideology in the good sense of the word, as Gramsci explains:

But at this point we reach the fundamental problem facing any conception of the world, any philosophy which has become a cultural movement, a "religion", a "faith", any that has produced a form of practical activity or will in which the philosophy is contained as an implicit theoretical "premiss". One might say "ideology" here, but on condition that the word is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, in law, in economic activity

---

<sup>96</sup> Gramsci, p. 150.

<sup>97</sup> Gramsci, p. 427.

<sup>98</sup> Gramsci, pp. 325-26.

<sup>99</sup> Gramsci, p. 146.

<sup>100</sup> Gramsci, p. 407.

<sup>101</sup> Gramsci, p. 343.

and in all manifestations of individual and collective life.<sup>102</sup>

When a particular form of philosophy manifests as a cultural movement or as a religion and integrates itself with various parts of human activity such as art, law, or economics, it becomes an ideology in the highest sense of the word. Hence, philosophical ideas become ideological ideas only when they cause men to establish social organisations. Two points should be noted from this passage: the first is that, for Gramsci, ideology is one of several conceptions of the world, but this conception can be either good or bad depending on its capacity and content. If it takes the form of an eternal truth or a dogmatic doctrine or fanatical faith, this is ideology in the bad sense of the word. If an idea creates a cultural movement for change, it becomes an ideology in the good sense of the word. In this case, a theoretical idea is transformed into a practical idea which gives men a goal and guides them in their actions for social change. The second point is that an ideology or conception of the world does not rely on its content alone; ideas or conceptions of the world cannot become cultural movements or take roles as social institutions by themselves. They require agents to propagate them to the masses.

Gramsci's second criterion for differentiating ideologies, is the distinction between organic and arbitrary:

One must therefore distinguish between historically organic ideologies—that is, ideologies that are necessary to a given structure—and arbitrary, rationalistic, “willed” ideologies. Insofar as they are historically necessary, ideologies have a validity that is “psychological”; they “organise” the human masses, they establish the ground on which human move, become conscious of their position, struggle, etc. As for “arbitrary” ideologies, they produce nothing other than individual “movements,” polemics, etc. (but they are not completely useless, either, because they function like the error that by opposing truth affirms it).<sup>103</sup>

In the second criterion, there are two sub-criteria. The first is that ideological ideas must relate to their social structures, and the second is that they must have the capacity to organise the movement.<sup>104</sup> An ideology that fails to meet the first sub-criterion is one that is based on pure or rational ideas and presents itself as independent from any given historical social structure. This form of ideology cannot be used to lead the great masses to overcome their suffering or to make them conscious of their social conflicts. This idea presupposes that only ideologies that present and connect themselves with a given social structure have the capacity to make the masses conscious

---

<sup>102</sup> Gramsci, p. 328.

<sup>103</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 171.

<sup>104</sup> See Gramsci, p. 445.

of their class struggle.

When ideology makes the masses conscious of their conflicts and organises them in their class struggle, this ideology also creates the unity of a movement. For Gramsci, this unity presupposes a leader or a group of leaders, those who organise, and others who are organised. Ideological ideas function as the cement between leaders and the led to form a cohesive movement. Gramsci elaborates on this function of ideology when he describes the strength of Catholicism in creating unity in its church:

This problem is that of preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc which that ideology serves to cement and to unify. The strength of religions, and of the Catholic Church in particular, has lain, and still lies, in the fact that they feel very strongly the need for the doctrinal unity of the whole mass of the faithful and strive to ensure that the higher intellectual stratum does not get separated from the lower.<sup>105</sup>

But an ideology does not necessarily need to meet both of these sub-criteria. Ideological ideas and their connection to their historical structures can be identified by analysing the content of those ideas. Their correspondence to a given structure cannot automatically produce a movement or organise the great masses of the people by itself. For Gramsci, even ideologies which do not necessarily connect in their content with any present social structure can be used to organise the masses. He acknowledges the power of a religion, such as the Catholic Church, to organise the masses. In this way, various religions around the world, which reflect their connection to a previous social structure, may still have the power to organise the masses.

In another passage, Gramsci seems to acknowledge this problem by stating that:

It is evident that this kind of mass creation cannot just happen "arbitrarily", around any ideology, simply because of the formally constructive will of a personality or a group which puts it forward solely on the basis of its own fanatical philosophical or religious convictions. Mass adhesion or non-adhesion to an ideology is the real critical test of the rationality and historicity of modes of thinking. Any arbitrary constructions are pretty rapidly eliminated by historical competition, even if sometimes, through a combination of immediately favourable circumstances, they manage to enjoy popularity of a kind; whereas constructions which respond to the demands of a complex organic period of history always impose themselves and prevail in the end, even though they may pass through several intermediary phases during which they manage to affirm themselves only in more or less bizarre and heterogeneous combinations.<sup>106</sup>

This critical test (mass adhesion or non-adhesion) presupposes that ideologies which correspond to a given current social structure are more coherent and can be far more durable and have more adhesive power than those that do not correspond in such a way. It seems that Gramsci believes

---

<sup>105</sup> Gramsci, p. 328.

<sup>106</sup> Gramsci, p. 342.

that the historical development will eventually crush any ideologies which are arbitrary because they do not correspond to their historical conditions. On the other hand, ideologies which correctly represent current politico-economic situations can attract the great masses more readily than those that do not. These ideologies can withstand any criticism in the long run because they can provide answers, or at least courses of action. They refer to their current situations and do not refer to abstract and mysterious concepts. In the end, these 'true' ideologies will win the competition against various 'arbitrary' ideologies. For example, the idea that God has bestowed power on the Papacy over the sovereigns of any kingdom on earth would have had tremendous power and influence in the medieval age, but this idea has less persuasive power in modern Europe now that the masses are familiar with the idea of a secular state.

We can reconstruct these two sub-criteria of ideology as follows. On the one hand, ideas or conceptions of the world can be abstract and taken as eternal truths. Once these ideas detach themselves from their current social structures, they come to have less durable power to organise the masses. On the other hand, ideas or conceptions of the world which correspond to a given or current social structure acquire the capacity to transform the great masses and make them aware of their revolutionary roles and goals. The metaphor of the economic base and superstructure can be used to understand this point. Throughout the course of history, the economic base of society is shaped by the development of the society's productive forces and provides a basis for ideas and politico-judicial organisations. At first, those ideas and organisations do correspond with the productive forces, but over time, the invention of new forms of practice need new forms of political and legal relations to sustain their development. The existing politico-judicial relations and organisations come in conflict with the new practices and the new practices start to detach themselves from their historical structures. For instance, the birth of commercial cities and practices in the European medieval age came into conflict with the Catholic Church's prohibiting usury. The masses, as they go about their everyday life, begin to question the authority of ideas and the legitimacy of politico-judicial organisations, as freemen in the free cities of Europe in the late Middle Ages questioned the authority of the emperor, the Church, and their teachings. The new way of life in the free city did not correspond to the teachings of the Church.

From the political struggle aspect, ideologies are conceptions of the world which have the function of organising the masses and creating ideological unity between the leaders and the led. These ideologies also include programs and goals for the members of an organisation. In this way,

there are numerous ideologies competing to attract support from the masses and organise them. The ideas of any ideology that aims to create cultural movements for change and aims to create a new type of society must correspond to the development of the current economic structures. If those ideologies cannot provide this correspondence, sooner or later their movement will lose its ideological unity and will disintegrate.

Gramsci uses the term 'ideology' in the neutral sense, that is, to refer to a situation in which there are several competing ideologies. If these ideological ideas take the form of organic ideologies (and Marxism is one of them) which can be used to organise the masses and lead them to bring about a social revolution, then these ideologies take on a positive sense. But at the same time, ideology needs agents to bring those ideas to the masses. This idea leads Gramsci to emphasise the role of intellectuals as agents in ideological struggles. This role of the intellectual in ideological struggles will be elaborated upon in the next section.

## **Ideological Struggles**

For Gramsci, ideologies play a vital role in creating unity within various groups, movements, and organisations. They serve as the cement to create cohesion in organisations such as the Catholic church, or any other religious organisation,<sup>107</sup> political party<sup>108</sup> or even the state.<sup>109</sup> In this sense, the aim or goal of ideological struggle can be understood in two ways. The first is to maintain the current unity for those already in power in an organisation and the second is to destroy the current unity and establish a new one. Gramsci explains why social revolutions did not occur in Western European countries which were far more advanced in their economic development and productive forces than a 'backward' country like Russia. He addresses this question by focusing on the level of the superstructure in which fundamental classes compete to sustain or destroy the current leadership, and the role of agents in these struggles.

For Gramsci, there are two kinds of intellectual: 'organic intellectuals', who take a role in organising social groups and 'traditional intellectuals', who claim to represent the past and uninterrupted history of mankind and claim to be independent and outside the struggle between the dominant groups.<sup>110</sup> He describes the differences between these two kinds of intellectual:

---

<sup>107</sup> Gramsci, p. 328.

<sup>108</sup> Gramsci, pp. 64, 73.

<sup>109</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 234.

<sup>110</sup> Gramsci, pp. 7-8.

One of the characteristics of the intellectuals as a crystallised social group (one, that is, which sees itself as continuing uninterruptedly through history and thus independent of the struggle of groups rather than as the expression of a dialectical process through which every dominant social group elaborates its own category of intellectuals) is precisely that of connecting itself, in the ideological sphere, with a preceding intellectual category by means of a common conceptual nomenclature.<sup>111</sup>

For Gramsci, conceptions of the world can continue to exist, even after the bonds to their social structures have perished, as in the case of some religious or philosophical ideas. One can claim that those ideas to some extents are independent of their socio-economic circumstances. Thus, traditional intellectuals are those who claim their ideas are independent of their social conditions and try to preserve those ideas and continue the tradition.

In contrast with traditional intellectuals who do not directly belong to any dominant groups, dominant groups or classes require agents to organise them. These agents can be called 'organic intellectuals'. The most important task of organic intellectuals, for Gramsci, is to organise and facilitate the development of a new class.<sup>112</sup> This 'specialised' task must be done by someone in that class itself or by their agents who are capable of performing it.<sup>113</sup> This task is not limited solely to the economic field but also extends to the social and political field.<sup>114</sup> Gramsci refers to this as 'the reform of moral and intellectual life, in words to fit culture to the sphere of practice'.<sup>115</sup>

Organic intellectuals who organise social groups can be classified by their relation to the class they assist. This is the class that possesses the means of production (labour or capital, under capitalism) in economic fields, such as industry associations, commercial councils, or trade unions. These intellectuals also extend their scope to include social and political fields for furthering their groups' economic interests. At the national or state level, if a social group can bring other social groups under its intellectual and moral leadership by compromising and sacrificing peripheral parts of its interests and maintaining its core interest, it can create a 'hegemonic bloc'<sup>116</sup> or an 'ideological bloc'.<sup>117</sup> A hegemonic or ideological bloc can be used to either support the existing class rule or to prepare for a social revolution to overthrow the current system of domination. If intellectuals are to use ideology to overthrow the existing class system, they have to convince the

---

<sup>111</sup> Gramsci, p. 452.

<sup>112</sup> Gramsci, p. 6.

<sup>113</sup> Gramsci, pp. 5-6.

<sup>114</sup> Gramsci, p. 5.

<sup>115</sup> Gramsci, p. 453.

<sup>116</sup> Gramsci, p. 161.

<sup>117</sup> Gramsci, pp. 60-61.

masses and other social groups to recognise the contradiction in the structure; then a new ideological bloc can emerge.<sup>118</sup> The correspondence of ideas and circumstances becomes apparent when those ideas expose the contradictions between the economic base and its superstructure. The development of a historical or ideological bloc is a result of translating ideas into practice. Reflecting on the contradictions within the structure is the starting point of future revolutions. Organic intellectuals must absorb traditional intellectuals into their ranks to achieve the new ideological bloc:

One of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer "ideologically" the traditional intellectuals, but this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals.<sup>119</sup>

In the advanced capitalist state, competition between organic and traditional intellectuals is the process of absorbing and reabsorbing each other and integrating or disintegrating the other's unity. When Gramsci uses the term 'war of position', he is referring to this process. He describes it as the battleground of intellectuals and suggests that those who win this struggle will gain absolute victory.<sup>120</sup> The 'war of position' is a war of attrition for intellectual superiority. To achieve this superiority, intellectuals of the fundamental groups need to develop their own coherent and convincing theories and conceptions of the world and to absorb or gain support from intellectuals in other groups.

For Gramsci, the process of absorbing and reabsorbing intellectuals from various sides is long and arduous. Its purpose is not to introduce a new ready-made ideology from outside to win another camp of intellectuals or to create unity between the leaders and the led, but it is to critique the existing ideology and the current worldview and activities of the ruling class. In this sense, the starting point of the ideological struggle begins with the critique of the common sense that is the vaguest form of social consciousness and develop it into a more sophisticated form of social consciousness such as religion or philosophy.<sup>121</sup> Therefore, the war of position between two fundamental classes is not an ideological struggle to impose a form of class consciousness on other classes as Larrain suggests.<sup>122</sup> The critique of common sense and exposure of the system of domination does not eventually create a new purified form of social consciousness for a particular

---

<sup>118</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 340.

<sup>119</sup> Gramsci, p. 10.

<sup>120</sup> Gramsci, p. 235.

<sup>121</sup> Gramsci, p. 331.

<sup>122</sup> Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology*, p. 83.

class. The new 'organic' ideology of the new class is a combination of several ideas from different classes and social groups which creates a unified form of social consciousness that can bind several subordinated groups or classes together against the dominant class. Thus, Marxism as a theory for exposing social contradictions that operate within the common sense of the masses can help the process of ideological struggle. There is no need for a true or purified class consciousness guide to be brought to the dominated class from outside to enable them to struggle against the dominant class.

Unlike Lenin, Gramsci can avoid the problem of workers having to adopt true class consciousness from without, which is inherent in Lenin's conception of ideology, because the starting point of ideological struggle is to criticise common sense and develop it into a new good sense with guidance from a more elaborated world-view such as philosophy.<sup>123</sup> This new good sense will be developed to create a new collective will between members of subordinated classes and create a new system of relations between various forces within a given society to form a new state.<sup>124</sup> Gramsci calls this the process of forming a 'national popular will'.<sup>125</sup> As long as organic intellectuals can create new ideas and modify common sense to create a new collective will, this collective will benefits all members of the subordinated class. This new ideological unity, or the new form of social consciousness, can include elements from the previous dominant class or even from the current ruling class. For instance, Marx integrated and borrowed ideas from the classical school of political economy in *Capital*, while Gramsci used Benedetto Croce's idea of an 'intellectual bloc' to develop his idea of an 'ideological bloc'.<sup>126</sup>

Gramsci emphasises the role of the party, which is to take a leading role in the war of position and create a collective will; however, the relationship between the party as the leader and the masses as the led is taken to be an interdependent relationship, not a top-down relationship. Gramsci describes this as a dialectic relationship between the intellectuals and the masses.<sup>127</sup> The common sense of the masses provides the ground for the intellectuals to critique and expose the system of domination by the ruling class. The plan, theory, and practice of the intellectuals or party are tested by the practices of the masses and the members of the party in their political

---

<sup>123</sup> Gramsci, p. 423.

<sup>124</sup> Gramsci, p. 129.

<sup>125</sup> Gramsci, p. 421.

<sup>126</sup> Gramsci, p. 73. Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was the Italian Hegelian philosopher who was the minister for education before Mussolini rose to power.

<sup>127</sup> Gramsci, p. 334.

struggles.<sup>128</sup> The intellectuals and the party need to learn the results of their political practices from the masses, and the masses need to upgrade their ideas into more developed and sophisticated forms. Gramsci says this process is one where ‘every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher’.<sup>129</sup> This idea makes the party less prone to the problem of paternalism than Lenin’s view of the party as a vanguard.

Gramsci borrows the term ‘war of position’ from the military sciences of his age. Two types of warfare were dominant in his era. One was the frontal attack or ‘war of manoeuvre’. This frontal attack was a direct confrontation using machine guns, grenades, or cannons to kill soldiers on the other side. The other was ‘trench warfare’. That was a series of battles to gain control over the opponents’ area by creating a system of trenches to preserve the line of defence while, at the same time, attempting to breach the other side. These two metaphors display the two phases of the political struggle. In the first phase, those fundamental groups prepare and elaborate their attack by creating their own, or destroying the other, ideological bloc before launching a frontal attack. Gramsci calls this a ‘war of position’<sup>130</sup> and the second (‘war of manoeuvre’) phase, one of the fundamental groups seizes state power by using direct force.

This metaphor can be used to portray ideological struggles which are series of battles between the two types of intellectual: organic and traditional. One is the struggle to establish a new social order, and the other is the struggle to maintain the current social order of the ruling class. These battles begin when the organic intellectuals on one side tries to gain intellectual supremacy over the organic intellectuals on the other side. They must conduct these battles with three objectives. First, they must create unity in their own social group. Second, they must gain support and consent from the masses and other social groups. And finally, they must absorb the traditional intellectuals in order to win intellectual and moral leadership over the rest of society. If intellectuals of the new social groups can achieve all of these objectives, as Cavour’s Moderate party did to succeed in the Risorgimento of Italian unification,<sup>131</sup> they will become the new ruling class.

---

<sup>128</sup> Gramsci, p. 335.

<sup>129</sup> Gramsci, p. 350. This idea clearly comes from *Theses on Feuerbach* number 3.

<sup>130</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 168.

<sup>131</sup> Cavour or Camillo Paolo Filippo Giulio Benso (1810-1861) is a leading figure in Italy unification, he is a founder of the Moderate party and the generative motor of the Kingdom of Piedmont in the war of Italian Independence and unification. His party can absorb the prominent militant figure like Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882) who leads an army and capture the kingdoms of Sicily in the process of unification.

On the other hand, if organic intellectuals of the ruling class gain the upper hand in these battles by reabsorbing organic intellectuals of the dominated groups and detaching them from their social groups and the masses, then social revolution will be postponed, and the current ruling class or groups will remain in power. This is Gramsci's attempt to answer the question of why the revolution has not occurred in the advanced capitalist states in the west, while it had occurred in less developed countries like Russia. One of the Lenin's successes in the Russian Revolution was to absorb and win over other intellectual groups, such as the Mensheviks, and to propose the idea of a new state, which became the USSR, although the Bolsheviks lost their hegemony over the course of the civil war which weakened their capacity to rule with the consent of the masses. The answer gives rise to another question: how can subaltern groups form and how do they gain mastery over their opponent, the ruling class? The answer is through the creation of historical blocs and winning the 'war of position'. If a subaltern group succeeds in this, then it can bring about a revolution, create a new state and become the new ruling class, as the capitalist class did on the brink of collapse of the feudal societies in Western Europe.

## **Marxism and Science**

The present chapter showed how Lenin examines Marxism, ideology, and science to conclude that Marxism is a scientific ideology, which fuses ideology with science to construct a political doctrine that can organise the masses and help them realise their aims. In Lenin's conception of science, the programs and action plans which are developed from this political doctrine are as scientific as any natural scientific ideas such as those of the atom or a chemical formula. Gramsci's understanding of the relations between science, Marxism and ideology is not the same as that of Lenin. The next section begins with Gramsci's use of the term 'science' and its relevance to Marxism.

Gramsci uses the term 'science' in a broad sense. For example, he considers that in the Middle Ages, the Christian Church monopolised 'religious ideology, which is the philosophy and science of the age'.<sup>132</sup> If religious ideas are the scientific ideas of their age, the term 'science' does not have the same meaning for Gramsci as it does for Lenin, since Gramsci is clearly using the term as an explanation of the world at a given time. In the Roman Catholic religion, science is taken from Aristotle and Arab Muslims. In several places, Gramsci locates science in different disciplines

---

<sup>132</sup> Gramsci, p.7.

or bodies of knowledge, such as economic science,<sup>133</sup> historical science,<sup>134</sup> the political science of Machiavelli's *The Prince*,<sup>135</sup> political science as a science of state,<sup>136</sup> and philosophy as a science of man.<sup>137</sup> In this sense, 'science' for Gramsci is a broad term referring to content and methods of different disciplines, not just the modern natural sciences.

Gramsci also argues against Bukharin who tries to merge Marxism (or in Gramsci's terminology 'Philosophy of Praxis') with natural science:

But it is the concept itself of 'science', as it emerges from the Popular Manual, which requires to be critically destroyed. It is taken root and branch from the natural sciences, as if these were the only sciences or science par excellence, as decreed by positivism. ... It has to be established that every research has its own specific method and constructs its own specific method and constructs its own specific science, and that the method has developed and been elaborated together with the development and elaboration of this specific research and science and forms with them a single whole. To think that one can advance the progress of a work of scientific research by applying to it a standard method, chosen because it has given good results in another field of research to which it was naturally suited, is a strange delusion which has little to do with science.<sup>138</sup>

If different disciplines have their bodies of knowledge and their methods, it cannot be assumed that a method associated with one discipline can be generalised and used in other disciplines with different content. The methods of the natural or physical sciences may be used in other sciences like history, economics, or political sciences, but there is no guarantee that those methods will have similar success.

Unlike Lenin, who relies on the scientific status for guaranteeing the goal and practices of the doctrine, Gramsci takes a different approach. For him, Marxism is a philosophical doctrine. However, the difference between Marxism and all other philosophies is that Marxism consciously exposes social contradictions and presents a way to overcome them, while other philosophical doctrines merely unconsciously reveal some social contradictions which they try to reconcile in their philosophical teachings.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, Marxism as a discipline has its own body of knowledge and methodology. Borrowing methods from other scientific disciplines can develop Marxism into a more advanced state, but it does not necessarily ensure the power of Marxism. Gramsci argues that the power of Marxism lies

---

<sup>133</sup> Gramsci, pp. 401, 410-11.

<sup>134</sup> Gramsci, p. 233.

<sup>135</sup> Gramsci, pp. 125, 133, 135.

<sup>136</sup> Gramsci, p. 248.

<sup>137</sup> Gramsci, p. 355.

<sup>138</sup> Gramsci, pp. 438-39.

<sup>139</sup> Gramsci, p. 404.

in its ability to expose social contradictions and help human beings transform the structure of human activities and overcome their social contradictions. It does not need to connect itself with the physical sciences to be identified as a ‘scientific ideology’, as Lenin suggests. In short, by following Gramsci’s reasoning on this topic and using the term ‘science’ in the broader sense, it can be concluded that Marxism is a scientific discipline—not in the same sense as the natural sciences, as the bodies of knowledge and the methodologies are different, but in the sense of the social sciences disciplines, such as economics or political science. The power of Marxism is to expose social contradictions and present a plan and program to overcome those difficulties and create a new type of society.

### **Ideological Superstructure**

Ideologies can be any ideas, but these ideas must serve the function of organising a social group by giving them goals and programs to achieve their goals. Ideologies are also the cement that creates cohesion within social groups. These ideologies are created and elaborated upon by intellectuals. It cannot be a surprise that, for Gramsci, an ideological superstructure is a combination of several ideologies together in one structure. This superstructure is a reflection of the complexity of social relations in a given society.<sup>140</sup>

Unlike Lenin, who does not elaborate on the concept of the ideological superstructure, Gramsci puts his effort into understanding the materialised structure of the ideological superstructure of a given society. If several ideas in a particular society combine into an ideological superstructure, they cannot proliferate themselves. They need agents to proliferate them and organisations to accept responsibility for this task. Such organisations include libraries and publishers.<sup>141</sup> Gramsci proposes a list of organisations which proliferate ideological ideas:

It would be interesting to study concretely the forms of cultural organisation which keep the ideological world in movement within a given country, and to examine how they function in practice. ... The school, at all levels, and the Church, are the biggest cultural organisations in every country, in terms of the number of people they employ. Then there are newspapers, magazines and the book trade and private educational institutions, either those which are complementary to the state system, or cultural institutions like the Popular Universities. Other professions include among their specialised activities a fair proportion of cultural activity. For example, doctors, army officers, the legal profession.<sup>142</sup>

The materialisations of an ideological superstructure, which are schools, the Church, universities,

---

<sup>140</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 340.

<sup>141</sup> Gramsci, p. 461.

<sup>142</sup> Gramsci, pp. 341–42.

or any other organisations, depend on scholars and religious intellectuals to take responsibility for transmitting ideas and conceptions of the world from generation to generation. Ideological superstructure in this sense is not a superstructure of all ideas but of a particular set of ideas that combine into a superstructure. This superstructure materialises itself into various kinds of organisation that can be the beginning point in the class struggles between the ruling class and the subordinated class to win and establish hegemony over the rest of society. Both classes have to gain support from the masses through various kinds of materialised ideological superstructures. In this sense, Gramsci's study is a contribution to the tradition of the study of ideology in class struggles pioneered by Lenin. His contribution takes the tradition to a new level with his view of these organisations as the battleground for the ideological struggles between organic and traditional intellectuals. This material manifestation of the ideological superstructure provides a departure point for Althusser in his attempt to establish the 'first' general theory of ideology, which will be elaborated in the next chapter.

Gramsci's conception of ideology is clearly neutral, given that he acknowledges both arbitrary ideology and organic ideology. However, his contribution to the tradition rests on his ideas of organic ideology, ideological bloc, hegemony<sup>143</sup> and war of position. These ideas tend to have a positive aspect when they are used to create unity within political organisations; however, this positive aspect can be used by either the ruling class or the subordinated classes. Thus, the positive aspect of his idea is not in the concept of ideology itself but in the class in which that ideology is represented. If ideology functions to make the masses conscious of their situation, this ideology is clearly positive and desirable from the point of the new social revolution; however, if the ruling class creates or modifies its ideology and reabsorbs the intellectuals of the dominated classes and secures support from the masses, then this ideology is negative and undesirable from the perspective of the next social revolution. This follows the same trend exhibited by Lenin as described earlier; however, the ideas of arbitrary and organic ideology are elaborated and extended to be compatible with the political situation in Italy in Gramsci's time, which was obviously different from the situation in Russia. It must be asked whether this neutral conception of ideology or Marx and Engels' negative conception is the most coherent when comparing the two, or can the apparent contradictions between them be overcome to produce a more acceptable conception in the tradition? This question and the answer will be elaborated upon at length in the

---

<sup>143</sup> Perry Anderson, 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, I, 1976, 5-78 (p. 16), Anderson points out that the concept of hegemony is originated from Lenin.

sixth chapter.

To summarise Gramsci's conception of ideology, ideological ideas function as cement to organise and unite social groups. Marxism, as one of the several conceptions of the world, has this cohesive function. But it is superior to other conceptions because it corresponds to the actual structure of society, and it has been consciously used to expose and overcome social contradictions. There is no need for Marxism as an ideological idea to be necessarily scientific in Lenin's sense, which is in the sense of the natural and physical sciences, because they are different in their content and in their methods of inquiry. Lastly, Gramsci draws our attention to the importance of ideological superstructure as the battleground for the ideological struggles between organic and traditional intellectuals.

The ideas of ideology in the neutral sense from Lenin and Gramsci play an importance role in the development of the theory of ideology. Ideology is used not only to criticise a particular form of social consciousness, but also to organise the masses in their political struggles. Several ideas are also introduced into the tradition, including Marxism as scientific ideology, philosophy of praxis, and ideological superstructure as a battle ground for the struggle for hegemony (in Gramsci's sense). All of these represent a puzzle for scholars addressing the question of how ideology in the negative sense, as it is mostly used by Marx and Engels, is compatible with ideology in the positive sense, as it is used by Lenin and Gramsci. In the next chapter, I will present Althusser's view of ideology and try to dissolve this dissimilarity and also create a new dichotomy between science and ideology.

## CHAPTER III: ALTHUSSER'S CONCEPTIONS OF IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

From the previous chapter of Lenin and Gramsci's conceptions of ideology, the rise of the neutral sense of ideology is already presented, other theorists have continued to develop their conceptions of ideology in this trend. Their efforts make substantial contributions to the tradition and enable us to understand how states and societies can manage the crises and retain their rule without using physical force. These contributions can be traced to Althusser who explains the ideological apparatuses that were used to sustain class rule in France.

The rise of the neutral sense of ideology changes the landscape of ideas and their relationship with social reality. Marxism becomes one of the ideologies competing against other ideologies, such as bourgeois ideology and agrarian ideology. The problem is that if Marxism is also an ideology, how does it differ from any other ideology? If there is nothing different about it, Marxism cannot criticise other class ideas by labelling them as ideologies. Lenin provides one solution by combining Marxism and science and suggesting that Marxism is a scientific ideology whereas others are not. Gramsci also accepts Marxism as an ideology but presents another solution by seeing Marxism as a philosophy of praxis. A philosophy of praxis operates as a form of worldview and a sophisticated ideology that enables people to unify theory and practice. The relationship between science, ideology and Marxism becomes a prime area of interest for theoretical elaboration. This tripartite relationship leads to Althusser's conception of ideology. He overturns the previous theories by divorcing Marxism from ideology but retaining the relationship between Marxism and science.

Althusser's conception of ideology offers us a different route from Marx, Lenin, and Gramsci for consideration of the relationship between Marxism, science, and ideology. For Althusser, Marxism can gain the superior status of a scientific doctrine without falling to the level of an ideology. Althusser relocates Marxism and includes it amongst scientific ideas. However, his conception of the nature of ideology also differs when compared to the other Marxists' conceptions mentioned earlier. There are severe criticisms of his conception of ideology from different angles within and without the tradition. This chapter starts by outlining these criticisms. This will be followed by Althusser's definition of ideology, the idea of ideological struggle, the relations between Marxism and science, and the different usages of the term 'ideological superstructure.'

We can summarise the way that scholars interpret Althusser's conception of ideology by distinguishing four aspects. The first aspect is the objectivity of ideology. The second is the general

function and specific function of ideology. The third aspect is the duality of science and ideology, and the final aspect is the idea of ideological state apparatuses. Scholars mostly hold critical views of the first three aspects of Althusser's conception of ideology but their emphasises are different. The fourth aspect has received only mild criticism and a more favourable reception.

The first two aspects, the objectivity, and the functions of ideology, can be categorised as problems of definition. Scholars, such as Callinicos and Larrain, argue that Althusser uses the idea of objectivity of ideology to refute the idea of false consciousness. For them, Althusser's ideology is not a personal or individual twisted or false consciousness but social consciousness of the structures of society.<sup>1</sup> Ideology in this sense can also affect human beings in their transformation of the social reality around them. An example of this kind of ideology is Marx's idea of commodity fetishism that facilitates capitalist society by replacing the social relations between human beings with social relations between things, primarily money and commodities.<sup>2</sup> McLellan does not share the same view of objectivity as Larrain and Callinicos, but he does share their view that Althusser is not concerned about the falsehood of ideology but puts the emphasis on the function of ideology as quasi-material existence.<sup>3</sup>

The objectivity of ideology relates to the general function and the specific function of ideology. The general function of ideology is to make human beings subjects. Subjects are agents or individuals who act or practice under particular ideas that give them their meaning and goals, such as citizens or human beings. This process operates without anyone's conscious knowledge. This general function is eternal as long as human beings live and strive. Ideology provides meaning for human beings' actions, interpersonal relations, and the relations between human beings and the environment surrounding them. In short, they need ideology to enable them to practice meaningfully.<sup>4</sup> For instance, through the operation of ideology, I can act as a good student, take the role of a citizen, and also act as master of the private properties that belong to me. However, Larrain points to a different direction for the general function of ideology, observing that ideology functions as cement to join several parts of society to create a whole.<sup>5</sup> McLellan combines both possibilities, stating that the general function of ideology is to create the subject and also to cement societal parts together to make a whole.<sup>6</sup> Ideology in its general function is eternal and has no history. For Larrain, Rancière and McLellan, the notion of no history is the sense that

---

<sup>1</sup> Jorge Larrain, *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p. 155; Alex Callinicos, *Althusser's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), p. 61.

<sup>2</sup> Callinicos, p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> David McLellan, *Ideology, Concepts in the Social Sciences* (Milton Keynes: Open Univ. Pr, 1986), p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> Callinicos, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Larrain, p. 156; Jacques Rancière, *Althusser's Lesson*, trans. by Emiliano Battista (London; New York: Continuum, 2011), p. 130.

<sup>6</sup> McLellan, pp. 32–33.

ideology exists and will continue to exist as long as there are human societies, no matter what types of society they are. Ideology becomes a social structure for human practice just as language provides a structure for communication.

The specific function of ideology is to create subjects within particular systems of class domination.<sup>7</sup> This specific function of ideology is a historical product; therefore, its content varies from era to era and from society to society. For example, in the system of class domination during the medieval age, ideology created subjects as serfs; these are different from subjects created as wage labours in capitalist society. There are also differences in terms of the systems of domination and exploitation between these two types of subjects and societies.

The duality between science and ideology is unanimously rejected by scholars. This duality also derives from the idea that the general function of ideology is to create subject. Most scholars point out that Althusser demarcates science from ideology, based on the idea that science does not create the subject as ideology does. In this sense, ideology is opposite to science.<sup>8</sup> The lines of reasoning against Althusser are similar. For instance, Callinicos argues against the duality of science and ideology. He suggests that since science develops according to its own rules and does not need external sources to interfere in its development, and since Marxism is a scientific theory, then Marxism does not need to lead the masses to create a social revolution.<sup>9</sup> The task of theoreticians is only to develop the theory and leave others with the mission of leading the masses. Kolakowski also argues against Althusser's idea that science does not need reality but only scientific criteria to justify its scientificity.<sup>10</sup>

The fourth aspect of Althusser's conception of ideology, the idea of ideological state apparatuses, has received less criticism from scholars compared to the first three aspects. It is an extension of the idea of the general and specific functions of ideology. Ideological state apparatuses operate in specific types of society to reproduce the social relations without recourse to oppressive forces.<sup>11</sup> Eagleton provides examples of ideological state apparatuses, such as 'school, family, church, the media.'<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that Kolakowski, a scholar who harshly criticises Althusser's theory, does not mention the idea of ideological state apparatus in his

---

<sup>7</sup> Larrain, p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> Rancière, p. 130; Callinicos, p. 58; Larrain, p. 157; McLellan, p. 31; Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay*, International Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 116; Leszek Kolakowski, 'Althusser's Marx', *Socialist Register*, 8.8 (1971), p. 113.

<sup>9</sup> Callinicos, p. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Kolakowski, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> Larrain, p. 158; Callinicos, p. 64; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991), p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> Eagleton, p. 147.

criticism.<sup>13</sup>

The first two aspects—objectivity and the general and specific functions of ideology—provide the foundation for Althusser’s conception of ideology. As shown above, in the case of objectivity, Althusser’s example of Marx’s idea of fetishism, undoubtedly can be used to explain the efficacy of this ideology at the level of social relations; however, this idea specifically operates within the capitalist mode of production and not within other modes of production. Does the objectivity of ideology exist in general, disregarding the types or modes of production in any given societies, or does the objectivity of ideology rely on a specific circumstance that makes it valid and operational?

One point should be addressed here and that is the different interpretations of the general function of ideology. Larrain considers the general function to be one of cementing, Callinicos considers it to be one of subject creation, and McLellan considers it to be a combination of both. The differences between them can be pointed out by tracing back through Althusser’s works. The functions of creating the subject and cementing several parts of society to create a whole are not the same. I may “unconsciously” perceive myself as an agent or a subject but being a subject does not automatically connect me to other people nor create a bond or cement me to the others. McLellan does not provide a mechanism for creating the subject and cementing the social parts at the same time. Regarding the other scholars, which interpretation (creating the subject or cementing the social parts) best and most properly represents Althusser’s general function of ideology?

From the idea of a duality between science and ideology, one can raise the point that if Marxism is a scientific theory, it must not be an ideology. In this sense, are there any proletarian ideologies or not? Do all proletariat ideologies lead the working class to submit to the rule of the ruling class? Does this mean there is no revolutionary ideology, but only a science of revolution?

As already shown in the previous chapter, similarities exist between the idea of Gramsci’s materialised ideological superstructure and Althusser’s ideological state apparatus (ISA). However, Althusser’s ISA is a part of his grand theory of ideology. ISAs are social structures that operate the specific function of ideology, that is to create subjects and prolong the system of domination of the ruling class. For Gramsci, this terrain is the battlefield of antagonistic ideologies that fight against each other for supremacy. Ideological struggles occur between the dominant ideology and subordinated ideologies; however, for Althusser, are there any ideological struggles or only struggles between science and ideology? In response to the criticisms from the above scholars,

---

<sup>13</sup> Kolakowski.

which refer to the objectivity of ideology, the general and the specific functions of ideology, the duality between ideology and science, and the ideological state apparatus, I propose that to fairly treat Althusser's elaborations and answer all those questions and criticisms, we should begin with Althusser's definitions of ideology.

## Althusser's Conception of Ideology

Unlike most of his precursors who use the concept without providing a clear definition, Althusser presents a general Marxist theory of ideology. He even claims that he is the first to do so.<sup>14</sup> This part will focus on two of his works, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* or *I&ISA* and the less notable *Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle* or *TTP&TF*, in which he elaborates on the concept.

The structure of this section is identical with that of the previous section; it is divided into two parts: definitions of ideology and the concept of the ideological superstructure. But the dissimilarity between Gramsci and Althusser is in the way Althusser sees the relations between science, ideology, and Marxism.

## Definitions of ideology

Althusser, though he claims to be the first to theorise ideology in the Marxist tradition, acknowledges de Tracy as having formulated the concept.<sup>15</sup> Althusser indeed provides a definition of the concept, but there are two versions, both of which more or less relate to science.

## Ideology as a system of representation

The first version appears in his *TTP&TF* in 1965 when he states that ideology is a system of representation of the world:

Ideological *representations* concern nature and society, the very world in which men live; they concern the life of men, their relations to nature, to society, to the social order, to other men and to their own activities, including economic and political practice. Yet these representations are not *true knowledges* of the world they represent. They may contain some *elements* of knowledge, but they are always integrated into, and subject to, a total system of such representations, a system that is, in principle, orientated and distorted, a system dominated by a *false conception* of the world or of the domain of objects under consideration.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 158-59.

<sup>15</sup> See Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Louis Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', in *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays*, trans. by James H. Kavanagh (London; New York: Verso, 1990), p. 24, emphasis in the original.

In this version, ideology is a system of representation of the world, which comprises three parts: nature, society—including economic and political practices—and men themselves. But this representation is necessarily false, even if it contains some knowledge of reality. Though men cannot live without that representation, he insists on its inherent falsity. People need ideology because the social structure is opaque; those who live in that structure need a specific kind of representation that enables them to find their place in society. That kind of representation is ideology.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, at least in his *TTP&TF*, Althusser does not argue against the idea of false consciousness as McLellan suggests<sup>18</sup>; however, he develops that idea and integrates it into his conception of ideology. The falsity of this consciousness is not due to its representation of social reality but due to the opacity of social reality, which distorts ideology.

According to Althusser, ideology functions in two different types of society. The first is a general function for all types of society and the second is specific to class society.

## The First Function of Ideology

The first function of ideology is to create bonds between people in all societies. It rests on the fact that hitherto human beings did not have true knowledge of their world, society or even themselves. Because reality is opaque and obscure, human beings need something to give them at least vague answers or hints of the relations between nature, society, and people themselves, that bind them together to form and reproduce their societies. Althusser suggests that ideology is the fetishism of life in society.<sup>19</sup> For example, ideology explains why the value of family is precious and must be upheld at all costs. The family, as one of the human organisations, is created to serve the interest of human beings; it takes on its own values independently and becomes a custom that guides human conduct. In a different passage, Althusser describes this function of ideology as 'a distinctive kind of *cement* that assures the adjustment and cohesion of men in their roles, their functions, and their social relations'.<sup>20</sup> This function of ideology as cement is reminiscent of Gramsci's conception of the function of ideology. For Gramsci, ideology is used to bind various

---

<sup>17</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 29, emphasis in the original.

<sup>18</sup> McLellan, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> See Louis Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', in *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Allen Lane, 1969), pp. 219-48 (p. 230), note 7.

<sup>20</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 25, emphasis in the original.

members of a same group or organisation into a unified and strong organisation capable of achieving its goals. But Althusser extends this cementing function beyond the level of social organisations to society as a whole by suggesting that without ideology society will eventually collapse.

Althusser adds another element to the function of ideology by describing it as a process of recognition and misrecognition:

We also understand that ideology gives men a certain 'knowledge' of their world, or rather allows them to 'recognise' themselves in their world, gives them a certain 'recognition'; but at the same time ideology only introduces them to its *misrecognition*. *Allusion-illusion or recognition-misrecognition* - such is ideology from the perspective of its relation to the real.<sup>21</sup>

When this ideological representation provides people with an understanding of their place in society, their roles, and how to interact between themselves and between themselves and their natural conditions and social institutions, it gives them a distorted recognition. According to Althusser, ideology always subsists because it is vital for forming a society. No society, regardless of whether it is a class society or not, can survive without ideology since its primary function is to create bonds between members of that society.<sup>22</sup>

## The Second Function of Ideology

The second function of ideology, according to Althusser, applies specifically to class society and refers to 'the new social function imposed by the *existence of class division*'.<sup>23</sup> The second or particular function of ideology is to reproduce and sustain ruling class domination. In a class society, there is a double role for, or usage of, ideology:

The 'beautiful lie' of ideology thus has a double usage: it works on the consciousness of the exploited to make them accept their condition as 'natural'; it also works on the consciousness of members of the dominant class to allow them to exercise their exploitation and domination as 'natural'.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, this 'natural' system of domination in a class society can operate without any questions from either party as long as this ideology functions extensively throughout the whole society as the natural relations between all members in a given society. Ideology in a class society operates in two ways: first, it binds individuals to become members of that type of society; second, it stratifies

---

<sup>21</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 28.

<sup>23</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 29, emphasis in the original.

<sup>24</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 28.

and establishes the social hierarchy. This stratification and social hierarchy can be secured on the condition that members of that society accept them as sound and natural.

In this conception, the function of ideology can be either neutral or negative, depending on the level of society within which it operates. If ideology is operating on the general level, then it is clearly neutral, even though it makes us misrecognise ourselves, because human beings cannot live without it. In contrast, if ideology is operating at a class level, then it is negative in that it is one of the factors which prolongs the system of domination.

## Ideology as the Creation of Subjects

Althusser reverses the relations between ideology, people, and the world by introducing a new and novel function for ideology, that is, to create subjects or, in his terms, to 'interpellate' subjects into their social positions.

He begins by stating that people are unconscious of the operation of ideology. He does not dramatically turn his attention to this 'unconsciousness' in *I&ISA*, but he gradually inserts this new characteristic of ideology into his later conception. For example, in his *Marxism and Humanism* (which he wrote in 1963, before *TTP&TF* in 1965 and *I&ISA* in 1970), he states that:

In truth, ideology has very little to do with 'consciousness', even supposing this term to have an unambiguous meaning. It is profoundly *unconscious*, even when it presents itself in a reflected form (as in pre-Marxist 'philosophy'). Ideology is indeed a system of representations, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with 'consciousness': they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their 'consciousness'.<sup>25</sup>

In this passage, there are two different meanings of consciousness: self-consciousness and the process of thought. As a process of thought, ideology operates in our mind unconsciously, the system of representation functions without our recognition of its existence. This form of consciousness is not a self-consciousness of individuals but a form of social consciousness that is generated within social structures. This representation is a reflection of our social reality, and it presents itself in the form of pre-Marxist or Utopian philosophical ideas.<sup>26</sup> If people are unconscious of these ideological reflections, then how does Althusser recognise this representation and understand its function? This problem will be addressed later in the section on Science and

---

<sup>25</sup> Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', p. 235, emphasis in the original.

<sup>26</sup> Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', p. 232.

Ideology.

This line of reasoning recurs in its most mature or fullest form in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, in which Althusser presents what he claims to be the 'first' Marxist general theory of ideology. By borrowing the characteristics of unconsciousness from Freudian terminology, ideology is understood as eternal and without history.<sup>27</sup> Not only is ideology eternal; it is also omnipresent and immutable.<sup>28</sup> These three features of ideology give rise to the further questions concerning the operation of ideology: Is it determined by social conditions? Does ideology operate in the mind of an individual in the same way as the unconscious in a Freudian sense? Does ideology operate in all societies in a similar way, or does it operate differently from one society to another? How can the function of ideology be immutable? The unconscious can be eternal and irrefutable because it is a process of mind of human beings<sup>29</sup> but does ideology as a form of social consciousness operate in the same way as the unconscious? And in the Marxist tradition, ideas, practices and all forms of human activity and organisation are conditioned by material reality, and those ideas and practices are developed throughout the course of history. Does Althusser's conception contradict this basic premise of Marxism? Althusser seems to answer all these questions by addressing ideology on two levels: ideology in general and ideologies in particular.

## Ideology in General

Althusser presents two theses of ideology in general: the first is that 'there is no practice except by and in ideology';<sup>30</sup> the second is that 'there is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects'.<sup>31</sup> He considers that human beings need to have an imaginary representation of their relation to their conditions of existence presented to them. It is part of human nature to require something to mediate between the world and ourselves.<sup>32</sup> Althusser provides examples of this imaginary representation: God as a representation of Kings or God as a representation of human beings.<sup>33</sup> God as a representation of kings is constructed on the material existence of actual kings; however, once this idea of God operates as ideology there is nothing that corresponds to it. Althusser considers that once the idea of God becomes ideology, God can operate on its own by

<sup>27</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 161, emphasis in the original.

<sup>28</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 161.

<sup>29</sup> Freud Sigmund, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920), p. 91.

<sup>30</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 169.

<sup>31</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 169.

<sup>32</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 164.

<sup>33</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 162.

itself. Human beings create an idea of God and give the content of God as a creator. Once human beings believe their idea of God, then God become a Creator. The idea of God is created by human beings from the image of their rulers (kings) and it becomes isolated from the material and social conditions and stands above them and directs them through religion. Once the idea of God becomes ideology, the representation of God is not the representation of any actual king, but a supreme being above any existence. The idea of God as ideology defines the relations between human beings, tells them their places in the world and how they should act toward each other. This function of ideology gives it its spectacular character, which is that it makes up the idea of a being which does not correspond to anything, so that society operates and organises human beings to act in specific ways toward each other.

If the real conditions of existence are represented in ideology, then these representations can be either true or false depending on how they are represented. This distortion is reminiscent of Marx's concept of false consciousness. If an imaginary relationship between men and the world is represented in ideology, then ideology does not truly represent the world; it cannot be attributed this ideology is either true or false or distorted or not.

In this view, subjects exist through human practice, and human practice is based on ideology. In this way, ideology creates subjects, even if the ideology is an imaginary representation of the world. People need ideology for their actions:

In every case, the ideology of ideology thus recognises, despite its imaginary distortion, that the 'ideas' of a human subject exist in his actions, or ought to exist in his actions, and if that is not the case, it lends him other ideas corresponding to the actions (however perverse) that he does perform.<sup>34</sup>

The structure of ideology, in general, is to make men subjects by making them both recognise and misrecognise the world through this imaginary representation. Althusser uses the famous example of the role of ideology in creating subjects as follows:

An individual believes in God, or Duty, or Justice, etc. This belief derives (for everyone, i.e., for all those who live in an ideological representation of ideology), ..., i.e. from him as a subject with a consciousness which contains the ideas of his belief. In this way, i.e., by means of the absolutely ideological 'conceptual' device (*dispositif*) thus set up (a subject endowed with a consciousness in which he freely forms or freely recognises ideas in which he believes), the (material) attitude of the subject concerned naturally follows.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 167, emphasis in the original.

As long as this function of ideology operates in the mind or consciousness of men by making them subjects, as believers, rational beings, or faithful believers in justice, this process is also guiding their proper courses of action toward particular goals, such as the kingdom of heaven, a lawful state, or perpetual peace. Althusser's examples give rise to another question: If those types of subjects (believers in God, Duty and Justice) are products of their historical conditions, how can they recognise themselves as subjects, if their social conditions do not make them understand the roles they have to play?

## Ideologies in Particular

While ideology in general functions throughout history as an immutable structure or mechanism to create subjects, ideologies in particular, as the specific contents of ideology in general, are brought about by their historical contexts and human activities.<sup>36</sup> These contents vary from time to time in the course of historical development. Ideologies can be divided into different categories, such as 'religious, ethical, legal, political, aesthetic, etc.'<sup>37</sup> They can also be associated with both the ruling class and the dominated class. Therefore, these ideologies can be ruling ideologies for the ruling class<sup>38</sup> and ideologies of submission for the subordinated class.<sup>39</sup>

Althusser suggests that particular ideologies which operate in class societies are negative because they perpetuate class domination. For example, in a capitalist society, bourgeois ideology reproduces future generations of capitalists, workers, skilled workers, etc. to sustain the system of domination. In this way, subjects are created who will submit themselves to power relations and act and practice according to bourgeois ideology as the ideology of the ruling class in that society.

A class society will reproduce itself by reproducing its ruling ideologies. These particular ideologies vary depending on their class situation. If the ruled or dominated class succeeds in its struggle against the ruling class, then the new ruling class will establish its ideology. It does this by ensuring that the new ideology pervades their society and establishes them as the new ruling class, as the bourgeoisie did when they won the struggle against the lords and the Church in Western Europe. This process raises the problem, if the working class tries to compete with the current rule of the bourgeoisie and wins this struggle, will the new society and the new class situation create a similar kind of system of domination towards the other classes, such as

---

<sup>36</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 159.

<sup>37</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 166.

<sup>38</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 166.

<sup>39</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 185.

peasants, as the bourgeoisie does? Althusser answers this question by claiming that Marxism is a science, not an ideology, and this science will lead the working class to struggle for universal interests and eradicate class domination.

He observes that people cannot live without ideology in general because the creation of the subject is unavoidable, but the reproduction of systems of particular dominant ideologies can be avoided with the aid of science.<sup>40</sup> For Althusser, no one can live outside the process of creating subjects. In this sense no one can live outside ideology, or at least outside ideology in general. Those who claim to be outside of ideology are still in its grip. The only way people can understand the function of ideologies and manage to struggle against a particular form of ideology is through science, although no one can avoid the process of subject creation itself.

As already shown above, the objectivity of ideology is based on its efficacy to interact with the social reality. Ideology can make human beings to act and practice to change the world around them and to create or reproduce the social relations that can be used to make them survive and also oppress particular members of that society. However, we can only understand this objectivity of ideology in a particular type of society or particular operations to create subject. If we accept the idea of subject creating function of ideology, we will face that from human history from the past to present, we are created as subjects to act, practice and perform. How can we suggest that there is the function of ideology in general that create subject without referencing to historical facts and become an eternal function? Ideology function in the general sense become an eternal force that become ahistorical. The claim of ideology in general is beyond human beings' experiences; therefore, it is not observable fact to approve or refute.

It should be noted that the function of ideology to cement or create bond between several parts of the society in *TTP&TF* is not always compatible the function of creating subject in *I&ISA*. To cement someone to the others is to create bond between them. The bond between human beings can be collective interest that serves everyone in the interest group or abstract ideas, imaginaries, or political goals as in political parties, nations. The second cases of political parties and nation seem to compatible both of cementing social groups and creating subjects than the first case of an interest group, but not all subject creating idea can operated both. I can act a as a law-abiding citizen without attaching myself to the country. Another example is that ones can become workers without class consciousness that make them become a unity class. The mechanism to combine both aspect as McLellan mentioned above, is to create an active subject that accept the role and understand the given tasks and try to change the circumstance of their group for the better

---

<sup>40</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 175, emphasis in the original.

conditions.

### ***Science and Ideology***

Unlike Lenin, who integrates science into Marxism to produce a scientific ideology of the proletariat, Althusser clearly asserts that Marxism is a scientific theory, not an ideology, and not even a proletarian ideology.<sup>41</sup> He divides the realm of ideas into two kinds: scientific knowledge and ideology.

This dichotomy between science and ideology is one of the most distinctive of Althusser's points. In his *TTP&TF*, he begins by identifying the difference between scientific doctrines and ideological doctrines.<sup>42</sup> The dissimilarity between those two types of doctrine lies in the fact that:

Marxist doctrine, by contrast, is *scientific*. This means that it is not content to apply existing bourgeois moral and juridical principles (liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, etc.) to the existing bourgeois reality in order to criticise it, but that it criticises these existing bourgeois moral and juridical principles, as well as the existing politico-economic system. Thus, its general critique rests on other than existing ideological principles (religious, moral, and juridical); it rests on the *scientific knowledge* of the totality of the existing bourgeois system, its politico-economic as well as its ideological systems.<sup>43</sup>

Even though he claims that Marxism is a scientific doctrine, Althusser makes only a brief distinction between ideology and Marxism. He distinguishes Marxism from other ideologies because its doctrine does not come from moral or juridical principles but is based on scientific knowledge. Thus, one can assume that liberty, equality, fraternity, and similar principles are abstract values which lack concrete scientific foundations. Marxism relies on the solid ground of value-free scientific knowledge. This non-abstract scientific character of Marxism gives the doctrine the power to critique existing society on scientific grounds. It should be noted that this notion of scientific doctrine is not only describe the phenomena but also try to change it. Criticism is a part of changing the phenomena and create the acceptance from the masses to make a revolution. Marxism is different from other proletarian ideological Utopian doctrines (such as those of Owen or Fourier) which criticise bourgeois principles but still operate within bourgeois values, even though they propose an ideal commune. Marxism differs from these other ideological doctrines in that it has different goals and different means for achieving these goals. For Althusser, non-scientific ideological doctrines within capitalist societies lead nowhere, and their goals and means for achieving them are constrained by the existing bourgeois system.<sup>44</sup> He credits Marx with having discovered a scientific

---

<sup>41</sup> See Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 3.

theory of history which departs from previous ideological theories.<sup>45</sup>

In the same work, Althusser presents Marxism as a scientific doctrine with two aspects: Historical Materialism as a science of history and Dialectical Materialism as a science of knowledge or philosophy.<sup>46</sup> These two branches of Marxism are distinct but related and dependent on each other. The first branch, Historical Materialism, is more developed than the other branch, which is still in its initial state.<sup>47</sup> By insisting on Marxism's status as a science, Althusser differentiates scientific practices from other practices:

*This production of knowledge in a given science is a specific practice, which should be called theoretical practice - a specific practice, distinct, that is, from other existing practices (economic, political, ideological practices) and absolutely irreplaceable at its level and in its function. Of course, this theoretical practice is organically related to the other practices; it is based on, and articulated with, them; but it is irreplaceable in its domain. This means that science develops by a specific practice - theoretical practice - which can on no account be replaced by other practices.*<sup>48</sup>

Theoretical practice can be influenced by other political, economic, or ideological practices but none of those practices can be a substitute for it. Althusser compares theoretical practice with ideological practice which, he suggests, permeates all other practices, except scientific practice:

*In fact, ideology permeates all man's activities, including his economic and political practice; it is present in attitudes towards work, towards the agents of production, towards the constraints of production, in the idea that the worker has of the mechanism of production; it is present in political judgements and attitudes - cynicism, clear conscience, resignation or revolt, etc.; it governs the conduct of individuals in families and their behaviour towards others, their attitude towards nature, their judgement on the 'meaning of life' in general, their different cults (God, the prince, the State, etc.).*<sup>49</sup>

Here, Althusser lapses into inconsistency, since he says that ideology permeates all human activities, without citing any exception, although he does except scientific practice when he discusses that.

Althusser considers that scientific practices need no subject, which is strange, since science involves relations with others. Since the function of ideology in general is to create subjects, subjects must come before practice. However, for Althusser, this is not the case:

*That the author, insofar as he writes the lines of a discourse which claims to be scientific, is completely absent as a 'subject' from 'his' scientific discourse (for all scientific discourse is by*

<sup>45</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', pp. 7-8.

<sup>48</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 15.

<sup>49</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 75.

definition a subject-less discourse, there is no 'Subject of science' except in an ideology of science) is a different question which I shall leave on one side for the moment.<sup>50</sup>

For Althusser, the point is that ideology and science are totally different areas. Ideology can be anywhere except in the domain of science. The process and function of creating subjects is an aspect of ideology, not of science. This argument is also made by Paul Thomas in his discussion of the relationship between science and ideology.<sup>51</sup> However, if scientific practices have no subject, then who conducts these scientific practices? Are scientists a different kind of subject? As long as 'scientific' practices or activities are carried out by human beings, not by someone from another space or time, how can they avoid being subjects?

According to Althusser, there is an ideology of science or a 'pseudo-science' which still creates subjects, and within this, the process of recognition and misrecognition continues to operate. The difficulty lies in distinguishing 'genuine' subject-less scientific ideas from 'pseudo-scientific' discourses and ideas which are the very purpose of ideology.

From this perspective of the difference between science and ideology, Althusser advances his argument by asserting that 'the frontier separating ideology from scientific theory was crossed about one hundred and twenty years ago by Marx'.<sup>52</sup> This sentence seems too bold, but if we limit scope of this declaration to the realm of social sciences, then it will be more acceptable. Before Marx, scientific ideas and ideological ideas in Social Sciences blended with each other and no one could distinguish between the two. Only those who can differentiate between these two kinds of idea, can escape the grasp of the all-pervasive ideology, and scientific knowledge is the only way to accomplish this:

That is why those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'. It is necessary to be outside ideology, i.e., in scientific knowledge, to be able to say: I am in ideology (a quite exceptional case) or (the general case): I was in ideology.<sup>53</sup>

If people consider themselves free from any ideology, then ideologies are successfully operating. Only a few people who have the scientific knowledge (Marxism), understand that they have become subjects through ideology in general and continue to be created as different subjects

---

<sup>50</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 171.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas, pp. 117-22; Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', p. 247.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas, pp. 117-22; Althusser, 'Marxism and Humanism', p. 247.

<sup>53</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 175, emphasis in the original.

through certain ideologies in particular. No one can be avoid being subjects through ideology in general, as they act as agents of ideology in the general sense; however, once one understands the function of certain ideologies in particular, that create subjects in the system of domination of one class over the other classes, one can start to try to overcome the system of domination, as Marx or Lenin have done. Those few people who correctly understand the functions of ideology, and accept the existence of those functions, can liberate themselves and at least have relative autonomy from ideology. But this does not mean that science can replace ideology, because human beings need an ideology in general to create subjects.<sup>54</sup> Science helps us to understand the process of creating subjects and struggle against a particular type of subject in a class society. This leaves us with the problem of accounting for Althusser's view that science does not need subjects, when he seems to claim that science came into being with Marx's work.

### ***Ideological Struggles***

For Althusser, the ideological struggle takes place in two domains: the first is the struggle against ideology, which is conducted by introducing science into the socialist movement. The second is the battle over ideological apparatuses, which is conducted by using or remodelling them to establish new ideologies of the proletariat.

The first and foremost task in the ideological struggle is to root out any ideology from the socialist movement and turn the movement in the direction of scientific doctrine:

To conceive the scientific doctrine of socialism, the resources of scientific and philosophical culture, as well as exceptional intellectual capacities, were required. An extraordinary sense of the need to break with ideological forms, to escape their grip, and to discover the terrain of scientific knowledge was necessary.<sup>55</sup>

This scientific doctrine of Marxism plays a crucial role in the movement by determining 'its strategy and tactics as well as in its means and forms of organisation and struggle'.<sup>56</sup> Like Lenin, Althusser considers that this scientific doctrine does not originate from within the movement itself; it must be imported from outside the movement by intellectuals (Marx, Engels, etc.).<sup>57</sup> Without those 'scientific' intellectuals, the working class would strive only for their mundane economic interests: increasing their salary, reducing their work hours and securing their work conditions.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> See Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', pp. 29-30.

<sup>55</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 31.

<sup>56</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 32.

<sup>57</sup> See Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 32.

<sup>58</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 34.

The working-class movement needs theoretical formation to divert them from their solely economic struggles. Althusser asserts that the working class needs Marxism to further its struggles against the ruling class ideologies:

But at the same time as they were performing this work of education and formation in scientific theory, Marx, Engels, and their partisans were constrained to wage a long, patient but harsh struggle *against the ideologies* that then dominated the working-class movement and its organisations, and against the religious, political and moral ideology of the bourgeoisie.

*Theoretical formation* on the one hand, *ideological struggle* on the other - these are the two absolutely essential forms, two absolutely essential conditions, which governed the profound transformation of the spontaneous ideology of the working-class movement.<sup>59</sup>

The task of Marxism is to transform the spontaneous ideology of the proletariat into scientific theory. This task can be accomplished by creating the organisations or institutions required to extend this Marxist science into every part of the movement through education.<sup>60</sup>

On the other hand, when the ideological struggle is waged at the level of an entire society, the objective is not to substitute former ruling ideologies with the scientific doctrines of Marxism, but to replace ruling ideologies with a new ideology, by controlling and remodelling existing ideological state apparatuses (ISA) or creating new apparatuses. At both levels, this raises the peculiar problem of the status of Marxism. Is Marxism a scientific doctrine (at the level of the movement) or an ideology (at the general level)? This problem will be addressed in the last section of this chapter.

For Althusser, ideological state apparatuses are the main mechanisms involved in the reproduction of the social formation and the creation of the subject. He lists those apparatuses as follows:

- the religious ISA (the system of the different Churches),
- the educational ISA (the system of the different public and private 'Schools'),
- the family ISA,
- the legal ISA,
- the political ISA (the political system, including the different Parties),
- the trade-union ISA,
- the communications ISA (press, radio, and television, etc.),
- the cultural ISA (Literature, the Arts, sports, etc.)<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 33, emphasis in the original.

<sup>60</sup> See Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 143.

These ideological state apparatuses are the main targets of the socialist movement which aims to seize them and modify them to suit the new ideology. As long as the ruling class controls and maintains its leadership through ideological state apparatuses, it can control state power. Althusser asserts that 'No class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the 'State Ideological Apparatuses'.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the ideological struggle for any aspiring new ruling class is to wage a battle against the current ISAs and diminish their legitimacy. This strategy will pave the way for the movement to seize control of state power and use this power to reorganise the ISAs to promulgate the new ideology.

Althusser provides the example of the bourgeoisie and its ideological struggle against the Church:

It is no accident that all ideological struggle, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, starting with the first shocks of the Reformation, was *concentrated* in an anti-clerical and anti-religious struggle; rather this is a function precisely of the dominant position of the religious ideological State apparatus.<sup>63</sup>

In the Western Medieval age, the Church, as the dominant ISA, 'concentrated within it not only religious functions, but also educational ones, and a large proportion of the functions of communications and "culture"'.<sup>64</sup> In capitalist states, the situation is entirely different. The role of the Church is diminished to become similar to the role of the former ruling class (feudal aristocracy). The dominant ISAs in capitalist states are the schools and educational institutions,<sup>65</sup> and these are the main targets of ISAs, which the movement must seize to exert its influence over society and establish its ideology. Thus, ISAs have a double role, one as mechanisms for the reproduction of social relations and the other as the terrains or battlefields on which the ruling class and the dominated class wage their ideological struggle.

## Ideological Superstructure

In his earlier work, *TTP&TF*, Althusser uses the same notion of the ideological superstructure as Marx used in the *1859 Preface*, which is the combining of various forms of consciousness in any given society, by restating the base-superstructure metaphor as follows:

---

<sup>62</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 146, emphasis in the original.

<sup>63</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 151, emphasis in the original.

<sup>64</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 151.

<sup>65</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 133.

In a given society, people participate in *economic* production whose mechanisms and effects are determined by the *structure of the relations of production*.... These same people participate in other activities - religious, moral, philosophical, etc. - either in an active manner, through conscious practice, or in a passive and mechanical manner, through reflexes, judgements, attitudes, etc. These last activities constitute *ideological activity*, ..., adherence to an ensemble of representations and beliefs - religious, moral, legal, political, aesthetic, philosophical, etc. - which constitute what is called the 'level' of *ideology*.<sup>66</sup>

Althusser follows Marx by dividing a given society into three levels: the economic structure, the politico-juridical superstructure; and the ideological superstructure. The ideological superstructure is the vast total of the various ideas in a given society. However, those two superstructures are not mere epiphenomena that arise from and are determined by the structural base, with no reciprocal influence of the superstructure on the base. They can have a relative impact on the structural base. Althusser transforms the three levels into 'instances', which have different impacts at different times on different social formations in a given society.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the politico-juridical and ideological instances have their own effects that can be 'overdetermined' by the economic instance.<sup>68</sup> With this idea of 'over-determination', Althusser can avoid crude forms of 'economism', which claim that every social phenomenon is caused by economic factors, and presents the complexity of the multiple factors that can form and shape the development of a given society. Nevertheless, the economic instance will determine all structures 'in the last instance'.<sup>69</sup>

But Althusser, unlike his predecessors, does not stop at this point. In his later work, *I&SA*, he argues that the base-superstructure metaphor is not suitable, since 'it is metaphorical: i.e., it remains *descriptive*'.<sup>70</sup> For him, this descriptive metaphor may be suitable for the early stages of Marxism as a theory of history, but he tries to go beyond it. To achieve this, he develops the mechanism and role of ISAs, which are responsible for social reproduction and the perpetuation of social domination. For Althusser, Marx's ideological superstructures transform into ideological state apparatuses which operate to create a particular type of subject and a system of domination of one class over the other classes in class societies.

Comparing Gramsci and Althusser's conceptions of ideology, several points should be noted. Gramsci uses the term in a neutral sense in his conception of organic ideology. For him,

<sup>66</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', pp. 23-24.

<sup>67</sup> Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading 'Capital'* (London: NLB, 1970), p. 97.

<sup>68</sup> See Althusser and Balibar, p. 99; Gregory Elliott, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, Historical Materialism Book Series, v. 13 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 137.

<sup>69</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p. 6.

<sup>70</sup> Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', p. 136.

Marxism is one of several ideologies which have the power to unite men and bind them as members of organisations. The unity and strength of an organisation relies on the cohesive power of its ideology. If that ideology corresponds to reality, or in Gramsci's terminology, to the structure, then that ideology will endure the test of circumstances, and the organisation will survive. The intellectuals who take the role of ideological agents will remain, and the system or society which those agents represent will endure as long as ideologies regularly function. Gramsci, unlike Lenin, believes that Marxism does not need to be scientific, at least in Lenin's sense, if sciences borrow or adopt methods from disciplines such as the physical or natural sciences. Adopting unsuitable methods will harm the discipline rather than benefit it.

Gramsci's contribution to the theory of ideology is a result of his concern with the question of the social revolution in the West. In Western Europe, the capitalist states faced several crises including the world economic crisis of 1929-1939 and the two World Wars. Although these crises affected European societies, the ideology of the bourgeoisie continued to function, and the intellectuals of that class retained their dominant roles in the intellectual sphere, so that European capitalist societies continue to survive. The task of intellectuals of the working-class movement now is to gain intellectual leadership by producing an ideological bloc which must be superior to the current dominant bourgeois ideological bloc. This superiority will rely on its correspondence with the politico-economic structure and help various subaltern classes to understand the nature of social contradictions within capitalist societies and unite them. If they are successful in this task, then a social revolution will follow.

Clearly, Althusser's views of Marxism and ideology differ from those of Gramsci. While Gramsci does not deny that Marxism can be a scientific ideology, Althusser disregards any such possibility. His general theory of ideology distinguishes between scientific theory and ideological ideas with respect to creation of the subject, which is the function of ideology but not of scientific theory. He acknowledges that Marx was the first to discover and acknowledge the function of ideology in general and that this discovery marked a turning point between the age of ideology and the age of science. However, he asserts that Marx did not systematically theorise ideology, and he claims to have developed the first theory of Marxist ideology in general.

The main problem with this distinction is that Althusser assumes that we cannot live outside ideology. Ideology permeates almost every aspect of human life—except scientific practice. It might be argued that the discoveries of Galileo or Newton and Marx are similar, in the sense that they result from scientific practice. But this means that anyone within scientific communities, even

without an understanding of Marxism, can regard their practices as scientific, and therefore can claim to be free of the hold of ideology? Or does this mean that scientific practices can make ones free from ideology of their discipline but not all ideologies? The next problem with Althusser's distinction between scientific theory and ideological ideas is that, despite claiming that Marxism is not an ideology, he uses the term 'Marxist ideology' in the same work when he describes the tasks of various members of the party as follows:

Only the vanguard of the working class, its most conscious part, possesses a *Marxist ideology*. The great mass of the working class is still in part subject to an ideology of a reformist character. And among the vanguard of the working class itself, which forms the Communist Party, there exists great unevenness in the degree of theoretical consciousness. Among the vanguard of the working class only the best militants have a genuine theoretical formation - in the area of historical materialism at least - and it is among them that theoreticians and researchers capable of advancing Marxist scientific theory can be recruited.<sup>71</sup>

This passage exemplifies Althusser's peculiar idea of the relationship between Marx, science, and ideology. If Marxism is a scientific theory and a scientific theory is not an ideology, then how do the militant parts of the party adopt a Marxist ideology? Is Marxism in this passage a scientific theory or an ideology? If the vanguard of the party, its most conscious part, adopts this ideology, and thus become subjects of this 'Marxist ideology', then the dichotomy between science and ideology collapses.

To avoid the problem of Marxist ideology, one can follow Althusser's suggestion that Marxism is a science, and a scientific theory needs no subject and takes no part in the process of subject creation. However, any scientific ideas can be used as ideological ideas to create subjects, and in this sense, Marxism can be used as an ideology, especially in its political practice of social revolution. If we accept Althusser's premise of the general function of ideology, that there can be no practice without ideology, then revolutionary practice needs ideology. Marxism as a scientific doctrine will become a revolutionary ideology when it is used to lead a social revolution.

The last question is whether Gramsci and Althusser take their conceptions of ideology from Marx. It is clear that Gramsci's conception is in the neutral sense when he categorises two types of ideology: arbitrary ideology and organic ideology. His conception tends to become more positive when he emphasises the role of organic ideology in the ideological struggles against the ruling class to form the new state. In the case of Althusser, he uses ideology in the neutral sense

---

<sup>71</sup> Althusser, 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', p.39, emphasis added.

regarding his general theory of ideology; however, when he compares science and ideology, ideology is taken in a negative sense. The question is, which is the more coherent conception of ideology in Marxism? Should Marxism be understood as ideology in Gramsci's neutral-positive sense or not as ideology in Althusser's neutral-negative sense? This question cannot be answered until we have a better understanding of Marx's conception of ideology, and so this question will be left unanswered until the sixth chapter which presents a re-conception of Marx's ideology.

As I already shown earlier in this chapter, there is a variety of definitions of ideology that Althusser uses throughout his works, and some of them are eventually different. For instance, the function of ideology to cement societal parts to become a whole is from *TTP&TF* and the idea of subject creation comes from the later work that is *I&ISA*. When some of scholars, such as Larrain or McLellan, put an emphasis on one of those definitions or try to combine those two different definitions together, their interpretations will become peculiar. Subject creation and the function to cement societal parts are not always interchangeable. The more plausible way to interpret the different definitions is not to combine them but to point the different definitions out and to suggest which is the more coherent definition within Althusser's conception of ideology. The later definition of subject creation is more agreeable than earlier definition and it is more coherent to Althusser's other ideas, such as the duality between science and ideology and the idea of ISA.

Althusser's general function of ideology is more problematic than the particular function on the ground that Althusser asserts his general function beyond human beings' experiences. Without a specific type of society, how does one imagine the abstract subject without contexts? The particular function of ideology is more plausible that is it explicate the way the ruling class can prolong and reproduce the system of domination through ISAs. That is the meaningful contribution of Althusser to the tradition; however, the ISAs is too limited and specific. It is limited on the reason that from the idea of ideological state apparatus, it should not specify only the type of society with state. We should extend the idea to any kinds of political organisations that use the materialised of ideological structure to prolong the rule of the dominant class or we can use Gramsci's term of materialised ideology structure that can be in any types of society with or without state.

Another contribution that Althusser's bring to the tradition is the problem of the relation of science, ideology, and Marxism. Althusser's idea of the of duality between science and ideology bring this relation to the fore front and also affects Althusser's conception of ideology. He attributes science to Marxism and makes Marxism self-sufficient. Marxism as similar as other scientific doctrine use their own criteria to determine and evaluate their methodologies and bodies of knowledge. Marxism in this sense is not contaminated by any other ideological ideas; however, this attribution makes Marxism less attach to their revolutionary process. The theorists just sit there, do

their research, write their articles and books, and wait for some ideologists to transform their scientific knowledge to be scientific ideologies and lead the masses to make the revolution. One can wonder that Marx who wrote *Capital* on the morning and attended the meeting of the first international (the International Workingmen's Association) in the afternoon could be a scientist in the morning and an ideologist in the afternoon? It can be understandable that in some scientific fields, such as Physics, Astronomy and Chemistry, those fields do not directly relate to the lives of human beings. The discovery of the wave theory, the new comet or the periodical table do not make ordinary beings aware the changes. These kinds of knowledge of the respected fields can be present as relative autonomy and self-sufficient; however, the social sciences are different. The suggestions from the research can affect the whole society, such as the creation to the population management plan that require ordinary citizens to control their sexual activities and to reduce the birth rate, or the suggestion of the economists to increase or decrease the policy interest to maintain the economic order of the society. If Marxism is a scientific doctrine, it is more likely in the social sciences group than the physical sciences.

The problem of science and Marxism will lead us to the next chapter, if Marxism cannot be a scientific doctrine like physical or hard sciences, then what is left to Marxism? Does Marxism become philosophical doctrine like ethics or use Gramsci's term "the philosophy of praxis". The next chapter will address the following problems: why do Marxist theorists attribute a 'scientific' status to Marxism? What is the basis of this claim and what is the proper relation between science and ideology in the Marxist tradition?

## CHAPTER IV: THE SCIENTIFIC STATUS OF MARXISM AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

As we have seen, Althusser presents a general theory of ideology by creating a dichotomy between scientific and ideological ideas: all ideas must be either ideological or scientific but cannot be both. Lenin, on the other hand, claims that Marxism is a scientific ideology, while Gramsci sees Marxism as an ideology in its fullest and most theoretical form as the philosophy of praxis. These three views of science, ideology and Marxism do not seem to be compatible.

The identification of Marxism as either a science or an ideology has an impact on the goals and practices of the tradition. There are three possible consequences of these different views. If the tradition is seen as a scientific theory, then Marxist theorists must have an intellectual commitment to develop it into theories for explaining social phenomena. If Marxism is seen as a proletarian ideology, then the focus shifts to its political applications, and the tradition has the main goal of overthrowing capitalism. Finally, if Marxism is seen as scientific as well as ideological, then the tradition must combine both science and ideology for its theoretical and practical aims.

My choice is the third possibility: Marxism combines both scientific and ideological aspects, depending on the audiences. Marxism cannot be only scientific theory for the reason that it does not merely try to give explanations of the world but also tries to change it. Marxism also cannot be only ideology, referring to ideas that are used in the political sphere to gain political power. It presents an argument that can be proved and refuted, not just a political value. However, Marxism as a scientific theory needs a firm ground on which to elaborate the model of science with which it is compatible, and which can be used to promote and develop its theory.

In this chapter and the next, I consider the argument that Marxism is scientific but already outdated, superseded, and falsified, according to the ideas of falsificationism (both naïve and sophisticated views) that are shown below. I propose that Marxism is scientific by arguing that if a tradition can present scientific explanations, then it must be scientific. One scientific model that can be used in the tradition is the causal mechanism model of scientific explanation arising from Critical Realism. I also present what I consider to be a plausible answer to the question of whether Marxism is a science or an ideology, depending on the context, based on two aspects of Marxism: theory and practice. This chapter investigates Engels' conception of Marxism as a scientific theory and considers several models of science and their relationship to Marxism. The following chapter will present the concept of praxis in Marxism and how it relates to the theory.

## Engels' Conception of Science

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward, several scientific discoveries led to the belief that, with scientific theories, human beings can control and even manipulate nature. The power of science manifests itself in its effects, i.e., its effectiveness in making steam engines, railways, telegraph lines, etc. Those inventions can create rapid changes to whole human societies by remodelling their economic and political forms. Science and technology not only transform the material environment, but also affect the ideas of their age. Science affects Marxism in two ways: first, in its claim to be a scientific theory and second, in its claim that, as a scientific theory, it is more advanced than other competing political economic theories.

These two claims can be found in Engels' and Marx's works such as Engels' *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* and Marx's *Capital Volume I*, although, their points of concern are slightly different. Engels stresses his claim that Marxism is a scientific theory, whereas Marx accepts that there are several scientific theories within economics but presents Marxism as the more advanced scientific form in that field. I will focus on Engels' claims and elaborate Marx's second claim when needed.

Engels provides his view of science to distinguish Marxism from other socialist movements. These include the 'Utopian' socialist movements of Saint-Simon, Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, who base their theories and practice on their subjective thoughts concerning absolute truth, justice and the ideal of a preferred society.<sup>1</sup> Marxism is different (at least in Engels' view), because its theories are based on science.

Before tackling Engels' conception of science, I should start with his concise view of nature and history. Engels claims that nature manifests itself as a progressive, historical, dialectical process:

Nature is the proof of dialectics, and it must be said for modern science that it has furnished this proof with very rich materials increasing daily, and thus has shown that, in the last resort, Nature works dialectically and not metaphysically; that she does not move in the eternal oneness of a perpetually recurring circle but goes through a real historical evolution.<sup>2</sup>

Engels sees nature as a historical process in the sense of a dialectic progression of nature and the physical world, arising from their material conditions rather than from any abstract ideas. Appealing to the modern natural sciences, Engels relates this dialectic process to human activities and even

---

<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, p. 297.

<sup>2</sup> Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', xxiv, p. 301.

to human beings themselves:

An exact representation of the universe, of its evolution, of the development of mankind, and of the reflection of this evolution in the minds of men, can therefore only be obtained by the methods of dialectics with its constant regard to the innumerable actions and reactions of life and death, of progressive or retrogressive changes.<sup>3</sup>

Engels' claim is that mankind, nature, and the universe share a dialectical nature. He gives several examples to support his claim of this dialectic process of the universe, including the Kant-Laplace nebular hypothesis and Darwin's theory of evolution.<sup>4</sup> His second claim is that science can be a revolutionary force. Engels also portrays Marx's concept of science by stating that '[s]cience was for Marx a historically dynamic, revolutionary force'.<sup>5</sup> Applications of scientific theories must impact on human circumstances, not just gradually but in revolutionary ways. Engels gives the example of the less famous Marcel Deprez, an electric engineer.<sup>6</sup> Deprez was the first to develop an electric transmission method over long distances (35 miles or 56.33 kilometres) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>7</sup> For Engels, this scientific discovery was important because 'the discovery involve[s] immediate revolutionary changes in industry and in historical development in general'.<sup>8</sup> The significance of Engels' second aspect of science (or the application of science as technology) is the revolutionary impact of theory on the development of history. However, in other places, Engels uses the term 'science' in a broader sense when he argues that after 'modern materialism' or 'scientific socialism' is established, then there is no special place for philosophy:

[M]odern materialism is essentially dialectic, and no longer requires the assistance of that sort of philosophy which, queen-like, pretended to rule the remaining mob of sciences. As soon as each special science is bound to make clear its position in the great totality of things and of our knowledge of things, a special science dealing with this totality is superfluous or unnecessary. That which still survives of all earlier philosophy is the science of thought and its laws—formal logic and dialectics. Everything else is subsumed in the positive science of Nature and history.<sup>9</sup>

It is not surprising that this line of argument is similar to Comte's law of three stages, especially in the transformation of the stage of metaphysics to positive science.<sup>10</sup> It also anticipates modern logical positivism, as set out by A.J. Ayer and Rudolf Carnap.<sup>11</sup> Philosophy as a queen or special

<sup>3</sup> Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', xxiv, p. 301.

<sup>4</sup> Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', xxiv, p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Karl Marx's Funeral', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, p. 468.

<sup>6</sup> Engels, 'Karl Marx's Funeral', xxiv, p. 468.

<sup>7</sup> Jos Arrillaga, *High Voltage Direct Current Transmission* (London, UK: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Engels, 'Karl Marx's Funeral', xxiv, p. 468.

<sup>9</sup> Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', xxiv, p. 303.

<sup>10</sup> See Auguste Comte, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans. by Harriet Martineau, 3 vols (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896), iii, chaps X–XI.

<sup>11</sup> See Alfred Jules Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1970); Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudoproblems in Philosophy*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967).

kind of 'science' will cease to have a function. Her role is only in the domain of 'science of thought' and the positive science of nature and history will replace all remaining branches of philosophy. This passage raises a problem regarding the status of scientific doctrine. If philosophy can be 'a special kind of science', then this science must not be like a scientific discipline such as biology or physics.

It can be argued that for Engels, Marxism is not an ordinary scientific doctrine in the broader sense, as systematic knowledge that can be any discipline, such as philosophy, logic, etc., but only in a specific sense, that is, the science of nature and history. Engels tries to present the tradition as a scientific doctrine in the narrow sense, like the influential sciences such as biology or physics. Thus, Engels chooses to compare Marx's discovery with Darwin's theory of evolution. With these two features of science (dialectic and revolutionary), he claims that Marx makes two scientific discoveries. Firstly, Engels presents Marx's theory of history as a general tendency of human life. Human beings live in societies for their survival. They live in societies because cooperation with others helps them survive by making it easier for them to satisfy their need for food, clothing, and shelter. But their desires and goals extend beyond the mere means of survival to include art, religion, and politics. Art, religion, and politics also become other means for human beings to cooperate in the more complex forms of society. Thus, the three of them can be used to distinguish one form of society from another.<sup>12</sup>

According to Engels, Marx's second scientific discovery is his theory of the capitalist mode of production. This theory assumes that the capitalist system operates to extract surplus value from workers through the wage system. For instance, the workers in a hammer factory receive their wages based on their working time. In the meantime, the capitalist who owns that factory obtains products (hammers) through the interaction between the workers, materials, and machines. If the workers work for four hours a day, the value of products (hammers) will cover all the expenditure for hammer production machinery, and the cost of labour includes one day's wage. But the owner of the factory does not hire the workers just for four hours; he employs them for a day at their standard working hours (today approximately 8 hours a day). In the next four hours, the worker produces four more hours of products for sale without any further payment for hire of labour power and this is the source of surplus value.<sup>13</sup> The capitalists can draw out this surplus from the workers for their own benefit in two ways. They can use it to expand their factory, to extract more surplus value from more workers, or use it for private consumption.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Engels, 'Karl Marx's Funeral', xxiv, pp. 467–68.

<sup>13</sup> See Karl Marx, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. 1*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), xxxv, chap. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Karl Marx', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, pp. 194–95, emphasis in the original.

Those two discoveries can be found in Marx's major work, *Capital*. Marx views his theory as a scientific theory, but he also acknowledges opposing theories, such as Ricardo's theory of political economy, as scientific theories. The difference between his theory and that of Ricardo, according to Marx, is that Ricardo's theory is an outdated bourgeois science of political economy, Ricardo's reflection was on an early state of capitalism, when the class struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was still underdeveloped.<sup>15</sup> The development of the capitalist system and the growth of class struggle calls for the development of Ricardo's theory with a more advanced explanation for that system, and this is Marx's task in *Capital*. Scientific theories can include both a bourgeois political economy like Ricardo's as well as Marx's theory, which tries to explain the new phenomena and overcome the failure of Ricardo's theory to develop an account of the conflict between capitalists and wage workers.<sup>16</sup>

If we accept that political economy is a scientific discipline, then the term 'science' in scientific theory is used in the neutral sense. Sciences can be used to represent the interest of the bourgeoisie as well as the proletariat. Assuming that Marxism, being a scientific doctrine, does include both a science of the capitalist mode of production and an ideology to mobilise the proletariat to overthrow capitalism, it seems that the tradition itself must present Marx's theory of the capitalist mode of production in *Capital* as the most advanced science of capitalism to guarantee its validity. However, the argument that Marx uses against Ricardo's theory can also be used against his own. If the conditions of the capitalist system differ from those of Marx's time, then it can be claimed that his theory, taken as the most recent account of the capitalist mode of production, is no longer relevant and should be replaced by a new theory that takes into account the contemporary conditions of capitalism.<sup>17</sup> My purpose is to claim not only that Marx's theory of capitalism is scientific, but that there is also still room for further development. However, the claim will be meaningless and unsubstantial without an understanding of the nature of scientific theories and the criteria used to differentiate the scientific from the non-scientific. This requirement leads to the next section in which I present several competing scientific models and their relationship to Marxism.

---

<sup>15</sup> Marx, xxxv, p. 14.

<sup>16</sup> Marx, xxxv, p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> For instance, there is the increasing importance of the service sector in the most advanced capitalist societies like the United States and other western European countries. See Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, [Nachdr. der Ausg.] London 1974 (Niedernberg: Repro Pfeffer, 1991), pp. 14–20; Harry R. Targ, 'Global Dominance and Dependence, Post-Industrialism, and International Relations Theory: A Review', *International Studies Quarterly*, 20.3 (1976), 461–82 (pp. 473–78) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2600095>>; Christopher Lasch, 'Toward a Theory of Post-Industrial Society', in *Politics in the Post-Welfare State: Responses to the New Individualism*, ed. by M. Donald Hancock and Gideon Sjoborg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 36–50.

## Scientific Models and their relationship to Marxism

Engels' claims of the two scientific discoveries do not necessarily make Marxism a scientific theory. Its claim to be a scientific theory depends, not only on the claims of one of its founders, but also on the application of its theory. From a theoretical perspective, Marxism needs not just to be scientific but also to be a progressive scientific theory. Marxism is not a stagnant theory or an already falsified scientific theory. From a political perspective, if Marxism fails to become a scientific theory and becomes one of the philosophical interpretations which Marxists always refute, the tradition will cease to have the power to attract the masses and the intellectuals for its program of social revolution. However, if Marxism is to continue to be scientific, we must provide a basis for its scientific ground that is reliable and relevant. Thus, we need ideas from the philosophy of science outside the tradition to provide the necessary model of science. Scholars of the philosophy of science have developed several models of science that can be used to demarcate the scientific from the non-scientific theories (the idea of demarcation). These models of science have their strengths and weaknesses. I will start with the most familiar model of science and continue through to the more recent models: empiricism, falsificationism, Kuhn's paradigm, and critical realism.

### Empiricism

Empiricism is the most common perception of science, that is, scientific knowledge originates from experience. The experience that informs the production of scientific knowledge is from observations and experiments. The idea can be traced back to Locke, Berkley, and Hume.<sup>18</sup> Without any prejudices, everyone should observe the same object and have the same experience. Scientific theories and scientific explanations can be constructed by generalisation of several observations of the same event. For example, an astronomer observes the orbit of a particular comet with the naked eye or with the astronomical telescope from time to time and record the orbital period of the comet and its characteristics. The orbital pattern of the comet can be verified by other observers of both orbital period and characteristics. If the patterns of the event are observed or tested by several observers or in experiments, the explanation or the theory of the event is more solid and better than theories and explanations where there is less conformity.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> A. F. Chalmers, *What Is This Thing Called Science?*, 3rd ed (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 1999), p. 3; Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, Science and Its Conceptual Foundations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that this idea of scientific knowledge cannot be used in mathematical science where theory does not directly originate from experience but from reasoning. See Alexander Rosenberg, *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy, 2nd ed (New York; London: Routledge, 2005), p. 23.

The strength of empiricism is its openness to almost everybody who can use their sensory organs to observe the events. Knowledge can be tested and verified disregarding the social status of the observers. If observers observe the event without any bias, the result of the observation should be the same. In this sense, the test process by observation or experiment is public and universally accessed. The production of knowledge cannot be a private experience or self-reflection of the past experiences of the observers, that cannot be tested or verified by other observers.

One famous version of empiricism is logical positivism. The idea of logical positivism comes from philosophers of the Vienna Circle. Logical positivism takes the idea of verification or testability by observation to the extreme. The testability by observation can be used to demarcate science from non-science. The main concern of philosophers of the Vienna Circle was to differentiate a scientific statement from a metaphysical statement.<sup>20</sup> Their method was to differentiate between statements which can be verified by observational evidence from those which cannot. The former is a scientific statement, and the latter is metaphysical statement. For the pursuit of scientific knowledge, they suggest that we should put more effort into the first kind of statement than into the second one.

Included in the idea of verification (or confirmation) is the claim that observation is evidence in support of a scientific theory.<sup>21</sup> This testing is performed using observers' senses and instruments to observe the result of the prediction. If the result of the prediction corresponds to the theory, then that theory is supported and confirmed. Without confirmation by observation, the theory cannot be scientific. The existence of God cannot be confirmed by observation, so we must accept the idea that God is religious and non-scientific.<sup>22</sup>

The idea of empiricism faces some criticisms from different points of view. For instance, there is the problem of the relevance of observations and the difference between the claim of the theory and the real event. In the case of the problem of observation, even if individuals were to observe without any bias or prejudice, the results of their observations could be different. The observation process comprises not only the interactions between the event, sensory organs, and nervous system of the observer, but also the cultural and intellectual aspects that function as mediators between the sensory organs and the events.<sup>23</sup> Cultural, intellectual, and technical aspects become barriers in the observational process. These barriers can make some elements of

---

<sup>20</sup> Ayer, pp. 6–8.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, Science and Its Conceptual Foundations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 40.

<sup>22</sup> Unless we accept the idea of creationism, which can be used to support the existence of God by stating everything is created by God herself.

<sup>23</sup> Chalmers, pp. 14–17.

the event more important than other elements or even lead to those events being disregarded in some cases. For example, from a cultural perspective, the movement of shaking one's head can have different meanings. In several cultures, it means disapproval but, in Indian culture, it means acceptance. Observation alone, without taking the cultural aspect into consideration, is not enough to provide a sound theory and explanation.

It should be noted that there is still a gap between explanations or theories and events. We can use the observation of events to formulate theories and explanations; however, our observations cannot guarantee that every event in the future will conform to the past observations. This is called the problem of induction.<sup>24</sup> For instance, in our knowledge of the celestial bodies, there are vast differences between an observed event and a real event which exists beyond human beings' observations. We can observe the orbit of Star A, create an explanation of the orbit, and predict the movement of that star. However, if the orbit of Star A does not confirm our prediction, we cannot use this lack of conformity to refute the explanation and prediction, for the reason that there can be several conditions that can affect our observations, such as the lack of efficient observation tools, or unknown conditions that affect the orbit of Star A. Or a simpler example is that a spectator can observe and collect the facts that, from the past to the present, pandas are black and white, but we cannot guarantee that in the future all pandas will be black and white. These unknown conditions can be anything—as yet undiscovered planets, comets, or organisms, etc.

The shortcomings of observation affect the whole idea of empiricism. That is, we cannot use observation to confirm or refute theories or explanations, because previously observed facts cannot guarantee forthcoming events. In this sense, the idea and the explanations of empiricism provide no conclusive theory and the theory can at most only approximate the truth. This limitation leads to another problem of empiricism and that is the problem of scientific progress. If we cannot use observations of past events to guarantee or refute theories concerning future events, then how can this theory be more progressive than other theories?

The strength of empiricism rests on its openness to almost every human being who can use their sensory organs to observe and make experiments to test their hypotheses, explanations, and theories. However, empiricism's strength is also its shortcoming in that our observations do not function uniformly across every human being, and the problem of induction makes explanations and theories based on the ideas of empiricism inconclusive. Marxism and some of other social scientific theories cannot be based on the model of empiricism because the progress of a society happens only once, and the past of the society is not the same as the future. The formation and

---

<sup>24</sup> Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 14.

collapse of Greek societies cannot be compared with the Chinese. In this case, observation of past events in different types of societies has limited meaning and relevance for the construction of the theory.

Another model of science that tackles all these problems and proposes a model of scientific development, a new idea of demarcation and a new relationship between observation and theory is falsificationism.

## **Falsificationism**

Popper's idea of demarcation rejects the idea of confirmation favoured by the Vienna Circle and logical positivism. Popper argues that if the idea of verification provides grounds for ideas to become scientific, then any ideas that can be verified are scientific. Consider, for instance, the statement that men who are born under the Zodiac sign of Aries will marry in their mid-thirties. It is possible that this phenomenon can be observed and possibly there will be several cases that will conform with the statement. This means that the statement can be confirmed but is this statement scientific or astrological?<sup>25</sup> Moreover, in the case of Marxism, adherents of Marxism can find evidence to support and confirm their theory. For example, one can crudely use several economic crises that happened alongside the development of particular capitalist systems in the world history to confirm that there is an inherent crisis within the capitalist system regardless of the conditions and the differences between the state of development of capitalism in those societies. Thus, the mere confirmation of a predicted event is not enough to support any theory as scientific. To overcome the peculiarity of confirmation, Popper reverses the role of observation in the scientific method from confirming a theory to falsifying it. Scientific theories are different from pseudo-scientific theories in their emphasis on observation because observation can be used to refute the former, but it cannot be used to refute the latter.<sup>26</sup> We can use the Hypothetico-Deductive or H-D model, which is common in any scientific practice, to demonstrate the difference between confirmation or falsification of any scientific theories. The process of H-D model is:

1. Gathering information from observations
2. Conjecturing or proposing a hypothesis, which is a result of step 1
3. Predicting a future event based on the hypothesis
4. Testing the prediction by experiments or another observation<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Karl R. Popper, p. 45. It should be noted that this case can also be used against falsificationism. However, being scientific statement has less meaning in the idea of falsificationism on the ground that the process of elimination the defects in the statement is more important than being scientific statement itself.

<sup>26</sup> Karl R. Popper, p. 53.

<sup>27</sup> Godfrey-Smith, p. 236.

The difference between confirmation and falsification starts from step 4 onward.

5. Confirming the proposed hypothesis with a true prediction
6. Falsifying the proposed hypothesis with a false prediction

The confirmation process of the H-D model is steps 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, while the process of falsification is steps 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6. The role of testing marks the difference between falsification and confirmation. In the falsification view of testing, observation must be used to eliminate the hypothesis, and any theories or hypotheses can be falsified by just one false prediction.<sup>28</sup> This falsification process can also be used for demarcating scientific theories from non-scientific theories by stating that only theories that are falsifiable are scientific theories.<sup>29</sup>

The falsifiable element of the theories and explanations can be used to differentiate between the good and the better theory. A theory that is more general and has greater coverage is better than a specified theory, on the grounds that a more general theory is easier to falsify than specified or limited scope explanations. The proposition of the general theory is, in Popper's term, a bold conjecture.<sup>30</sup> The bolder is the better. For instance, the proposition that every bird will raise its left leg before flying to the sky is easier to falsify than the proposition that every green bird in Dublin will raise its left leg before flying to the sky.

The falsification model of science has two advantages over the empiricism model. Firstly, it can dissolve the problem of observer relevance. The hypothesis does not need to be value free or derive from an unbiased observation. The elimination process of falsification will expose the limitations of the hypothesis whether from biased, unskilled, cultural bound observations, or any defects in the hypothesis of the theory. Only one single contradicted observational fact is enough to falsify the whole theory. Secondly, the falsification model can overcome the inconclusive theory problem of empiricism. Theories or explanations progress by being eliminated and the surviving theories or explanations show that they have better explanatory power than those that are eliminated. In this sense, we can learn from the mistakes of the past and develop a better theory that has fewer defects and more explanatory power. The process of scientific development is a process of eliminating existing theory and developing new theory on the same topic. Bold conjecture and critical reasoning are two important key elements for establishing and eliminating theory in the process of falsificationism.

However, Popper's falsification model faces some difficulties. Some theories are too easy to refute or too hard to refute. In the case of too easy to refute, the process of falsification only

---

<sup>28</sup> Karl R. Popper, p. 41, note 8.

<sup>29</sup> Karl R. Popper, p. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, Routledge Classics (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 313.

needs one single contradictory fact to falsify the theory. This falsification process contradicts the development of scientific history. For instance, in the case of Copernicus' theory of *heliocentrism*, the theory proposes that the orbit of planets is around the sun and is contrary to the model that stars, or planets move around the earth, which is called *geocentrism*. At that time, simple observation by eye did not seem to show that any celestial bodies orbited around other stars or planets. On the other hand, simple perception suggested that celestial bodies did move around the earth.<sup>31</sup> Does this mean the theory of heliocentrism is already falsified? Popper himself admits that we should stick to the theory and not permit a single contradictory observational fact to falsify the theory.<sup>32</sup>

Another difficulty is that scientists can find several ways to retain their theories and refute the contradictory observational facts. For instance, if the perturbation of the orbit of Planet A does not conform to the theory of gravity, one can speculate that there is another yet undiscovered planet that affects the orbit of Planet A, or one can argue that the current astronomical telescope is insufficient to observe Planet A and the result of the lack of sufficient tools is the contradictory observational fact. Thus, scientists can postpone the falsification process by using these kinds of justification.

Popper uses the model of falsification against Marxism by arguing that while Marxism is a scientific theory, it is already falsified.<sup>33</sup> Being a falsified scientific theory means that the theory loses its value and importance and become a historical relic in the history of science. The theory cannot produce new discoveries and explanations. As I already said above, when it comes to being too easy or too hard to falsify, both apply to Marxism. For instance, in the case of being too easy to falsify, one can use the fact that the socialist revolution did not occur in the advanced capitalist societies in Western Europe, but did occur in the less industrially developed country of Russia, to falsify Marxist theory; however, is one single contradictory fact enough? Do we need to be dogmatic to preserve the theory as Popper suggests? Secondly, does the socialist revolution in Russia mean that there are several conditions that the theorists in the tradition should develop to explicate the event? For instance, one could point out that the role of civil society in Russia and in Western European countries was too different, or that the Bolshevik party and its counterpart, the socialist parties in Western Europe, did not have the same resources and capacity, and that this led to different revolutionary outcomes, even though there were prevalent economic crises in those

---

<sup>31</sup> See Barbara Bienkowska, 'The Heliocentric Controversy in European Culture', in *Scientific World of Copernicus: On the Occasion of the 500th Anniversary of His Birth 1473-1973.*, ed. by Barbara Bienkowska (Place of publication not identified: Springer, 2013), pp. 122–23.

<sup>32</sup> Karl R. Popper, 'Normal Science and Its Danger', in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (presented at the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1970), p. 55.

<sup>33</sup> Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), pp. 48–49.

countries. Such case is too hard to falsify. In both cases, the idea of falsificationism cannot be used to support a scientific model of Marxism.

Thomas Kuhn proposes another model of science that can overcome the falsificationism problem of theory being too easy or too hard to falsify. Kuhn introduces the idea of paradigms and scientific revolution.

### **Kuhn's Paradigm**

Kuhn sees paradigms and scientific revolutions as parts of a scientific pattern. Unlike Popper's idea that scientific theories are too prone to falsification, for Kuhn, scientific theories are more durable and can withstand several contradictions. Kuhn argues against Popper's idea of falsification, suggesting that, when they are in their developing state, scientific theories are far from perfect and tend to be falsifiable. If we accept the idea of falsificationism, then there are no scientific theories left to develop.<sup>34</sup> The process of scientific development does not rely on falsification or confirmation<sup>35</sup> but on interactions within the scientific community and the way the community deals with theoretical anomalies.

Kuhn's model of scientific progress can be summarised into six stages as:

1. Pre-Paradigm<sup>36</sup>
2. Normal Science
3. Crisis
4. Revolution
5. New Normal Science
6. New Crisis

The pre-paradigm stage is the stage in which several contested paradigms strive against each other to gain adherent support from members of scientific communities in the respective field. Kuhn's paradigm means a particular set of scientific explanations, concepts, theories, and points of views. It also includes the rules and standards of the scientific practice.<sup>37</sup> The adherents of a particular paradigm do not question the core or the fundament explanation of that paradigm.<sup>38</sup> Once a paradigm gains sufficient support from the members of that scientific community, it becomes normal science. Scientists working in the normal science stage can accumulate and

---

<sup>34</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 146–47.

<sup>35</sup> Kuhn, p. 80.

<sup>36</sup> Kuhn, p. 101 Some authors use the term 'pre-science' on this stage. See Chalmers, p. 108.

<sup>37</sup> Kuhn, p. 10.

<sup>38</sup> Kuhn, p. 11.

develop theories and explanations within the paradigm but do not go beyond the core of the paradigm. The stage of normal science is also called the stage of puzzle-solving.<sup>39</sup> Scientists raise puzzles and try to solve them using the methods and instruments provided by the established paradigm. The research in the normal science stage produces nothing new and makes no major changes that can affect the paradigm. According to Kuhn, there is no paradigm without inherent anomalies.<sup>40</sup> Anomalies are gaps or discrepancies between the theories and the phenomena which the theories try to explain. Once scientists working within an established paradigm face more and more anomalies without any way to resolve them, then the established paradigm faces a crisis.

The crisis begins when the current established paradigm or normal science cannot sustain its anomalies from within and without. Therefore, paradigms in any field eventually face their crises. Kuhn uses the term crisis to refer to the stage when anomalies cannot be neglected, and these anomalies increasingly attract the attention of the prominent scientists of that field. In the moment of the crisis, adherents of the established paradigm lose faith in the paradigm, and the question of the fundamental of the paradigm arises.<sup>41</sup> The crises lead to the revolution of overthrowing the current paradigm when an alternative paradigm gains the support of the respective scientific community. According to Kuhn, the shift from the previous to the novel paradigm involves a change of world view as the previous and the new paradigms are incommensurable.<sup>42</sup> The change of paradigm changes the way the scientists perceive the research questions, the validity and reliability of the methods and the instruments used in the scientific research projects. The old question ceases to be a question in the new paradigm; therefore, there is no accumulation between paradigms. For instance, the change of paradigm from the old geocentric view of the world to the new heliocentric view make all the old questions of the geocentric view invalid and members of the scientific community no longer perceive the relationship between the sun, the moon, the earth, and all other orbits as geocentric. Kuhn's use the term "gestalt switch" to describe the moment of the shift of paradigm that affects members of the scientific community.<sup>43</sup>

The new paradigm cannot change the fact that there are anomalies inherent in all paradigms, so the process is still the same. The new paradigm faces a new crisis and eventually loses the support of its adherents, and once the newer paradigm gains the support of the respective scientific community, stages 2-6 recurrently follow.

---

<sup>39</sup> Kuhn, pp. 35–36.

<sup>40</sup> Kuhn, p. 81.

<sup>41</sup> Kuhn, p. 77.

<sup>42</sup> Kuhn, p. 112.

<sup>43</sup> Kuhn, p. 120.

As with other ideas on the nature of science, there are strengths and weaknesses in Kuhn's idea of the paradigm. The strength of the idea is that it can portray the development of the scientific process and the reason why theories are not easily falsified. The anomalies within the paradigm can be neglected if they do not lead to a crisis and cause the members of the respective scientific community to lose their faith in the paradigm. The process from establishing the paradigm to the revolution of the new paradigm takes a long time and a great deal of effort from the scientific community. However, the strength of Kuhn's idea is a trade-off. If the different paradigms are incommensurable based on the differences between standards and the ways in which the theories and relevant facts are perceived, then there cannot be any progress between the paradigms. All history of science is fragmented, and different paradigms cannot be related or compared. Thus, the problem of incommensurability also leads to the problem of relativism, that is, each paradigm has its own value; therefore, human beings can never accumulate their scientific knowledge from the past to the present and even into the future.

Kuhn's example of the shift between paradigms relies on the history of science and mostly on Physics and Chemistry.<sup>44</sup> In the domain of the social sciences, Kuhn raises the question: are there any paradigms at all?<sup>45</sup> For Kuhn, in any one discipline at a given time, one paradigm dominates all branches of the discipline; however, there is no such thing in the social sciences. In the social sciences, there are several contested explanations and none of them rule out the other explanations to become a dominant paradigm. In this context, does this mean that there is no normal science in the social sciences? Marxism, as a part of the social sciences, is far from being normal science. At most, the social sciences are in the pre-paradigm state; the contested paradigms are still striving to get support from the members of the communities.

If we accept Kuhn's model of scientific development and suppose that Marxism is one theory in the social sciences, we have to conclude that, at most, Marxism is one of contested paradigms striving to become recognised as normal science. Since the normal science stage has not been reached in the social sciences, according to Kuhn,<sup>46</sup> Marxism cannot be the dominant paradigm but, at most, only a contested paradigm. Moreover, we have to accept that there is no progress between dominant paradigms after the paradigm shift for the reason that those paradigms are incommensurable. Progress in the scientific field is in the eye of the beholder. Progress can be easily found in normal science but not in the competition between contested

---

<sup>44</sup> Kuhn, pp. 24–36.

<sup>45</sup> Kuhn, p. 15.

<sup>46</sup> The opinions of pre-paradigmatic stage of social sciences are disparate, some authors accept Kuhn's condition and definitions of paradigm, but others choose to modify the definition and condition to state that there are several paradigms in social sciences. See Christopher G. A. Bryant, 'Kuhn, Paradigms and Sociology', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 26.3 (1975), 354 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/589851>>; George Ritzer, 'Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science', *The American Sociologist*, 10.3 (1975), 156–67; Shiping Tang, 'Foundational Paradigms of Social Sciences', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 41.2 (2011), 211–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393109355294>>.

paradigms.<sup>47</sup> In this sense, progress, in Kuhn's sense, refers to the number of problems that can be solved within normal science. Comparing Popper and Kuhn, we will fall between the dichotomy of two extremes, one in which scientific theories are too easy to falsify and the other in which there is a lack of progress between paradigms. Is there any idea that can combine both Popper's rigorous strength of progress and Kuhn's ideas of paradigm that is not too easily falsified? Is it possible to have different sets of explanations and methods that compete with each other at the same time? A model that can answer these questions and combine these two strengths is Imre Lakatos' idea of the research programme.

### **Lakatos' Research Programme**

Lakatos' idea of the research programme can be called sophisticated falsificationism. Lakatos's model of scientific development draws attention to Popper's progressive trend and to the role of the scientific community described by Kuhn. These two aspects can be used to determine good and bad scientific theory or, in Lakatos' terms, the progressive and the degenerative research programme. To understand both aspects of Lakatos' research programme, we will begin by examining the structure of the research programme and the two types of research programme.

The structure of the research program can be divided into two different layers, the hard core, and the protective belt. The innermost layer is called the hard core of the research programme; it is immune to arguments against or refutation of its fundamental assumptions and theories.<sup>48</sup> The hard-core theories or laws of a research programme are gradually developed; therefore, they can be changed but these can only be constructive changes not negative changes or refutations.<sup>49</sup> The hard core is the most crucial part of the research programme. It determines the development of the protective belt and the conditions under which the existing research programs can be superseded by another research programme. Lakatos gives examples of research programme hard cores, such as Newton's three laws of mechanics and the law of gravitation<sup>50</sup> for Newtonian physics, a frame of reference for physics that is provided by the stars for Copernicus's heliocentrism.<sup>51</sup>

The outer layer of the research programme is the protective belt. The protective belt is a group of hypotheses and theories that can be changed and refuted to support and protect the hard core.<sup>52</sup> Similar to Kuhn's idea of the paradigm, anomalies can be found even in the early stage of

---

<sup>47</sup> Kuhn, p. 163.

<sup>48</sup> Imre. Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. by John Worrall and Currie, 2 vols (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), I, p. 48.

<sup>49</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 134.

<sup>50</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 182.

<sup>52</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 48.

the research programme.<sup>53</sup> The protective belt theories function to reduce anomalies; however, they cannot eliminate all anomalies.<sup>54</sup> Lakatos describes anomalies as counter examples that challenge the research programme. Good or progressive research programmes produce novel facts or find new anomalies. On the contrary, degenerative research programmes cannot produce any novel facts and use ad hoc modification of the hypotheses to overcome anomalies.<sup>55</sup>

The idea of two layers of research programmes and two types of research programmes as several strengths. First, it retains Popper's idea of falsifiability in the protective belt. The fact that theories and hypotheses can be developed and refuted shows the progressive aspect of the research programme. Second, the falsifiability of theories and hypotheses is not so easy as to make them too vulnerable. A shift from the research programme can occur only if there is an alternative research programme. The roles of scientific communities are crucial in the development of the existing research programme and the alternative research programme, and in this respect the process is similar to the development of Kuhn's paradigms.

However, Lakatos' research programme also faces some difficulties concerning how to differentiate between progressive and degenerative research programmes. An example of this difficulty can be found when considering the idea of heliocentrism. Unlike the usual view of heliocentrism in which Copernicus is given the credit as the inventor of the theory, Lakatos gives the credit to an ancient Greece astronomer, Aristarchus of Samos (310-230 B.C.).<sup>56</sup> If the heliocentrism research programme could not develop any supporting theories or hypotheses for approximately one thousand and seven hundred years, until Copernicus "revived" the idea of heliocentrism, then during that time was the heliocentrism research programme progressive or degenerative? The same argument can be used when considering Marxism. For Lakatos, Marxism is a degenerative research programme that cannot produce any novel facts and uses ad hoc modifications to preserve its research programme.<sup>57</sup> If, in the next five hundred years, someone can develop or "revive" Marxism in a manner similar to Copernicus, then is Marxism degenerative or progressive? In this sense, if it is possible for any research programme that fails to become a degenerative research programme, and later to be revived and become a progressive research programme, as was the case with heliocentrism, how are the categories of degenerative and progressive research programme still meaningful?

---

<sup>53</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 48.

<sup>54</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 49.

<sup>55</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 68.

<sup>56</sup> Lakatos, 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', I, p. 189.

<sup>57</sup> Imre. Lakatos, 'Science and Pseudoscience', in *Philosophical Papers*, 2 vols (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), I, pp. 5–6.

From the ideas of empiricism, falsificationism, Kuhn's paradigm and lastly Lakatos' research programme, the model of scientific progress changes, from the method that individual scientists use to verify or falsify the theories, to the role of scientific communities in shifting a paradigm or proposing an alternative research programme. It is obvious that Lakatos' research programme is the best option. For instance, it retains the progressive feature of the falsification model, but the theories are not too easily falsified. Lakatos' model relies on the scientific communities in the same way as Kuhn's paradigm, but Lakatos' research programme is not incommensurable or relativist. The research programmes can be compared and superseded by other alternatives. However, we must accept that the idea of progressive and degenerative research programmes is problematic because of the time frame associated with differentiating between the two type of research programmes. Thus, I accept the general outline of Lakatos' research programme but not the criteria to differentiate between the progressive and degenerative research programmes. As shown above, any theory can be picked up by a later generation of scientists to revive and develop; therefore, we cannot clearly identify the timeframe needed to distinguish a degenerative programme from a progressive programme. We should reserve the possibility of shifting between those two types of research programme, from degenerative to progressive and vice versa.

From the idea that scientific theories provide an explanation of events, theories also show something about the world. The question is, what kind of something is shown? From the perspective of empiricism, theories provide patterns or regularities or law-like theories; however, there is an alternative model of explanation: scientific theory does not necessarily provide law-like explanations but provides the mechanism that produces an effect. This kind of explanation leads us to the following section on Critical Realism.

## **Critical Realism**

Events in the domain of the social sciences, because of human intervention, are vastly different from events in the physical sciences. For example, the rise and fall of feudalism in Western Europe is dissimilar from the structure of the Atom. The structure of the Atom is independent from human beings' activities and remains the same before or after the proposition of its structure by Niels Bohr. However, the birth and decline of Feudalism in Western Europe mostly relied on human intervention. Furthermore, Western Feudalism is a unique event that is unlikely to happen again. If there are scientific explanations in both cases (Atom and Feudalism), then the nature of the scientific explanation must be different in each case.

Roy Bhaskar proposes the idea of Critical Realism (originally, he used the terms Transcendental Realism and Critical Naturalism but combined and adopted the term "Critical

Realism" later).<sup>58</sup> Critical Realism presents an alternative view of reality, causation, and knowledge in contrast with the idea of empiricism. Bhaskar lays the foundation for Critical Realism by categorising knowledge into two dimensions: intransitive and transitive. The first dimension is based on the idea that reality exists independently from the persons who experience or observe it.<sup>59</sup> Bhaskar names objects in this intransitive reality as intransitive objects of knowledge. The existence of intransitive objects of knowledge does not mean that human beings cannot change or have an impact on reality, but it means that its existence does not depend on human activities. For instance, the atom exists as an intransitive object of knowledge and investigation whether human beings discover it or not; or leopards exist whether or not human beings observe or record their behaviour. The second dimension of knowledge, according to Bhaskar, is transitive.<sup>60</sup> This second dimension of knowledge refers to theories, methods, and techniques that are used in the investigation or construction of the theories that explain the intransitive object of knowledge; therefore, theories and explanations can be developed, changed, and refuted.

Bhaskar also proposes three overlapping domains of reality: the real, the actual and the empirical.<sup>61</sup> The real refers to mechanisms and structures of the world that exist with or without human intervention, such as the structure of genes, DNA, and the structure of substances. The actual refers to the state in which the structures or mechanisms operate; that is called the event. Lastly, the empirical refers to events that can be observed or experienced by human beings. These three different domains give us the mediated relationship between human beings and the world. For instance, once human beings invented the automobile, plenty of them became available, and the existence of any single automobile does not rely on human beings' perception. They exist without any human intervention or observation. Automobiles can be driven and can be used to transport human beings and materials; this capacity of automobiles is latent. Once automobiles are driven and used to transport something, the capacity of the automobile is realised and this becomes "activity", Baskar called this state the "actual". The events of driven automobiles can occur with or without any spectators (except the drivers and the passengers). When the events are observed and experienced by the spectator, this state of reality is called "the empirical". Thus, Critical Realism does not reject the regularities that can be observed through sensory organs of human beings but recognizes that the event itself has inner structures or mechanisms that cause the events. The task of inquiry is not just to present the regularities of the event as the empiricists

---

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Collier, *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy* (London; New York: Verso, 1994), p. xi.

<sup>59</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, Classical Texts in Critical Realism (London; New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 21.

<sup>60</sup> Bhaskar, p. 21.

<sup>61</sup> Bhaskar, p. 56.

suggest, but to uncover the mechanisms that underly the events in the domain of the real.

The two dimensions of knowledge and the three domains of reality lay the foundation for Critical Realism on the topics of reality, causation, and knowledge. The task of scientific research is to find the real cause of the events, that is, the mechanisms of the structure. The pursuit of knowledge is progress in the sense that knowledge approximates truth and is the representation of the real mechanism of reality. The model of the mechanism can be improved upon and refuted by newer models or even abandoned if the proposed mechanism is misleading and does not produce the effect suggested.

Marxist theorists can use the idea of Critical Realism for its ontological and epistemological base as a scientific theory and the idea of Lakatos' research programme as a direction for the progressive trend of the hard core and the protective belt theories. Marxism, as a scientific theory, investigates the mechanisms of the capitalism system to explain how and why the capitalist class makes other subordinated classes accept their rules. An examination of the structure of the capitalist system and its mechanism to produce that effect are some of the most crucial tasks Marx and Engels undertake in *Capital*. The next part will show how the idea of Critical Realism and other related ideas associated with mechanisms can be presented in the Marxist theory of the capitalist mode of production.

## Marxism and its Scientific Explanation

If we accept the idea of Critical Realism that scientific theory must identify the mechanism that causes certain events, then Marxism as a scientific theory must identify the causal mechanism in regard to its explanations. The development of hard core and protective belt theories must develop in this direction. The causal mechanism presupposes that there is a real cause that can produce the effect. This 'real' object of scientific inquiry exists independently from scientists and scientific activities.<sup>62</sup> The task of scientific theory is not just to propose hypotheses concerning the regularity of events but to represent the structure of the world.<sup>63</sup> At least in the social sciences, the structure of the world can be understood in terms of the form of the casual mechanism that causes the phenomenon.<sup>64</sup> Scientific realism in general and Critical Realism in particular do not emphasise regularities and predictions; the prime target of explanation is the mechanism of the observed phenomenon.

I shall begin with the basic assumptions regarding the causal mechanism and the

---

<sup>62</sup> Roy Bhaskar, *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy*, Classical Texts in Critical Realism, 1st rev. edn (New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 10.

<sup>63</sup> Godfrey-Smith, p. 177.

<sup>64</sup> Bhaskar, p. 66.

differences between the several types of this model based on their functions. The basic assumptions regarding the causal mechanism are:

1. The mechanism can be understood through the way it produces the effect.
2. The mechanism shows the causal relation between the cause and the effect.
3. The mechanism has a structure.
4. The mechanism has multiple levels or a form of hierarchy.<sup>65</sup>

The first two assumptions express the causal realist view of science, which assumes that there is a real cause that produces the effect. In this case, it is a mechanism, and this mechanism is a tool to explain the phenomenon by describing the interaction between structures that brings about the effect. The structure in the third assumption refers to parts and the interactions between its parts. For instance, the movement of a ball that is the result of my kick is the interaction of the ball and my kicking force. The relationship between the ball as a part and the force that hits the ball as another part construct a structure of how the ball moves. The third and fourth assumptions present the characteristics of the causal mechanism as structural and hierarchical. The fourth assumption indicates that, as well as the ordinary mechanism of the force that moves the ball, there are other levels that operate underneath. For instance, at the lower level of the ball as a part of structure, there is the interaction of its fibre, the glue, and other compositions; and at an even lower level, there is its atomic structure, that is, the relationships between protons, electrons and so on.

Various philosophers of science present their own definitions of the casual mechanism. However, they share some similar features, such as the parts (or entities) that combine to constitute a system, interactions of the parts (or activities between entities), and effects that result from the interactions (activities). For example, Stuart Glennan portrays the mechanism as ‘a complex system that produces that behaviour by the interaction of a number of parts, where the interactions between parts can be characterised by direct, invariant, change-relating generalisations’.<sup>66</sup> Peter Machamer, Lindley Darden and Carl F. Craver present mechanisms as ‘entities and activities organised such that they are productive of regular changes from start or set-up to finish or termination conditions’.<sup>67</sup> These two definitions share the view that a mechanism relates to changes, but their ways of emphasising the changes are quite different. For Glennan, the interaction between parts within a system produce the changes that occur; however, for Machamer, Darden and Craver, it is both the entities and the activities between entities that

---

<sup>65</sup> Peter Hedström and Petri Ylikoski, ‘Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36.1 (2010), 49–67 (pp. 50–51) <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102632>>.

<sup>66</sup> Stuart Glennan, ‘Rethinking Mechanistic Explanation’, *Philosophy of Science*, 69.S3 (2002), S342–53 (p. S334) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/341857>>.

<sup>67</sup> Peter Machamer, Lindley Darden, and Carl F. Craver, ‘Thinking about Mechanisms’, *Philosophy of Science*, 67.1 (2000), 1–25 (p. 3).

produce changes within a system.

Both views use examples from biology, such as the process of producing a synapse in the nervous system<sup>68</sup> or the composition of several neuron cells in the nervous system,<sup>69</sup> so that one can infer the difference between the explanations in physics and in biology. Explanations in biology are not predictions based on regularities, but on models that enable one to understand how the interaction between various parts can produce changes within an observed entity. However, there are some limitations in both of their definitions. For Glennan, the mechanism in the system does not just interact to change the property of a part but in some cases it does so to produce something within the system. For example, there are several interactions in the four chambers of the heart, but those interactions are for the purpose of pumping oxygen to the blood and directing it to other tissues and parts of the body. That is how Machamer, Darden and Craver define a mechanism that produces changes within a system. However, sometimes within the system there are interactions that merely interact without producing changes.<sup>70</sup>

William Bechtel and Adele Abrahamsen propose a view of scientific explanation that differs from the D-N model. They point out that biology differs from physics in several ways, and therefore it cannot use the D-N model for explanations. Explanations in biology are not predictions based on regularities but are based on the mechanism that causes the various parts or components to interact to produce a particular outcome, such as systems maintenance.<sup>71</sup> They also combine both elements of Glennan's interaction and Machamer, Darden and Craver's activities that produce regular changes. Bechtel and Abrahamsen state that 'A mechanism is a structure performing a function in virtue of its component parts, component operations, and their organisation. The orchestrated functioning of the mechanism is responsible for one or more phenomena'.<sup>72</sup>

They present other features of this model as follows:

- The component parts of the mechanism are those that figure in producing a phenomenon of interest.
- Each component operation involves at least one component part. Typically, there is an active part that initiates or maintains the operation (and may be changed by it) and at least one passive part that is changed by the operation. The change may be to the location or

---

<sup>68</sup> Machamer, Darden, and Craver, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> Glennan, p. S345.

<sup>70</sup> James G. Tabery, 'Synthesizing Activities and Interactions in the Concept of a Mechanism\*', *Philosophy of Science*, 71.1 (2004), 1–15 (p. 9) <<https://doi.org/10.1086/381409>>.

<sup>71</sup> William Bechtel and Adele Abrahamsen, 'Explanation: A Mechanist Alternative', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 36.2 (2005), 421–41 (p. 422) <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2005.03.010>>.

<sup>72</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 423.

other propert(ies) of a part, or it may transform it into another kind of part.

- Operations can be organized simply by temporal sequence, but biological mechanisms tend to exhibit more complex forms of organization.
- Mechanisms may involve multiple levels of organization.<sup>73</sup>

This model presupposes that there must be interactions between various parts or structures of the mechanism. These components or parts combine into a system or organisation and the interactions between them are called “operations”. There are interactions within a system and operations that may produce changes. By understanding the mechanism that produces the effect through its operations or interactions, we can understand how the phenomena or system operates. Refuting one model can involve either proposing another elaborated model that has more components and/or operations between them or proposing a new system (with new component parts and interactions) that can better represent the reality and overcome the anomalies of the existing model; otherwise, the model still survives as a Lakatosian research programme.<sup>74</sup>

For Bechtel and Abrahamsen, different domains or organisations have their own operations; thus, their explanation in one upper level cannot be used to explain operations at the lower level and vice versa. They insist that in 'mechanistic explanation, successively lower-level mechanisms account for different phenomena. Scientists construct a cascade of explanations, each appropriate to its level and not replaced by those below'.<sup>75</sup> In this sense, we cannot reduce the explanation of the upper level to the lower level and assume that there is a fundamental explanation that can explain every level of phenomena.

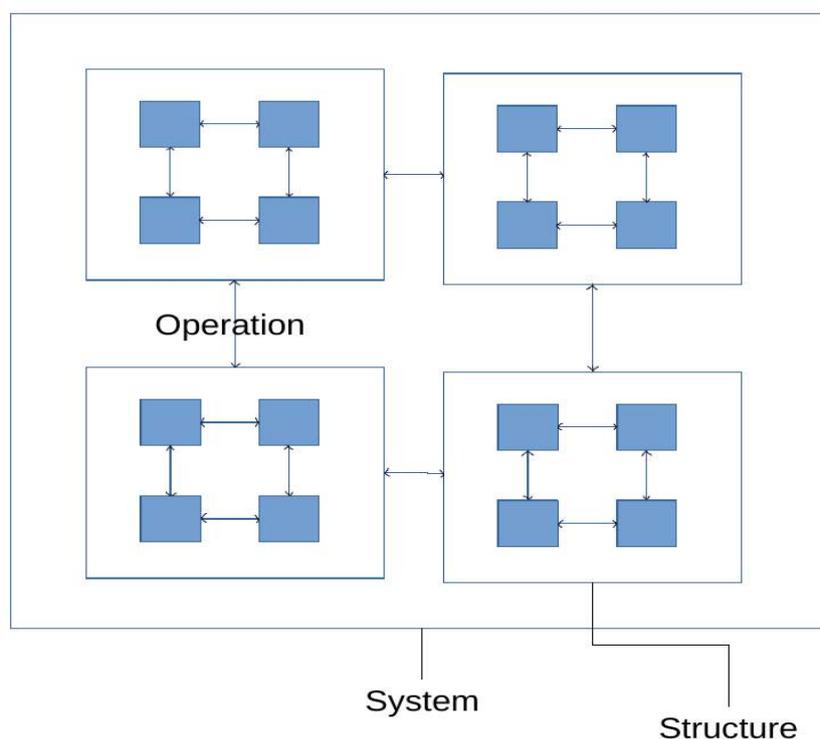
To illustrate the relation between structures, their functions and the interactions or operations of the structures that form the system or organisation, I create two figures as follows:

---

<sup>73</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 424.

<sup>74</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 437.

<sup>75</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 426.



*Figure 4.1. The relation between structures, operations, and system*

In this figure, all boxes represent structures and the lines between them are operations. Several structures interact, between them create their system, and the system becomes the structure at the higher level. Thus, this model can be used in recursive way to go from the lower level to the higher level.

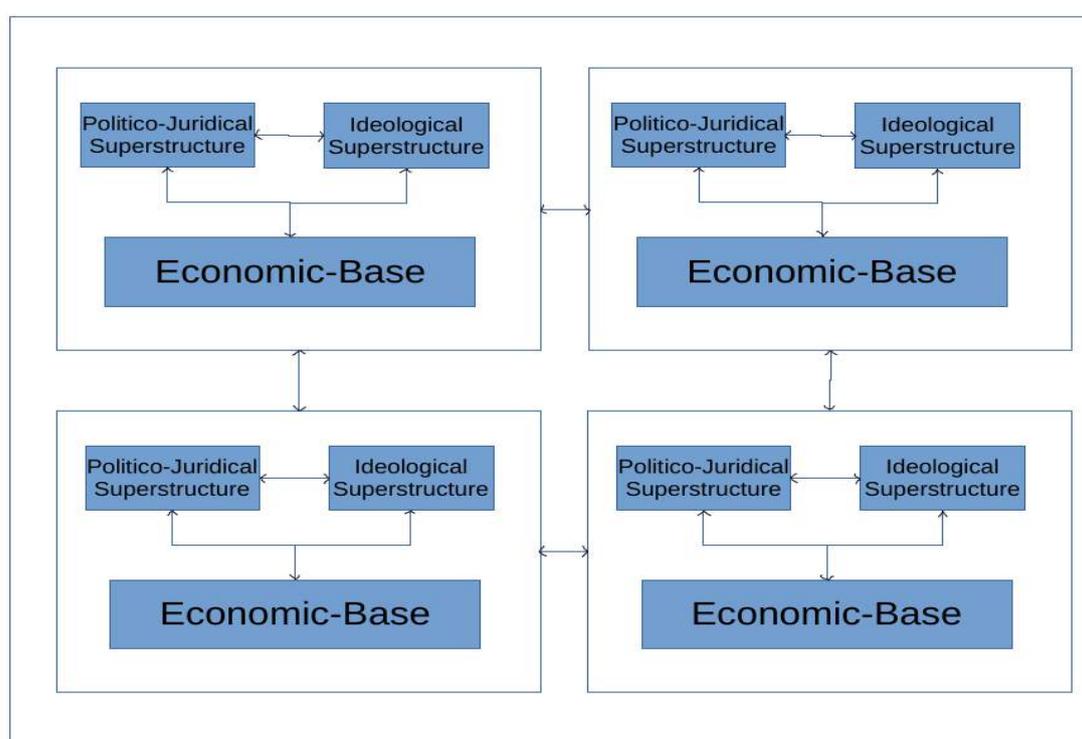
The mechanistic model of explanation in biological terms can be summarised as follows:<sup>76</sup> This model is based on the presupposition that the system comprises several components or structures and that that system produces effects. The human body can be understood as a system. This system has several structures or sub-systems, such as the blood circulation system and the respiratory system, each of which has its own function. Together they perform their functions to circulate blood through the human body.

The mechanistic model can be used to understand Marx's theory of history. It begins with the presupposition that Marx's theory of history has several components including the economic-base, the politico-juridical superstructure, and the ideological superstructure. All of these are structures, and they have their own operations toward each other. The task of Marxist inquiry in this model is to identify the effects of the system and to present the operation of those structures in a relatively isolated economic system. At a higher level, every economic system can be treated as

<sup>76</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 423.

a structure, and their operations construct the global system. On the other hand, at the lower level, every structure is its own system and has its own sub-structures and operations at the upper levels affect the lower levels (in a recursive way) while operations at the lower levels affect the upper levels (in a heuristic way). The spatial-temporal description of the relation between base and superstructure can be used as a starting point for the mechanistic model to understand one type of society. And the transformation of one type of society to another type can be illustrated at the highest level by treating societies as structures, which are combined into the whole history of humanity at the highest level.

This point can be illustrated by applying the mechanistic model of scientific explanation to the level of politico-juridical superstructure as follows:



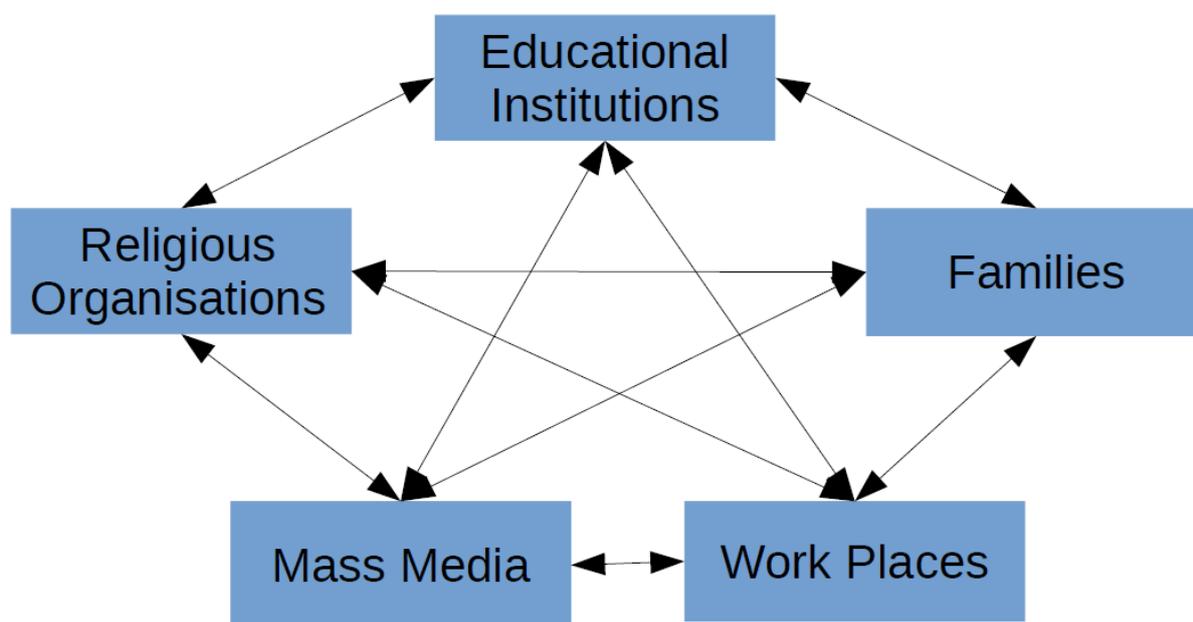
*Figure 4.2 Relations between states at the global level*

The whole box represents the global level as the highest level, and the small boxes represent each society at the lowest level of the global system. The interactions between the small boxes can take various forms, such as imperialism, trade wars, or actual wars between states. The interactions between these small boxes and the impacts on the small boxes can vary from time to time depending on the structure of each box and the type of interaction. For instance, the result of war between states can be an annexing of one state over another state or cultural imperialism can affect the ideological superstructure box of other states.

In the lower level, each state is represented by one box and each box can disintegrate into

its economic-base and superstructure. The economic-base and superstructures represented by the inner boxes are different in each state and society. There are interactions between superstructures and between superstructures and an economic base. And the operations of states in the global capitalist system are also not equivalent. For instance, the role of the U.S. in the capitalist system is not like the roles of third world and less developed countries. The generalisation of the operations as explanations at this level can be explained only at this level and cannot be reduced to the lower levels. As said above, each level has its operations, but the operations at the upper level cannot be used to explain those at the lower level and vice versa. Even if the theory of history could be used to explain the general tendency, it affects different levels differently. This general tendency presupposes a material basis determining the general tendency of history, but the conditions that are created by the material basis differ between countries, even though they are determined by the same source. Moreover, the operations between various structures in particular countries at particular times are specific to those countries; they cannot be reduced and used to explain the situation in other countries or even in the same country but at a different time.

At the level of superstructure, the mechanical explanation can be used to formulate the relations between various components as follows:



*Figure 4.3 Ideological Superstructure and its components*

The boxes represent various materialised structures of an ideological superstructure, such as presses, families, educational institutions, religious organisations, and workplaces. The lines between them symbolise interactions or operations between those structures. If we presuppose

that the goal or the purpose of the ideological superstructure is to maintain the rule of the ruling class in a particular society by reproducing social relations (the ruling class and the subordinated classes), we can understand this by postulating the operations of each structure and combining them to form the system that supports this function.

The politico-judicial superstructure uses force to maintain order in a given society. The structures within this superstructure includes courts of justice, police forces, armed forces, etc. These structures make and mould the individual to conform to the rules according to the social relations of production within a given society. For instance, no one can legally steal another person's property.

The operation of the ruling class, through the interaction of various social structures, is a social mechanism that makes individuals subjects under the (capitalist) state rule, workers under the idea of free trade and wage labour, and students under the supervision of schools and other education system. The operations between various components of the ideological superstructure not only justify or legitimise the rule of the ruling class, but also make the individuals of the given society act, to themselves, to other persons, to their society, and to the world surrounding them, as subjects in the Althusserian sense.<sup>77</sup> The operations not only create subjective meaning for the individuals, but they also create group identities for human beings to belong to. However, there is no unifying effect of the operations of these components on the individuals; therefore, it is possible that various kinds of subjectivity are not compatible nor in harmony. For instance, the role of individuals in the family as husband and wife and their roles as citizens of a given state can be conflicted. Under some conditions, one cannot be a good citizen for their nation and a good wife at the same time. But the apparent contradictory nature of the roles of the subject are acceptable if it does not conflict with the social relations of the capitalist system. For instance, the roles of teacher and of wife can be conflicted. Female workers in the educational institution have to work within their families to take care them, and also to work in the office. These two roles demand their time and put stress on them, and occasionally female workers have to choose which roles should be prioritised. However, these conflicted roles in a capitalist society do not directly affect the relations of production; they do not immediately impact the interest of the ruling class. Thus, these conflicted roles are acceptable.

The interaction of the politico-judicial superstructure and the ideological superstructure can be summarised by using Gramsci's terminology: the interaction of the force (politico-judicial) and consent (ideological) makes the individuals conform and accept the roles and social relations of

---

<sup>77</sup> The idea of social reproduction as the means of the ruling class make it rules can be found in Göran Therborn, 'What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? Some Reflections on Different Approaches to the Study of Power in Society', *Critical Sociology*, 25.2-3 (1999), 224-43 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205990250021101>>.

production that are generated from the base.

These models are just examples of using a mechanistic explanation in Marxism, and they are intended to show that other scientific explanations can be used to understand social phenomena. This mechanistic model of scientific explanation has several strengths. First, it avoids the problem of economic reductionism that assumes that all social phenomena are due to economic causes. On the contrary, this model assumes that each social phenomenon has multiple levels, and each level has its own 'generalisation'. There is nothing that can explain all levels of a single phenomenon. For example, the operations within the ideological superstructure and the higher level of the state have their own generalisation. At the state level, not only the ideology superstructure but also the politico-juridical superstructure operates to sustain and reproduce capitalist social relations through repressive means or brute force (politico-juridical) or through ideological means by making the individuals concede to the rule of the ruling class. There are also operations at the base that shape the means of these two superstructures and vice versa. The explanations or generalisations concerning the mechanism at the ideological superstructure level cannot be used to explain the higher level which involves different components and a dissimilar mechanism.

Moreover, the model of the ideological superstructure level provides the reason why the ideological struggles are latent and are not active in the normal situation. The various subject roles drain the energy of the individuals and make them put their effort into fulfilling the goals and the requirements of those subject roles, such as becoming a pious religious member, a good citizen, a good teacher, a good wife. Only if subject roles that severely affect the social relations of the capitalist society, such as capitalists and workers, are taken into account, and the exploitative social relations and system of domination are vividly present, and the great masses of human beings in that society are aware, then the social relations in question cannot easily reproduce themselves and the latent ideological struggles become active and can be observed and experienced.

The relationship between reductionism and mechanistic explanation is quite well-known among Marxists. For example, several Marxists at the time of the Second International interpreted Marx's theory of history as economism which is a combination of both mechanistic explanation and economic reductionism.<sup>78</sup> Reductionism in the form of economic reductionism considers that every social phenomenon is caused by economic conditions. The birth of a new society mechanically occurs through the development of the forces of production in the economic domain, and there is

---

<sup>78</sup> Chantal Mouffe, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. by Chantal Mouffe (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), pp. 172–76; V. I. Lenin, 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, pp. 315–16.

no role for the party or revolutionary agents for making a social revolution.

I incorporate Marxism with the idea of Critical Realism can benefit the tradition. On the reason that it is important to emphasise that mechanistic models 'are not the mechanisms in the world, but representations of them'.<sup>79</sup> This does not contradict the realist assumption of the real existence of objects of inquiry; however, it emphasises that the task of human inquiry is to gain a better understanding of the world. Representations of the world can be true or false, depending on how well the representation corresponds with reality. We can only present reality itself through a representation. So, the claim is that any representation can be superseded by one that is developed to be better. Our task is to present a mechanism that corresponds as closely as possible to the reality in our scientific pursuit and to remember to avoid the harmful belief that we can seize the eternal truth and claim it to legitimise our actions and purposes. Marxism in this sense can retain its critical attitude to pursue a better representation of the world and Marxists can apply their models of representation to their political practices to test and develop them, as will be shown in the next chapter.

---

<sup>79</sup> Bechtel and Abrahamsen, p. 425.

## CHAPTER V: PRAXIS AND ITS RELATION TO IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

The concept of praxis has a unique status in Marxism, as reflected in Marx's famous *Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach*: 'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it'.<sup>1</sup> This seems to emphasise the importance of change over interpretation and suggests that we should not just be interpreters of the world of experience, but also, and more importantly, we should modify it. The emphasis on change and transformation of the material world distinguishes Marxism as different from other philosophical theories. It makes Marxism a political doctrine and a revolutionary social movement. Since praxis captures this line of thought, the concept is highly regarded by some Marxists. For instance, one claims that praxis is the core of Marx's theory of history,<sup>2</sup> while another uses the term 'a philosophy of praxis' as a synonym for Marxism.<sup>3</sup> The purpose of Marxism is to transform a capitalist society into a communist society through social revolution. This theory is illustrated by the success of the Russian Revolution, which led to Lenin gaining high status as a Marxist theoretician.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter aims to present the interwoven relationships between the concepts of praxis, science, and ideology in the Marxist tradition. The idea of practice affects the tradition in two domains. First, in the theoretical domain, practice can be used as a criterion to preliminarily identify the validity of ideas when ideas interact with material reality. If ideas can transform material reality, they must relate to the real mechanical causes of that reality. Thus, the ability of ideas to transform material reality indicates that there must be some truth inherent in them but, on the other hand, ideas that cannot change material reality must have some defects in them and need to be changed or even abandoned. In this sense, the idea of praxis can be used to support or refute theories to

---

<sup>1</sup> Karl Marx, 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v, p. 5, emphasis in the original.

<sup>2</sup> See Antonio Labriola, *Socialism and Philosophy*, trans. by Ernest Untermann (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1912), p. 60; and a more recent scholar see Joseph Margolis, 'Praxis and Meaning: Marx's Species-Being and Aristotle's Political Animal', in *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*, ed. by George E. McCarthy, Perspectives on Classical, Political, and Social Thought (Savage, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1992), p. 330.

<sup>3</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Joseph A Buttigieg, 5 vols (New York; [Chichester]: Columbia University Press, 2007), III, pp. 369, 376, 378; Antonio Gramsci and Frank Rosengarten, *Letters from Prison*, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), II, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup> György Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*, trans. by Nicholas Jacobs (London; New York: Verso, 2009), p. 13.

further develop the concept of Marxism as a scientific discipline. Second in the ideological-political domain, the idea of ideological practice can be used to support or destroy the existing rule of the ruling class by reproducing the existing order or exposing the exploitative system in preparation for the coming social revolution.

However, the idea of praxis does not originate from the Marxist tradition itself. The term 'praxis' has a long history. It can be traced back to Greek classical ideas, especially those of Aristotle.<sup>5</sup> Although the dichotomy between theory (idea) and practice (action) is now commonplace, Marxist thinkers take this dichotomy to another level of importance.

Authors in the Marxist tradition share similar views on the idea of praxis as a creative element. For instance, Gajo Petrovic considers that praxis

... refers in general to action, activity; and in Marx's sense to the free, universal, creative, and self-creative activity through which man creates (makes, produces) and changes (shapes) his historical, human world and himself; an activity specific to man, through which he is basically differentiated from all other beings.<sup>6</sup>

Another author sees praxis as "non-alienated labour", that is, an activity "through which the worker objectifies their own creative powers whilst affirming and extending social bonds of mutuality."<sup>7</sup> Edward Andrew takes a similar view. He argues that any activity that creates unity between theory and practice is science<sup>8</sup> and that scientific practice is creative.<sup>9</sup> The creative aspect of praxis also presents in John McMurtry's interpretation of Marx's idea of human nature. For McMurtry, only when 'work in which man is not thus constrained, but freely realizes his subjecthood in creative praxis, this "unadulterated" form of work is what man needs qua man: it is "life's prime want" for the truly human existence.'<sup>10</sup> Human beings in this sense show their creativity through their practice. They transform their circumstance through their plans and ideas, and through this process, differentiate themselves from other beings.

I share their views on both aspects. I recognise that the unity between theory and practice represents the creativity aspect of human beings. Marx also states the same. However, the idea of

---

<sup>5</sup> Nikolaus Lobkowitz, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), pp. 4-5.

<sup>6</sup> Petrovic, Gajo, 'Praxis', in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. by T. B. Bottomore, 2nd ed (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Reference, 1991), pp. 435-40 (p. 435).

<sup>7</sup> Chris Hanley, 'An Exploration of Educative Praxis: Reflections on Marx's Concept Praxis, Informed by the Lacanian Concepts Act and Event', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49.10 (2017), 1006-15 (p. 1009) <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1273087>>.

<sup>8</sup> Edward Andrew, 'A Note on the Unity of Theory and Practice in Marx and Nietzsche', *Political Theory*, 3.3 (1975), 305-16 (p. 306) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009059177500300306>>.

<sup>9</sup> Andrew, p. 311.

<sup>10</sup> John McMurtry, *The Structure of Marx's World View* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 32.

scientific practice as praxis should be elaborated. Individuals can theorise their circumstances and their social condition and develop the relevant tools in their scientific or theoretical practice; however, the idea that results from theoretical practice does not directly and immediately change the world or the circumstances. For instance, when Marx developed his theory of capitalism, his theories and conceptual tools were based on the Western European capitalist system. However, his theory does not directly affect the capitalist system; it needs another person to put his ideas into practice. In this sense, I propose that praxis has another aspect, that is, idea guidance practice, which will be explained in the last section of this chapter.

In the Marxist tradition, the practice of transforming the environment to support members of society and the practice of developing ideas to assist that transformation are the first two practices (praxis) required in any society. The concept of practice is also used as a criterion for testing theories by the success or otherwise of their ability to transform social reality. In addition, the concept of practice relates to the concept of ideology in that it explains the rise of the ideological superstructure. Ideology, especially the ideology of the ruling class, results from the limited capacity of social practices to satisfy all members of society. Ideological struggle between two fundamental classes is also a form of ideological practice in that it aims to prolong or end the rule of the ruling class. If the productive forces are changed and have power to enable social practices to satisfy more members, this requires a new set of ideas to regulate those practices. The ideological superstructure is a result of ideological practices of the ruling class or its ideological assistance to create a set of ideas that can regulate members of a given society to accept the rule of the ruling class. If the ruling ideologies cannot regulate the new practices and accommodate them to the existing rule of the ruling class, then those ruling ideas will lose their power to get the masses to accept the rule of the ruling class and the existing ideological superstructure will collapse.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part elaborates the aspect of practice that Marx and Engels use in their theory of history. The second part explicates the scope of practice as a criterion for the evaluation of theory. The last part moves back to the connection between ideology and practice.

### **Three Aspects of Practice**

Although Marx and Engels never present us with a crystal-clear definition of the term practice, we can infer its meaning and connotations of the term from their usage of it. Marx uses the term in at least three ways. First, he uses it in the ordinary sense of the dichotomy between theory

and practice. Second, he uses the term practice as a criterion to evaluate the validity of human thought. And last, he uses the term in the sense of activity that is guided by theory. When it is used as a criterion to evaluate a theory, it presupposes a unity between theory and practice. The last criterion preliminarily suggests that a valid theory must produce a coherent effect. It should be noted that the desirable effect alone is not sufficient to determine the validity of the theory. For example, the outcome of an overthrown government or regime can be gained from a false theory in the sense that it provides a false mechanism for the events. The desirable outcome can result from other aspects that are not mentioned in the theory or its explanations. However, an incoherent outcome can indicate that the problem lies within the theory and that needs to be developed or even refuted.

In the Marxist tradition, theoretical guidance of practice plays a crucial role in the transformation of the environment and the social reality. This kind of practice is not an arbitrary practice but a conscious-theoretical one. These two aspects of practice are two sides of the same coin. One aspect enables the evaluation of a theory and then, once that theory is established, the other aspect guides human beings to implement their course of action in accordance with the theory. The application of the action guidance aspect of the theory, can be used to evaluate the validity of the theory.

### **Dichotomy between Theory and Practice**

Marx's understanding of practice in the ordinary sense of the dichotomy between theory and practice, is used to describe the duality between theory and practice or other dichotomies such as principle-practice,<sup>11</sup> theoretical principle-practice<sup>12</sup> or paper-practice.<sup>13</sup> These dichotomies are apparent throughout Marx and Engels' works, as when they compare the differences between theory and practice of different nations,<sup>14</sup> or when Marx himself criticises the contradiction between

---

<sup>11</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Preface to the 1888 English Edition of the Manifesto', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi, p. 512; Karl Marx, 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Marx and Robertus', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi, p. 281.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and Others', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, p. 267; Friedrich Engels, 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and State', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi, p. 186.

<sup>14</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The German Ideology', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-*

the revolutionary practices and theories of the bourgeoisie during and after the French Revolution.<sup>15</sup> Engels makes the same point when he refers to Robert Owen's biography and comments on how Owen applies his cooperative theory in practice.<sup>16</sup> In each case, a duality between ideas and the application of those ideas in practice is presented. This aspect of practice is no different from the common usage of the term. However, the next two aspects highlight the uniqueness of the term in Marxism.

### Epistemological Role of Practice

In its epistemological aspect, the concept of practice can be used as a tool for testing a theory. This aspect is presented by Marx when he argues about the criterion of the objective truth of human thought in his *Second Thesis on Feuerbach*:

The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, i.e., the reality and power, the this-worldliness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question.<sup>17</sup>

Marx presents a similar idea in his *Eighth Thesis on Feuerbach*, when he suggests that 'All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice.'<sup>18</sup> In both theses, Marx uses theory and practice to suggest a dichotomy, but in the *Eighth Thesis*, he suggests that the practical element of an idea or thought can serve as a criterion for proving its objective truth.

Marx emphasises the role of human practice in creating and transforming their environment. For him, animals also create and transform their environment—for example, bees create their hives—but people do their practical activities by creating things according to their own plans and

---

47, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v, p. 441; and also, when they suggest the role of the social democratic party for propagating its programme to the petty-bourgeoisie in Marx and Engels, xxiv, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-44*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), iii, pp. 164-65; or when Marx propose his theory of human nature in which man is a conscious producer, see Karl Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-44*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), iii, p. 275.

<sup>16</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv, p. 293; or when he identifies the difference between the sexual practice and the moral theory of the bourgeoisie in Engels, 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and State', xxvi, p. 184.

<sup>17</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 5, emphasis in the original.

ideas, or even the creating the standards by which to evaluate their activities. These standards rest on the capacity of human beings to transform their outer nature (environment) according to their ideas, not just their functional instinct, as with an otter's dam. Human beings create and transform their world according to values such as the aesthetic values referred to by Marx's as 'the laws of beauty'.<sup>19</sup> And human beings can also freely transform their environment in whichever forms they choose; such forms are not determined by a given species nature, as they are with otters or bees. This creativity and the capacity of human beings to understand the structure, role and purpose of otters' dams and bees' hives, and to imitate and recreate them as they choose, differentiate human beings from other species. Human beings do not merely transform their environment for the satisfaction of their needs and their own survival, but consciously create standards by which to evaluate their transformations. Marx gives the example of the standard of beauty, but one can extend Marx's idea to various kinds of standards, such as efficiency, prudence, economy, etc., that can be used to guide and evaluate human practices. The concept of practice in this sense is clearly distinct from the ordinary use of the dichotomy between theory and practice. Theory and practice are not merely united; the unity between the ideas (of transforming) and its practice (of transformation) relies on the particular human standards, such as beauty and creativity.

Marx regards human practice as 'sensuous human activity'<sup>20</sup> and also 'revolutionary' or 'practical-critical' activity. This aspect of human activity is not merely a reflection of the environment but goes beyond it to become a reciprocal idea that changes the circumstances and thoroughly modifies itself through the process of transformation of the environment.

The understanding of practice is also applicable to the political practice of Marxism. Marx and Engels state that, 'for the *practical* materialist, i.e., the *communist*, it is a question of revolutionising the existing world, of practically coming to grips with and changing the things found in existence'.<sup>21</sup> This line of argument leads to a specific aspect of practice that is 'revolutionary' or 'practical-critical'. This aspect of practice, especially in the socio-political terrain, makes Marx's usage distinct from the ordinary usage of the dichotomy between theory and practice. Not only does it assume a unity between theory and practice, but it has a critical element, according to

---

<sup>19</sup> Marx, 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', III, p. 277.

<sup>20</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 3, emphasis in the original.

<sup>21</sup> Marx and Engels, v, pp. 38-39, emphasis in the original.

which the critique of the existing socio-political order can provide a new standard and plan for a new order. It refers to revolutionary practice that has a 'critical' and 'revolutionary' aspect. People cannot implement new standards and plans if the very ideas and actions of a new society contradict each other or if they contradict the material conditions that make them possible.

Therefore, this kind of practice is inherently a trinity between ideas, their application, and their material conditions. Marx and Engels make use of this trinity in two ways: to evaluate ideas and in their theory of history.

The trinity of theories (ideas), practices (their applications) and material conditions can be used to evaluate other ideas. If an idea can be applied, then there must be some true elements in the idea. In this sense, practice becomes a criterion of truth for ideas and theories. However, there are different views amongst Marxists on this role of practice as a criterion. Engels explicitly specifies the types of practice which can be used to prove theories:

The most telling refutation ... of all other philosophical quirks is practice, namely, experimentation and industry. If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural phenomenon by bringing it about ourselves, producing it out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes...<sup>22</sup>

Lenin follows this emphasis on the role of scientific experiment and industrial practice to confirm or refute human thought.<sup>23</sup> He even suggests that in the domain of the theory of knowledge, the concept of practice is 'first and fundamental'<sup>24</sup> and other explanations are 'nothing but confusion and lies'.<sup>25</sup> However, Lenin adds a reservation to this suggestion by stressing that '[o]f course, we must not forget that the criterion of practice can never, in the nature of things, either confirm or refute any human idea completely'.<sup>26</sup> These two passages seem contradictory. However, we must accept that some human ideas cannot be absolutely proved or refuted until there are adequate tools that can be used for the process of proving and refuting. For instance, Copernicus' idea of heliocentrism needed the development of an astronomical telescope before it could be proven. Only the more concrete practices, such as making tools or observing something in nature, enable

---

<sup>22</sup> Friedrich Engels, 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi, p. 367.

<sup>23</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), xiv, pp. 101, 170.

<sup>24</sup> Lenin, xiv, p. 143.

<sup>25</sup> Lenin, xiv, p. 143.

<sup>26</sup> Lenin, xiv, pp. 142-43.

theories to be more conveniently refuted or proven. However, the complex practice of transforming a structure of human society or seizing the power of the state are difficult to completely refute or prove, because of the difficulty involved in identifying the independent variable of the phenomenon.

Lukacs also makes some remarks on this role of practice as a criterion for truth of theory, especially in relation to Engels' notion of industry and experiment. Lukacs emphasises the fact that the domains of industry and experiment limit the concept to an 'immediate' practice of producing something.<sup>27</sup> Lukacs claims that Marxism as a theory of history has to surpass this notion of immediate praxis into 'comprehensive praxis'.<sup>28</sup> The idea of comprehensive praxis is that knowledge in any given society develops at the same time as the society itself develops, and there is no single instance of merely immediate praxis that can prove or refute a large scale or long duration event. If we accept Engels' idea, then the Marxist theory of history cannot be proven, and this makes the theory unscientific. Praxis in this sense is immediate praxis and has limited power to be applied to the progress of history. Thus, an understanding of the theory of capitalism must go beyond a single instance of experiment or industrial production. Only a series of such instances can combine to transform one type of society into another.

If one tries to prove the idea of making a hammer by making it, the success or failure of making a hammer can be used to confirm or refute that idea. Or one can try to prove or refute a scientific theory in a laboratory if the appropriate tools or equipment are available. However, if ideas or theories are far beyond the current capacity of existing industrial structures or tools, then they cannot be tested. The only option we have is to wait until the development of industry and technology reaches a particular level that can then be used to prove the theory. In Lukacs's mind, the theory he is concerned with is Marx and Engels' theory of history itself, and for that type of theory, a more comprehensive praxis is more suitable than an immediate practice. However, Lukacs never provides a clear definition of 'comprehensive praxis' or an example that could be used to test a grand theory like Marx's theory of history. One can suggest that comprehensive praxis is a series of practices, not just a single instance of practice; however, even with regard to a series of practices, one may ask, how many practices must be combined into a series for it to become comprehensive praxis? We should acknowledge Lukacs' argument against Engels that practice can be used to test a theory; however, it has limitations when it is used to test a grand

---

<sup>27</sup> György Lukács, 'Preface to the New Edition 1967', in *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1971), p. xix.

<sup>28</sup> Lukács, 'Preface to the New Edition 1967', p. xix.

theory like Marx's theory of history or any grand theory. That is to say that even if a revolution succeeds and creates a new regime, as in Russia after 1917, the revolution alone as an event is not necessary to confirm the theory for the reason that Marx's theory of the capitalist system acknowledges the problem of exploitation in the capitalist society but states that the revolution is to abort that exploitation. The revolution supports Lenin's theory of revolution but that is a subsidiary or safety belt theory to Marx's theory of capitalism. The events after the revolutions and the reverting to capitalism in current Russia even reduce the significance of the revolution to support the grand theory. The incoherent outcome can be used as an indicator of the limitations of the theory that must be developed or even refuted; however, the coherent outcome must not be treated as confirmation in the ordinary positivist sense, as there are several factors that can affect the outcome which are not present in the theory and lead up to that event.

By assuming unity between theory and practice in the production and transformation of social reality, we can categorise theories into two kinds: coherent theories and practices and contradictory theories and practices.

Marx and Engels say that theories are illusions when practices cannot prove them or when the theories are contradicted by practices. For example, Marx criticises the contradiction between bourgeois revolutionary theory and its practice. The idea of individual liberty is one of the core prerequisites for the formation of the liberal state. Thus, in the liberal state, individuals become citizens and their liberty is protected by the state.<sup>29</sup> However, individual liberty cannot overpower the state when that liberty comes into conflict with public security. Thus, the means (state) becomes an obstacle to the end (individual liberty) and citizenship conflicts with individuality. The revolutionary theory that led to the French Revolution was contradicted by its application in practice. And this contradiction becomes more puzzling when the demands of the state are accepted without question by the individual.

Marx and Engels emphasise the role of practice in producing the material world and ideas that correspond to its material basis. However, the development of productive forces and relations of production give rise to the condition that ideas seem to become independent from their material conditions. For instance, when the idea of religion develops in a given society, this idea can be used by the ruling class to create unity within that society. Religion becomes the cement that combines several groups of people in a particular hierarchical

---

<sup>29</sup> Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', III, pp. 164-65, emphasis in the original.

order. This idea is one of the instruments of the ruling class that enables them to rule. To enable such a rule, the ideas must be presented as being above and beyond human creation. Ideologists of religion tell the story of creation and present the idea of God as the creator of human beings. Different religious ideas develop in different societies depending on their level of sophistication. These ideas are used by the ruling class to govern and distribute goods and products in that society. For example, in European Medieval societies, the serf is the product of the social relations. Members of that society can be forced to become serfs, but brute force alone is not sustainable to prolong the rule of the ruling class; serfs must be convinced by religion to remain serfs. In this sense, the role of ideology to create unity between the ruling class and the subordinated classes finds its grounding. However, the success of the ruling class does not confirm the existence of God or other beings that are used to support its rule.

For this point onward, human ideas can become 'something other than consciousness of existing practice'<sup>30</sup> and can 'represent something without representing something real.'<sup>31</sup> For Marx and Engels, when consciousness detaches itself from its material practice, it can emancipate itself from the world and proceed to the formation of 'pure' theory, theology, philosophy, and morality. As long as the productive forces of a given society cannot satisfy all the needs of its members, then that society needs this particular kind of idea to ensure that its members accept the rules and regulations of the society.

However, the historical basis of society also brings about conditions in which ideological ideas may wither. Ideological ideas lose their power when they confront new forms of practice. The introduction of new technologies that can satisfy more members of society come into conflict with the current regulations and rules. If the ruling class and its ideologists can modify ideological ideas to be compatible with that development, then the ruling class can prolong its rule. However, if ideologists cannot fulfil this task and an antagonistic class can produce a new set of ideas that render a new practice possible, then the new ideology will give rise to a revolution in which the current set of ruling ideas and social relations are overthrown through revolutionary practices. We can use the example of the transformation from serf to wageworker through the contest between the idea of social hierarchy based on religion and the idea of free trade in which labour becomes

---

<sup>30</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 45.

one of its commodities. Serfs in western medieval countries, could not be transferred to a new owner unless the fiefs were lost or gained by another feudal lord. However, with the development of the free city, and the beginning of capitalism, serfs could become wageworkers, if they fled from their fief to live in the free city and were not effectively pursued and punished by their lords or were even encouraged to do so.<sup>32</sup> Because the rulers of the free cities could tax the serfs and gain income from them, once they became wageworkers in cities. The more serfs fled to the free cities; the more income was gained by the lords.

With these two usages of the term practice (a criterion to evaluate the validity of human thought and a theory-guided practice), Marx and Engels divert their usage of the concept from the ordinary employment of the dichotomy between theory and practice, to practice as a tool to evaluate theory, and finally they integrate the term into their theory of history. Practice becomes a conscious act of human beings to transform their environment to serve their ends, and even becomes revolutionary practice when it overthrows the existing social relations and ideas that correspond to those social relations. However, this practice is also conditioned by its material world. Will or theory alone cannot lead to revolutionary practice. Revolutionary practices are not just criticisms of ideological ideas, but also practices that transform material conditions. Revolutionary practices can become real if, and only if, the material conditions make possible the realisation of the theories in practice. For instance, capitalist society could not have arisen from the primitive society of human beings of a million years ago. It needed the development of the productive forces of slave society and feudal society before the productive forces were sufficient for the development of the new form of society.

In short, we can sum up Marx and Engels' concept of practice as having three aspects. The first is similar to the ordinary use of the term. This first aspect rests on the dichotomy between theory and practice. However, the second and third aspects are more important in the tradition. They both emphasise the unity between theory and practice, but the difference between them is in their emphases. The second aspect stresses the role of evaluating an idea in the theory of

---

<sup>32</sup> See Jerome Blum, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978), chap. 19; There is another explanation for why serfs moved to the city. It happened because of the series of enclosure acts that transformed communal open fields to private property of the landowners. Serfs could not use those fields for feeding themselves and were forced to vacate those lands for the new tenant farmers, see Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 198-99; Barrington Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), chap. 2.

knowledge by identifying the coherence or contradiction between theory and practice, while the third aspect relies on the role of conscious transformation of human beings' environment and their social reality. The usage of the last aspect is the crucial link in the relation between practice and ideology.

### **Idea Guidance Practice**

Practices of human beings in their relations to their material world are based on particular ideas, usually regardless of whether those ideas are true or false. This relation between practice and theory (idea) has a crucial role in the Marxist theory of society and social change. From the point of view of the theory of society, idea guidance practice (ideological practice) can take two forms: ideological practice of the ruling class and revolutionary practice of the new class.

The aims of those two practices are guided by different ideas. However, some aspects of the two ideas are similar. The ideological practice of the ruling class and the revolutionary practice of the new class both presuppose a particular social structure and social order. Also similar is the fact that both ruling class and revolutionary ideologists require support from the masses in order to implement their ideas. However, the difference between them is that one aims to prolong the existing society while the other aims to create a new one.

### ***Ideological Practice***

The origin of all ideological and revolutionary practice is the limited power of the productive forces to satisfy all of the needs of all human beings. In Marx's theory of history, the concept of productive forces plays a crucial part. The theory has two aspects: the theory of society and the theory of social change.

In the theory of society, Marx and Engels state that the source of ideological practice is a result of the development of history. If the main driver of history is the development of productive forces, when these productive forces reach the level of creating a division of labour, then they will also create a division between mental and manual labour. It is the mental labourers, such as priests and teachers, who develop and regulate the productive forces and also maintain social relations. In class society, the maintenance of existing social relations reinforces the rule of the ruling class. After the development of productive forces reaches the level of division of labour, the ideologist emerges:

The division of labour, which ... as one of the chief forces of history up till now, manifests itself

also in the ruling class as the division of mental and material labour, so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), while the others' attitude to these ideas and illusions is more passive and receptive, because they are in reality the active members of this class and have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves.<sup>33</sup>

The division of labour between mental and manual serves to reproduce and maintain the existing structures of society by attributing tasks to different members according to their proficiencies. If we accept that human beings cannot live without a form of society, then this division of labour benefits all members of that society. For instance, in ancient India, the society is divided into four main castes, namely, the teacher (Brahmin), the warrior (Kshatriya), the merchant (Vaishya), and the labourer (Shudra). Brahmins preach and teach the other members of society to accept the moral order of society that originates from the creator God (Brahma). The Brahmin caste is a manifestation of the head of Brahma, Kshatriya from the arms, Vaishya from the thighs, and finally Shudra from the feet. The head is supposed to lead, the arms are required to protect, and the thighs and feet are needed to follow. The society as a social organism is used to support the rule of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

Once the division of labour has developed as one type of social relation, it reproduces itself through socialisation in families, schools, markets, work, and religious places. Direction from mental labourers to manual labourers creates more efficient production to satisfy more needs of members in a given society. However, the guidance by mental labourers also leads them to have greater advantages over manual labourers. In this sense, if the productive forces have limited power to support all needs of all members of a society, mental labourers will develop ideas and reasons for its members to accept the way resources are distributed within that society. In a class society, the guidance of mental labourers benefits the great mass of manual labourers, but it gives greater benefits to the ruling class of that society. To prolong social relations in a particular society, it is necessary to maintain the system of regulation and force monopolisation of resources and ideas that make them acceptable. Mental labourers who take these roles become ideologists who serve the interests of the ruling class. Their ideas become the ideology of the ruling class and the proliferation of their ideas becomes ideological practice.<sup>34</sup>

In as much as ideological practices emerge and endure, if the productive forces cannot satisfy all needs of all members in a given society, ideologists and ideological practices for

---

<sup>33</sup> Marx and Engels, v, pp. 59-60.

<sup>34</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 63.

maintaining the social relations of that society are inevitable. Ideological ideas cannot reproduce themselves without ideologists, and the task of reproducing and modifying ideological ideas is also the means by which the ruling class sustains the existing structure of a given society.

Ideological ideas and practices differ over time and across eras. For example, in the medieval age, the teachings of Christianity were a prime example of ideological ideas, and its ideologists were the priests. The role of those ideologists—the Pope, Cardinals, and the hierarchy within the Catholic Church—and the practice of the rituals of the Church, were written in the Scripture. In modern capitalist society, ideological ideas became ideas of free trade and equality of opportunity in the free market, and its ideologists played their roles in the media and academic life. The practice of democratic elections and the rituals of parliament create and sustain the idea of rule by the people, which functions to justify the current rule of the ruling class. However, ideological ideas can be changed and modified if they are not against the fundamental interests of the ruling class. This modification occurs during the rule of one particular class, such as the movement of the counter reformation of the Catholic Church to counter the rise of the Protestant movement.

The case of the Protestant movement can be seen as a conflict within a ruling class. However, if that conflict had endangered the ruling class itself, that conflict would have vanished.<sup>35</sup> For instance, the result of the Thirty Years War, which was a series of wars between Catholic and Protestant kingdoms, was the Peace of Westphalia. Its treaties provided recognition of the sovereignty of the rulers within the territories, and the rights of the believers in those territories to choose their faith (only Catholic and Protestant in the beginning).<sup>36</sup>

Marx emphasises the point that a new revolutionary class needs new revolutionary ideas. Conflict between two or more parties alone in the ruling class will bring nothing and end up with modification of the ruling ideas to ensure that the rule of that class survives. When the ruling class loses the capacity to modify ideological ideas in its interests, it may prefer to use direct force to maintain its rule. For Marx, this is the sign of a coming social revolution.<sup>37</sup>

---

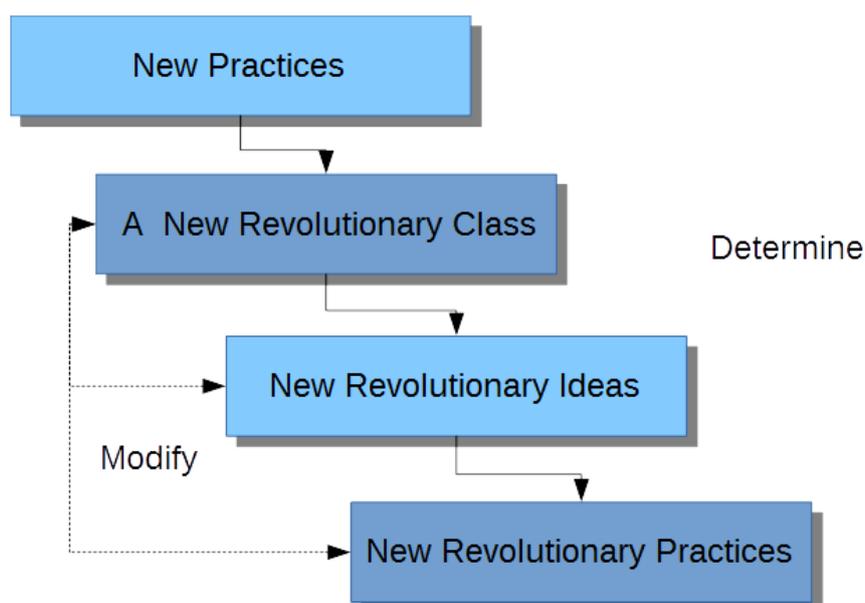
<sup>35</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 60.

<sup>36</sup> Leo Gross, 'The Peace of Westphalia, 1648-1948', *The American Journal of International Law*, 42.1 (1948), 20 (pp. 21-22) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2193560>>.

<sup>37</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 49.

## ***Revolutionary Practice***

As Marx shows in the *1859 Preface*, when the development of productive forces conflicts with the existing social relations, those social relations become fetters to the further development of the productive forces. That moment is the beginning of a social revolution.<sup>38</sup> Marx also says that the process of conflict between new and existing forms of practice gives rise to a new revolutionary class, and a new revolutionary idea cannot be possible without a new revolutionary class.<sup>39</sup> We can illustrate Marx's idea of the relationship between the new practices, a new revolutionary class, new revolutionary ideas and, finally, revolutionary practices as follows.



*Figure 5.1 The relation and process between new practices, revolutionary class, revolutionary ideas, and revolutionary practices*

On a general level, in any society, the development of technologies creates new forms of practice. These involve the interaction between people, tools, and the environment to transform materials into products to satisfy the needs of society. For instance, in the transformation from hunting-gathering societies to planting and harvesting societies, the forms of social control in each society operated to ensure that the society was stable for at least most members. The invention of iron

<sup>38</sup> Karl Marx, 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix, p. 263.

<sup>39</sup> See Marx and Engels, v, p. 60.

agricultural tools creates new forms of practice, as they make it easier for the farmer to cultivate the land compared to the stone or the brass tools. The more cultivated lands give rise to new forms of practice to regulate the relationships between people, their labour that is used in the cultivation, and the cultivated lands. The system of property and its regulation also needs political power to ensure that the members of that society conform. The system of property ownership also changes in accordance with those new forms of practice. However, the forms of social control that made herdsmen accept the system of property and the rule of the ruling class were not the same as those experienced by agriculturalists. Herdsmen cannot maintain their livestock as the open space is fenced and becomes private property. They have to change their occupations and change the means of subsistence and change their practice to new agricultural practices in the rural areas and new industrial practices in the urban areas. If the forms of social control can absorb the new surplus of production and make members of a society accept transformations of practice, then there is no revolutionary change in the power position of the ruling class.

On the other hand, if the new forms of practice create an opportunity for the creation of a new class, and the ruling class cannot develop ideas and means of social control to absorb the new surplus of production in that society, the new class comes into conflict with the ruling class. For example, in 800 in the early Medieval ages, Charlemagne prohibited interest in trade and business by introducing usury law throughout his empire.<sup>40</sup> Thus, it was not possible for merchants or lenders to lend money and gain interest without the risk of being excommunicated. Only Jews were exempt from the law because they were not Christian, so they could lend money.<sup>41</sup> The struggle against usury law represents the struggle of merchants against the feudal lords and the rule of the Catholic Church, for the emergence of the capitalist class. However, a new class alone cannot win the struggle against the existing rule of the ruling class. It needs alliances with other subordinated classes. In order to gain supremacy, a new class needs to develop new ideas that can make its own class distinct from other classes. Such ideas create unity between the new class and other subordinated classes and strengthens them in their struggle against the existing ruling class. In this sense, new revolutionary ideas function as ideology for unifying one class and making alliances with other classes. For instance, the idea of political freedom, economic freedom and religious freedom can be used to gain support from the great masses and other subordinated classes to seize the political power, as happened in France during the French Revolution. Once the new class

---

<sup>40</sup> James M. Ackerman, 'Interest Rates and the Law: A History of Usury. (Monetary Control Law)', *Arizona State Law Journal*, 1981.1 (1981), 61-110 (p. 73).

<sup>41</sup> Ackerman, p. 73.

and its alliance succeeded in overthrowing the rule of the previous ruling class and established itself as the new ruling class, a new form of society arose as capitalist society superseded feudal society in Western Europe.

However, this pattern will happen again, once the productive forces give rise to a novel form of practice, create a new class and lead to conflict between the current ruling class and the new class that gains its interest from the new form of practice, as Marx predicts in the case of capitalist society. The conflicts will occur between the working class and its alliance and the capitalist class as the current ruling class.

The interaction between revolutionary ideas and the new revolutionary class is a long, arduous, and reciprocal process. The ideas that shape the new class, and the practical activities of the new class in the political and economic domain, affect revolutionary ideas. It should be noted that these new ideas need not be purely original ideas without any trace of other ideas within them.<sup>42</sup> The new revolutionary ideas represent a new configuration of several ideas from the past and present, rearranged and modified. Some examples of these can be found in the works of Robert Filmer and John Locke. Both cite passages from the Old Testament to support their political claims. Robert Filmer uses the idea that Adam, as the first human being, received the mandate from God to rule all beings under heaven; therefore, all monarchs are true heirs of Adam, even the usurpers of thrones, or those appointed by the nobles, become patriarchal monarchs and gain the “divine right” to rule, their subjects as Adam does.<sup>43</sup> On the contrary, Locke uses passages from the same Scripture to argue against Filmer’s idea. The paternal power that is the basis of Filmer’s divine right cannot be inherited. If Adam, as the first creature, has rights over his children, dominion, and so on, his right to rule ceases after his death. Adam’s children cannot have the same right over his brothers and sisters and so on. In every generation, the patriarchal power will be divided between the children of the same generation and will be divided in the next generation. Thus, the paternal power is limited to the scope of fathers over their children not the uncles over the nieces and nephews. Moreover, some monarchs, such as Moses and Joshua, do not directly originate from the previous monarch.<sup>44</sup> Where does the patriarchal power of Moses and Joshua originate from? In this sense, the same Scripture can be used to support or refute the rule of the monarch when it is rearranged, and some elements are brought into the forefront. This is in

---

<sup>42</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha and Other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949), pp. 61–63.

<sup>44</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. by Ian Shapiro, *Rethinking the Western Tradition* (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 197.

keeping with Gramsci's suggestion as discussed in the third chapter. These quasi-new ideas can be introduced and gain support from other classes for the coming revolution. The ideas can be modified by theorists who are part of the new class under circumstances that are open to the new elements of those ideas. If the ideas cannot successfully create unity within and without the new revolutionary class, then that class will lose in the struggle against the existing ruling class whose system of domination will then continue.

Conflict between new forms of practice and existing social structures and controls can also appear in a mediated form between ideas which support the new forms of practice and those which are against them. An example of this kind of conflict is the struggle within the Christian Church between ideas that supported the practices of newly emerged capitalists (the Protestant work ethic) and the existing ideas that were used to maintain social order in Western Medieval society. This mediated form of conflict can also be seen between existing ideas and those from elsewhere, such as happened in China, India and almost all non-Western countries in Asia and Africa during the age of colonialism. The new ideas and the new forms of practice that were introduced from outside contradicted the existing ideas and practices of the society.

The development of new ruling ideas gives rise to new questions: When does the development of revolutionary ideas become a practice or, more precisely, is critical activity a practice? The answer to these two questions is that all critical activities are practices, but not all such practices are revolutionary. Only if some of those critical activities result in the transformation of social reality through revolution do they become revolutionary practices. In this sense, there are two types and phases of revolutionary practice: the practice of developing revolutionary ideas and the practice of overthrowing the existing ruling class and establishing a new ruling class.

For Marx and Engels, the second revolutionary practice presupposes the first. The first and foremost practice in preparation for the revolution is to criticise and expose the existing ideology. Almost all of Marx and Engels' writings and their activities are examples of this first task of revolutionary practice. These criticisms of existing ideologies become scientific practices when they provide a better explanation of the existing social structure than those given previously by the ideologists of the ruling class.<sup>45</sup> However, criticism alone cannot lead men to overthrow the rule of the ruling class. There must be another kind of revolutionary practice to serve that purpose. This

---

<sup>45</sup> See the previous chapter on the topic of Scientific Status and its relationship with ideology.

leads us to Lenin's emphasis on the role of the party as a vanguard of the proletariat.

If Marx and Engels present objective theories for the future communist revolution, then in Lenin's view, the task of Marxist revolutionaries is to adapt and reconfigure minor parts of those theories and create a revolutionary organisation. That organisation will apply Marxism and use it as a guide for the coming revolution. Lenin supposes that Marxism is an objective theory and that any deviation from it will mislead the revolution:

The sole conclusion to be drawn from the opinion held by Marxists that Marx's theory is an objective truth is that by following the *path* of Marxian theory we shall draw closer and closer to objective truth (without ever exhausting it); but by following *any other path* we shall arrive at nothing but confusion and lies.<sup>46</sup>

Revolutionary practice requires preliminary theory. Lenin therefore had to develop his own revolutionary theory and make it compatible with Marx's theory of history.

From Lenin and Gramsci onward, Marxists have tried to bridge the two phases of revolutionary practice (criticism and overthrowing the ruling class) by stressing the importance of creating unity between the leaders (the party) and the led (mass). This unity has the aim of bringing about the social revolution:

[T]he immediate task of our Party is not to summon all available forces for the attack right now, but to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle.<sup>47</sup>

Overthrowing the ruling class does not automatically occur when revolutionary ideas arise in a society. Those ideas must be used for organising and preparing the masses for the coming revolution. Without this preparation, the revolution loses momentum and direction. It must be noted that the party was one of the most suitable means of bringing about the revolution in Lenin's time. However, the party discipline toward its members led to a paternalistic tendency, which provided the need for a new conception of the party for a revolutionary perspective. Thus, the process of creating new conditions and preparing the masses for the coming Communist revolution needs a dialectic relation between the masses and the party which must learn from each other in order to avoid that tendency. This brings us to Gramsci's idea of revolutionary practice and the role of the

---

<sup>46</sup> Lenin, XIV, p. 143, emphasis in the original.

<sup>47</sup> V. I. Lenin, 'Where to Begin', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), v, p. 17.

party.

Gramsci emphasises the notion of revolutionary practice (praxis). He even calls Marxism a 'philosophy of praxis', but Gramsci's philosophy of praxis has another dichotomy other than that between theory and practice—the dichotomy between structure and superstructure.

In a philosophy of praxis, wherein everything is practice, the distinction will not be between the moments of the absolute spirit but between structure and superstructure; it will be a question of establishing the dialectical position of political activity as a distinction within the superstructures.<sup>48</sup>

The concept of an interaction between structure and superstructure is the way Gramsci avoids the notion of practice as realisation of the 'absolute spirit' in the Hegelian sense. A dialectic interaction between the economic structural base and its superstructure gives revolutionary practices materialistic rather than idealistic justification. In this view, the moment of practice must start from a critique of common sense and philosophy<sup>49</sup> that will reduce the legitimacy of the current ruling class. The new proposed ideas can be used to prepare and create unity between intellectual leaders and the masses.

Gramsci also uses the distinction between superstructure and structural base in his concept of 'historical bloc' for elucidating the unity between ideas and their material conditions:

The structure and the superstructures form a "historical bloc." In other words, the complex and discordant ensemble of the superstructures reflects the ensemble of the social relations of production. From this, one can conclude that only a comprehensive system of ideologies rationally reflects the contradiction of the structure and represents the existence of the objective conditions for revolutionizing praxis.<sup>50</sup>

Forming a historical bloc requires a comprehensive understanding (or ideology in the positive sense) of the structural base. Those systematic ideas (or ideologies) create a unity between structure (the topic of inquiry) and superstructure (the outcome of inquiry). The unity or 'historical bloc' is not created by merely superseding one idea with another, but by recognising the economic and material foundation of those ideas. This type of understanding enables the leadership of the party to prepare the masses for the revolution when the appropriate economic conditions occur.

Revolutionary practice in this phase needs to prepare the newborn revolutionary class by giving them theoretical guidance. However, revolutionary ideas need an organisation that can

---

<sup>48</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 271.

<sup>49</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 369.

<sup>50</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 340.

introduce new ideas to the masses. According to Gramsci, the party as an organ of the revolution can play a vital role in cultivating new ideas. Without the idea of revolution (and also its organisation), the struggle against the ruling class will tend to end up as the day-to-day struggle for better wages and working conditions, which Gramsci calls 'spontaneity' of the struggle.<sup>51</sup> However, a revolutionary organ (party) without an awareness of the needs and consciousness of the masses in its class could lead to the other extreme, a party that betrays its class and acts for its own party interests.<sup>52</sup> A party's revolutionary ideas can be insufficient and false. If a party can learn about the new concrete situation from the masses, this will improve its ideas and practices. It also can avoid the possibility of those who claim to know everything taking over and putting a yoke on its members.<sup>53</sup>

Marxism, or in Gramsci's term the 'philosophy of praxis', unifies a concrete economic situation and the theoretical guidance required to lead a revolutionary class. This transforms the current situation into a new society by overthrowing the current ruling class and creating a new state. Once it has grasped state power and the state apparatuses, the new class transforms existing social relations into new ones. This is the process of revolutionary practice.

According to Gramsci, the process of revolutionary practice starts with the practice of critiquing the current social relations and progresses to the political practice of grasping state apparatuses to transform the existing social relations to new ones.<sup>54</sup> The ideas informing the critique the current system (or, in Marx's terms, the current mode of production) may or may not be scientific ideas. Several economic ideas, such as those of Adam Smith and David Ricardo, have been influential for their explanations of the transformation of the feudal system into the capitalist system in Western Europe. If we accept that those ideas are scientific, then it becomes apparent that ideas which are used to support free trade and competitive advantage are also used to support the newborn bourgeois class consciousness and legitimise the transformation of economic structures in the bourgeois revolution.<sup>55</sup> However, after capitalists establish themselves as the ruling class, if those ideas are accepted as eternal truths and detached from the historical process,

---

<sup>51</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 52.

<sup>52</sup> Gramsci, III, p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Gramsci, p. 164.

<sup>54</sup> Gramsci, p. 331.

<sup>55</sup> Geoffrey Pigman, 'Civilizing Global Trade: Alterglobalizers and the 'Double Movement'', in *Global Standards of Market Civilization*, ed. by Brett Bowden and Leonard Seabrooke, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), p. 192.

they also become the ideological ideas of the ruling class and part of the ideological superstructure. This may occur, for instance, once one accepts that the market is the best place to allocate the value of products or that free trade is the only rational way for human beings to exchange their goods and products. In this sense, Marx and Engels' critiques of capitalism are similar to those of Smith and Ricardo; they are vulnerable to the possibility of becoming ideological ideas. Marx and Engels' ideas can start as scientific ideas,<sup>56</sup> with their critical aspect and their explanations, when they are used to critique the capitalist system, but they can end up as the ideological ideas of the ruling class, as happened in the Soviet Union. In the Soviet Union, anyone who disagreed with the party's interpretation of Marx's ideas ended up losing their life, as happened to Leon Trotsky. This not only delegitimises the leading role of the party, but it also results in the party becoming more and more ignorant about the concrete situation and the possibility of another interpretation of the texts.

Scientific ideas need a specific type of methodology, scientific communities, and even other disciplines to develop and maintain their characteristic as scientific. However, scientific practice relies on material conditions for pursuing the object of knowledge. For example, without the invention of the telescope, Galileo could not have found the largest four moons of Jupiter that provided support for Copernicus' theory of heliocentrism. Marxism as a scientific theory also relies on similar support. It cannot be theorised without precursor theorists like Smith and Ricardo for its economic aspects or Hegel for its philosophical grounding. Marxist theory also provides tools for understanding and discerning social reality. A critical attitude allows Marxism to advance as a living scientific theory and avoid a dogmatic tendency.

However, in the case of Marxism, the second phase of revolutionary practice is to seize the power of the state, by force or by peaceful means, depending on the politico-economic conditions of the societies. For the practice of this second phase, even if it relies on Marx and Engels' ideas (as scientific ideas), there is no blueprint for any revolutionaries to rely on; therefore, one cannot treat those ideas as infallible scientific facts. If they did, Marxism would fall into a religious-like ideology which demands supporters follow the teachings of its leaders without question or reservation. Thus, preparation for the revolution is a long and enduring process which continues until Marxism survives several tests and presents sound and possible solutions for the existing class structure. For example, failure to seize the power of the state, or failure to maintain the stable

---

<sup>56</sup> From Engels' point of view, Marx's and his own critiques of capitalism are clearly scientific. See Engels' view on this topic in the previous chapter of this thesis on the section of 'Engels' Conception of Science.'

rule of the existing state can be used to acknowledge the limit of the theory and modify it to become a better theory. Only then can its revolutionary practice proceed to the next phase of seizing state power.<sup>57</sup>

Lenin developed his strategy and the role of the party by using Marxism as a cement to create cohesion between the party and the masses. Lenin's interpretation of Marxism and his use of that idea helped him bring about the Russian Revolution. The general ideas in Marx and Engels' theory of history are interpreted and used by Lenin. In this sense, Marxism became a (Russian) proletarian ideology for waging a war against the Czarist regime. It also became a (Chinese) agrarian ideology for the Chinese revolution, as used by Mao.

However, an idea that has the power to unite and organise the masses is one thing, but a scientific theory is another. The practices and collapse of the regime within the Soviet Union can be used to discredit Marxism as a proletarian ideology in Lenin's sense, but not Marxism as a scientific idea. To discredit Marxism as a scientific idea would be to refute its core idea, which is the antagonism between the two fundamental classes within society. If, on the one hand, one can present a sound explanation of capitalist society that shows that there is no conflict between the ruling class and the subordinated classes, then that would give a fatal blow to the Marxist explanation of capitalist society. On the other hand, one could seize state power with or without scientific theories, as long as the overthrowing organiser has political insight into the situation and succeeds in using a particular idea to create leadership of their group and delegitimise the current ruling group. If they succeed in this task, then they can bring about a revolution. The successful seizures of state power in China and Nepal were not necessarily related to Marx's theory in itself. They relied on the conditions of those two countries and on the charismatic leaders of those countries in the power struggle to transform the Asian feudal societies. However, their success resulted in the creation of capitalist states that deviated from the aim of Marx's idea of Communist society. The failure of the existing ruling ideology to reproduce its rule provided the opportunity for the new revolutionary class to create a new ruling ideology and to create its alliance with the subordinated classes. The economic conditions in those society also created the conditions within which to establish the new form of society. Thus, those practices in Russia and China can be called revolutionary practices but only in the sense that they ended the feudal societies, but not in

---

<sup>57</sup> See Stanley Aronowitz, 'Gramsci's Concept of Political Organisation', in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ed. by Joseph Francese, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 64 (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).

the sense that they created a Communist society. In the final analysis, history will evaluate the course of revolutionary practices. It will determine if it is possible for revolution to result in a Communist society or if this is inevitably just a premature revolution, whose post-revolutionary society will revert to a capitalist system, as has happened in Russia and China.<sup>58</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> See William Hinton, 'Why Not the Capitalist Road?', in *The Privatization of China: The Great Reversal* (London: Earthscan, 1991).

## CHAPTER VI: RECONCEPTION OF MARX AND ENGELS' THEORY OF IDEOLOGY

### Introduction

The first two chapters show that Marxist thinkers conceptualise ideology in two ways: negative and neutral. These two conceptions can be traced back to Marx's usages of the term 'ideology' either in *The German Ideology* or the *1859 Preface*. After Lenin, the neutral conceptions of ideology became dominant, and the negative conceptions became less influential. Recently, scholars have looked again at the root of the Marxian conception of ideology and the negative conception of ideology has re-emerged.<sup>1</sup> However, scholars seem to differ in their specific configurations and connotations of the term, emphasising various aspects such as 'false consciousness', 'illusion' or 'ideological superstructure'. These varying emphasises lead them to have different interpretations of the concept.

This chapter aims to present the Marxist conception of ideology by removing the weaknesses and retaining strengths of the different interpretations of the concept within the tradition. This chapter will also try to overcome the apparent contradictions within Marx and Engels' works, and present a coherent Marxist conception of ideology. These apparent contradictions will enable us to understand the reasons for the differences in interpretation in the works of later Marxists.

The second aim of this chapter is to present a more coherent understanding of the relationship between science and ideology in the tradition. On the one hand, Marxism provides scientific theories and explanations of capitalism and the development of history. On the other hand, Marxism can be seen as an ideology of the subordinated class in political struggles against the existing ruling class. Are these two dimensions of Marxism detrimental or beneficial to the tradition?

To answer these questions, we begin with some general remarks on Marxism. The idea of ideology in the tradition varies from the negative sense as an idea to be critiqued in a class society, through to a neutral sense as a class outlook or class consciousness, to a positive sense as cement to unify the masses to struggle against the ruling class. One should keep in mind that Marxism has a dual aspect: one as a scientific theory and another as a social movement.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Martin Seliger, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay*, International Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Jorge Larrain, *Marxism and Ideology*, Contemporary Social Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983); Bhikhu C Parekh, *Marx's Theory of Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1982).

If one tries to preserve the status of Marxism as a scientific theory, rather than a philosophical one that merely tries to interpret the world, then one has to accept this dual aspect of Marxism. The theory of ideology in Marxism has these two aspects as well. One can use it as a critical tool for exposing the symptoms of class conflict and one can also use it to stimulate the masses to make a socialist revolution. These two aspects cause various sorts of confusion, especially when one of the two aspects is taken to represent the whole conception. This confusion in the theory of ideology can be mitigated if we trace the conception back to Marx and develop the conception through his sketchy view of history. If we take Marxism as a scientific theory, we also have to accept the possibility of its supersession by other theories that have more explanatory power. In this chapter, we investigate current interpretations of the Marxist conception of ideology and propose a plausible coherent conception which takes into account the relationships between Marxism, ideology and science.

### **Ideology: Creating Unity in a Group**

As shown in the first chapter, authors who focus their efforts on the function of ideology tend to interpret Marx and Engels' concept of ideology in a negative sense. The reason is that Marx and Engels put their effort into exposing social contradictions, especially in the capitalist system. Most ideologists and ideological ideas that occupied Marx and Engels in their early writings were those of the ruling class in the capitalist system. Marx and Engels argue against these types of ideas and ideologists at length in *The German Ideology*. Only in a small paragraph in the *1859 Preface* does Marx use ideology in its neutral or even in its positive sense.

To solve this seeming contradiction between the negative sense and the neutral sense, I propose that we should understand the ideological idea as an idea with a specific function. It creates unity among individuals under the common idea that makes them a group. Thus, ideology can have either a negative or a positive meaning depending on how those ideas connect to a particular class or social group. In this sense, ideology is the cement that binds people together under a common identity and with a specific goal. For example, ruling ideas are the ideas that make individuals subject to the rule of the ruling class. Those ideas create a unity between different members of social groups to form one entity by making them citizens or subjects of the state. They also create goals for the citizens, such as protection of the homeland, sacrificing oneself for the sake of the country, etc. On the other hand, ideology also can bind individuals into social groups that challenge the rule of the ruling class and take on the identity of the new members of the coming society. This ideology can unify those individuals into a revolutionary group if they have revolutionary interests.

## Ruling Ideas: Concealing Social Conflicts and Contradictions

The ideology of the ruling class functions mainly to conceal social conflicts and contradictions that could lead to revolutionary change. As already shown in the previous part, the fundamental social contradiction in a particular society is the contradiction between the propertied and the exploited classes in that society.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that the concept of social contradiction in Marxism has a specific meaning. This social contradiction at the general level is a contradiction between social relations of production and productive forces.

Social relations of production include the social division of labour and a system of ownership and property, which become the economic structures of society. A class society needs two other structures to make its economic structures function properly: the legal-political and ideological superstructures.

Social relations of production also create economic classes, which are defined by the productive forces they own and their position in the social relations of production. Different types of society have different economic structures (or different relations of production and different class structures). Existing relations of production can be sustained and maintained by means of force through the politico-juridical superstructures or by consent through the ideological superstructure, until the system fails to develop or introduces new forms of productive forces.

Human beings also intentionally or unintentionally create various forms of social structure, such as families, educational institutions, syndicates, professional associations and so on, to satisfy and sometimes unexpectedly multiply their needs. They also create specific ideas to govern, regulate and reproduce those social relations and social structures in order to reach their goals. In a class society, once those ideas and social relations become fetters that prevent the development of productive forces, and even dominate the members of that society, social conflicts, such as the conflict between individual and collective interests<sup>3</sup> or between individual interests and their class interest, intensify.<sup>4</sup> For example, accepting that social relations of production, such as the relation between serfs and their lords, are created by human beings for their survival, it is apparent that once those social relations are reproduced through social structures and organisations such as the family, a system of property, or an education system, they become independent from their creators and eventually govern the activities of the human beings themselves. Metaphorically, the tools become the masters and the masters become slaves of their tools. To maintain the rule of the ruling class, the ideas that are used to regulate social relations

---

<sup>2</sup> György Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1971), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 46.

<sup>4</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 247.

must be spread and reproduced; these ideas are called “the ruling ideas”. In this sense, the ideology of the ruling class has the primary function of regulating the social relations of production in a given society and determining the norms and accepted ideas by concealing the social conflicts within that society.

However, if the forces of production can be developed and the existing ruling class cannot use the newly developed productive forces to serve their interests, then those changing forces will create an opportunity for the breakdown of existing society, followed by the creation of new forms of practice, new classes, and new relations of production to sustain the development of those forces.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the ruling ideas will eventually come into conflict with the new forms of practice of the productive forces, and the social contradictions involved in these conflicts will emerge. In this sense, if the ruling classes want to prolong its rule, the ruling ideas must be revised and modified in order to manage the new social conflicts. If the conflicts can be concealed and submerged, then the rule of the ruling class can still be preserved.

In a capitalist society, the propertied class that organises and maintains these social relations will gain the most, as opposed to the exploited class which has less power to modify the social structures. Social conflicts are symptoms of the social contradictions that manifest on the surface of social reality. For instance, the struggle for a better salary or better working conditions and improved welfare of workers is one of several conflicts within capitalist societies. The conflicts in this sense can be mediated by the ruling class and the dominated classes, by means such as creating regulations that limit the working time or improve the minimum salary of the worker; however, the alleviation of pain and suffering of the worker must not touch the core interest of the ruling class which is the current social relations of production. This conflict is a result of the need the capitalist mode of production has for the development of workers’ skills and knowledge in order to increase productivity. However, the workers’ increased knowledge and skills also create opportunities for the workers to understand their conditions and challenge the rule of ruling class within their societies.

The needs of capitalists to gain more benefits and sustain their needs also makes them invest in developing new technologies that can be applied to make more products to gain more profits.<sup>6</sup> If, on the one hand, the productive forces develop and generate more products, the dominant class then faces the problem of making the dominated class accept the uneven distribution of these products. On the other hand, the development of productive forces, especially in a capitalist society, also creates opportunities for the dominated classes to understand their

---

<sup>5</sup> Marx and Engels, v, p. 38.

<sup>6</sup> It will cause the classic problem of overproduction see Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. III*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), xxxvii, chap. XV.

situations and resist those relations in factories and educational institutions. The work process in factories creates the possibility of solidarity between workers to form their organisations, while research in educational institutions can reveal the problems within the capitalist system to the public. In this sense, the ruling ideas in a capitalist society do not just conceal the conflict of uneven distribution. They also conceal the contradictions between the propertied class and the exploited class and make the dominated class accept the rule of the dominant class and overlook these contradictions.

To conceal social conflicts and contradictions, ideology plays two roles: legitimisation and rationalisation. The first role involves directly supporting the ruling order by creating and maintaining the state-centred ideology. This kind of ideology mainly operates to make the members of a given society accept the regulations and customs within the domain of the legal-political structures.

To legitimise a particular set of power structures in a given society is to make members of that society accept the way the ruling groups acquire and apply their power to extract and distribute resources. For example, one of the strategies of this role is to enable political societies to gain their legitimacy to monopolise and operate the repressive forces toward members of those societies. Using brute force alone is not enough to prolong the rule of the ruling class. The ruling class needs to transform brute force into 'just' force. This strategy can be carried out by establishing social structures such as police forces, courts, and military forces. Also, they create the idea that operates behind those forces that makes them acceptable and apparently accountable for their conduct and practice to members of that society. For example, the idea that 'no one should be presumed guilty before their trial' enables those structures to monopolise the power to decide who is guilty or not. If political societies fail to obtain that legitimation, and the majority of members of a given society lose their faith in those organisations, and other social groups develop and create new bodies or organisations which become authorised forces to settle conflicts among their members, then those political societies will lose their authority and begin a process of dissolution.<sup>7</sup>

The role of legitimation is inherent in any society, as long as those societies cannot provide substantial wealth for every member, and the forces of production can satisfy only the basic needs of a majority of the members. Those societies cannot avoid unevenly distributing goods, products, and benefits, if they merely produce more than enough to cover the basic needs of the majority but not enough to satisfy the basic needs of all. Along with this inequality, a system of power and a division between the leaders and the led is created. As long as there are social conflicts, the rulers need this strategy of legitimised force. In some societies, where productive forces are relatively

---

<sup>7</sup> See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), pp. 258–59.

stagnant,<sup>8</sup> such as European countries in the medieval ages, at least before the Crusades, the need to maintain political and economic order required acceptance from the members. Such acceptance makes members of those societies subject to the system of rule and makes them obey the rule of the ruling class. Ideological ideas in this strategy are used to create that acceptance by developing the concept of divine rule or rule by the Grace of God. The creation of the subject can be both normative and descriptive, that is, by consent or by force (in Gramsci's terminology). Being subject to normative rules makes individuals willingly accept their role and the relationship between themselves and their rulers, or as subjects under the legalised force of the rulers.

The legitimising process also provides opportunities for the ruling class to reproduce the social relations of production. To reproduce the social structures of a given society, the ruling class uses social institutions, such as families, schools, and other educational institutions to promulgate ruling class ideas. For instance, the curriculum shapes the world view of the students, their interactions with other persons, and the roles they will play as workers, consumers, and technicians, to support and maintain the current social relations. Those socialising processes ingrain the new members of a given society with a particular view of power relations as the norm.

In Asian countries, where people have faith in Buddhism or Hinduism, the one who should become the ruler is the one who has accumulated several good Karmas from previous lives. Monks and priests, who monopolise the sacred texts (Tripitaka and the Vedas) and their interpretations, determine who is to be the ruler and even those who will lose their rule. With the benediction of good Karmas, when the ruler rebirths into the present life, they will have the right to rule, and anyone else who has accumulated less good Karmas must obey them. The holy texts not only tell members of those societies who should rule but also justifies the use of repressive forces in those societies. The concept of Mara (devil), which some people can be said to embody, makes these people targets to be destroyed or annihilated. Priests in these Asian societies can use their interpretations of 'sacred' texts as an ideology to select a ruler, and also use the ideology of Mara to legitimise savage repressive forces.

Ideology also has the role of rationalising the existing situation and making members of a given society accept their situations by providing reasons for their unfortunate circumstances. In Psychology, rationalisation is defined as a '...defence mechanism whereby the individual uses complicated (often circuitous) explanations in order to justify behaviour. This defensive process happens outside conscious awareness and is thought to be a way of covering up a more painful unconscious reality'.<sup>9</sup> For example, people can rationalise an unjust rule that they have to tolerate

---

<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, if the productive forces are still be developed, and the power to satisfy the needs of members of a given society increases, then ideology in that society will have less roles to operate.

<sup>9</sup> *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology*, ed. by David Ricky Matsumoto (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge

for the time being by believing that to have an unjust rule is better than to have no rule. Or they may rationalise it by believing that the rule is unavoidable and that there is no other form of rule that is better than the existing one.

Rationalisation at the level of individuals themselves and their living conditions does not directly protect or serve the interest of ruling groups, but by leading people to accept the circumstances of exploitation, it will indirectly prolong the rule of the ruling group and postpone any possible challenge to that rule. By contrast, the ruling class does not need to develop ideas to rationalise social conflicts, but merely allows conditions for any idea that can take that role to legitimise the current situation in the consciousness of the masses.

The content of these ideological ideas varies, depending on the historical, economic, and political conditions of their societies. Ideological ideas, and the conflicts which they conceal, vary from one society to another and can even be different in the same society in different epochs. Ideological ideas of the ruling class in a particular society might well fail to be ruling ideas in another society at another time. For example, ruling ideas that legitimise European capitalist societies, such as the ideas of 'liberty, equality and fraternity,' cannot be used to legitimise medieval Chinese society. The idea of loyalty in classical Confucianism cannot justify the modern order of capitalism.

## **Ideological Superstructure, Ideas of the Ruling Class and Revolutionary Ideas**

The problem of the concept of ideological superstructure arises from different interpretations of Marx and Engels' works on this topic. These are the *1859 Preface* and *The German Ideology*. As shown in the first chapter, the *1859 Preface* is better known than *The German Ideology* and has had greater impact on other Marxists, such as Lenin and Gramsci. Ideology in the neutral sense and the notion of ideological superstructure originate from two passages in that *Preface*. The first is the idea that can make people realise their oppressed conditions and transform their current situation., Marx combines several types of idea, such as legal, political, religious, artistic, and philosophical, into ideological forms.<sup>10</sup> These ideological ideas can make people conscious of their conflict and fight it out. If we accept that scientific knowledge can enable us to understand the situation around us, it also gives us the means to influence that situation. So, we should include scientific ideas among ideological ideas. Therefore, Lenin could say that Marxism is a scientific ideology when he used it in political struggles before and after the Russian Revolution, while Gramsci's idea of Marxism as a philosophy of praxis

---

University Press, 2009), p. 423, I agree with Eagleton on this idea of rationalisation strategy of ideology. See Eagleton, p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263, emphasis added.

comes from the same source. Marxism for them is an idea for making a social revolution, but they classify Marxism differently: a scientific ideology for Lenin and a philosophy of practice for Gramsci.

Marx's usages of the term "ideology" as a means to make human beings understand their current situations and change them not only gives birth to the apparently positive sense of ideology; it also links to Marx's next passage in which the idea of the ideological superstructure is presented. Marx explains the relation between the economic base and its superstructures as follows:

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which there arises a legal and political superstructure and to which there correspond *definite forms of social consciousness*...<sup>11</sup>

In this passage, there are two kinds of superstructure: a legal and political superstructure and a structure that corresponds to definite forms of social consciousness. Marx does not explicitly state the name of the later superstructure. However, if one merges Marx's first passage, which states that ideology includes all ways in which people become conscious of their situations and fight out the conflicts, with Marx's second passage, which refers to a superstructure of definite forms of social consciousness, then we have a particular superstructure composed of several types of ideas. The combination of those two Marx's passages is the birth of the ideological superstructure as the superstructure of ideas in a given society.

As shown above in the first chapter, authors like Seliger, Larrain, Parekh and Eagleton, who emphasise the negative sense of ideology and yet maintain the idea of the superstructure that includes all forms of social consciousness, eventually face the problem of how ideology in the negative sense can be compatible with the ideological superstructure. The problem is that if ideological ideas are just particular kinds of ideas, then they are only a subset of all ideas through which people fight out their conflicts. The name of a subset of ideas cannot be used to describe the set of ideas itself.

There are two ways to maintain the negative conception of ideology and the idea of it as a superstructure encompassing all ideas. The first is to invent another word to avoid this problematic term. This strategy is used by Larrain when he suggests a new term like 'ideational superstructure'. His ideational superstructure encompasses all forms of social consciousness in a given society, including scientific, philosophical, political, economic and ideological ideas, etc. In this sense, an

---

<sup>11</sup> Marx, XXIX, p. 263, emphasis added.

ideological idea is a subset of all ideas that can be placed under the set of all ideas in the 'ideational superstructure'. However, the drawback with this strategy is that it must ignore Marx's conception of the ideological superstructure in *The German Ideology* and the positive role of ideology which is that it can make people realise their roles and bring about a social revolution, as described in the *1859 Preface*.

The second way is to limit the scope of the ideological superstructure to ideas of the ruling class. That is my view; however, I first have to clarify the kinds of ruling ideas, and their function in concealing social contradictions. If some of the ruling ideas operate as ideas that conceal social conflicts and contradictions, then superstructures of those ideas must operate in a similar way. These ideological superstructures include only the ideological ideas of the ruling class. In any class society, ideas of the social structures comprise two types. The first are ideas about the process and the interactions within and between the economic and political structures. For instance, in economic structures, there are various kinds of ideas about the system of property, labour, and interest. And within political structures, there are ideas about elections, the parliament, the cabinet, the court, the police forces, etc. The second type of ideas makes the first type reasonable to members of a given society. For instance, the legitimate way to change the government or explanations for why we should protect the system of property and limit the scope of government interference and so on.

This first type of ideas of the ruling class need not conceal social contradictions. But mere descriptions of the processes and interactions within and between the structures cannot make members accept the rule of the ruling class. This acceptance requires the second type of ruling ideas, since they give a reason for the structures, which are organised in specific ways. The task of the second type of ruling idea is to conceal social contradictions and give reasons for supporting the existing social structures. In this sense, the ideological superstructure is a set of ideas that function in two ways: to legitimise and to rationalise those structures. This ideological superstructure enables the legal-political superstructure and the economic base to maintain the rule of the ruling class properly. Thus, the ideological superstructure is the superstructure of the ruling ideas that conceal social conflicts and contradictions. Any ideas that perform that role, whether they are legal, political, religious, artistic, philosophical, or even scientific, can be combined into the ideological superstructure of the ruling class.

Ideas in that ideological superstructure can be modified alongside the juridical-political superstructure and the structural base, as long as the ruling class uses that modification to prolong its rule and make those other structures operate properly. On the other hand, a dominated class can develop its own ideas to challenge the structure of ruling ideas. If those ideas can delegitimise

and expose the way that ruling ideas make other members of society accept the rule of the ruling class, then it can make the ruling class resort to force to suppress ideas that undermine the legitimacy of the ruling class. In this sense, the ideological superstructure is the battleground for the ruling class to gain support and for the revolutionary class to destroy that support among all or most members within a given society.

The development and the interactions between the structural base and superstructures can be summarised as follows: Ideas that transform the economic structures are developed and come into being through the activities of thinkers or intellectuals. However, it is not possible for those ideas to transform the whole economic structure of a given society if they cannot win support from at least a part of the ruling group, such as some of the intellectuals in that society. To assimilate intellectuals from the ruling class into a revolutionary movement, as Gramsci points out, is to diminish the power of the ruling class to perpetuate acceptance by subordinated classes. Also, if intellectuals, from both the revolutionary class and that part of the ruling group, support the new economic ideas and succeed in seizing power in the legal-political structure of that society, then those new economic ideas will become the main source of transformation of the structural base and gradually (or rapidly) affect the rest of superstructures. The contents of the previous ideological superstructure lose their significance, as they do not correspond to the new economic base and legal-political superstructures.

For example, in the European medieval ages, one way of settling conflicts between individuals was called 'trial by ordeal'. When judges did not have enough evidence to decide a case, they could resort to 'trial by ordeal'. The assumption was that if the accused person was innocent, they would receive protection from God. An innocent person who receives divine protection can walk over burning ploughshares or heal within three days after placing their hands in boiling water. This sort of trial is possible only if the content of the ideological superstructure of the time is dominated by the idea of miracles and divine intervention in human affairs. The Catholic Church and its priests were the primary agents for spreading such ideas, and at the same time, they monopolised interpretation of the holy texts. The concept of justice that made this trial acceptable changed when a new form of economic base and a new legal-political superstructure arose. Trial by ordeal lost its function in the European modern age when the Catholic Church lost its power to control temporal rulers, and the idea of positive law and trial by evidence were developed and became dominant.

All contents in the ideological superstructure have the primary role of providing seemingly sound reasons for accepting the economic structures and legal-political superstructures. Ideas in the ideological superstructure can alter, as long as those ideas do not directly conflict the rule of

the ruling class or make them lose that status. Ruling class interests can be compromised to some extent, provided the power to organise the economic base remains in the grasp of that class. Such ideas even can modify the legal-political structure and economic structures, in the name of 'reform', to maintain the rule of the ruling class. The rule of the ruling group will last until their ruling ideas are exhausted or cannot be modified to extract any further support from the intellectuals of that society. If a new social group proposes new ideas for a new type of society, in those circumstances, there would be an opportunity for a new type of society to come into existence. And this is how we should think about the concept of ideological superstructure, which is the structure of the ruling ideas and principally operates to conceal social contradictions within the given society. Moreover, the ideological superstructure is also an ideological battleground between the existing ruling class and the new class to preserve the existing rule or destroy it by exposing the concealed social contradictions. In this sense, we can retain Gramsci's and Althusser's ideas of the ideological superstructure as a battleground for the struggle and also retain the negative sense of the idea by reducing its scope to only the ideological superstructure.

### **Marxism as a Scientific Idea for Exposing the Ideology of the Ruling Class**

Ideology can be developed by the subordinated class to unify other social groups by exposing the mystified contents of the ruling ideas. For instance, all ruling ideas can be used to conceal social contradictions and rationalise the social conditions to make the majority of members of a given society accept and reproduce the existing social relations of production. The task of revolutionary ideas is to expose the social contradictions and render the rationalisation of the social conditions invalid. For instance, Marx exposes the inferior conditions of the wage labourers in the capitalist system when compared to the conditions of the capitalists in *Capital*, especially in chapter 25. The process of capital accumulation relies on the integration of wage labour into the capitalist system and the surplus value gained by the capitalist class is proportional to the degree of integration of the wage labour. This exposure functions in two ways: firstly, Marx's arguments reduce the legitimacy of the ideas of wage labourers that support the dominant of the capitalist class and, secondly, Marx's arguments at the same time, create the conditions that can lead to a catharsis between the proletariat class that face the same exploited conditions. The more unity there is within a new class the greater its chances for a social revolution against the current rule of the ruling class.

However, exposing the social contradictions alone is not enough to create a social revolution; the subordinated class needs to organise and create alliances with other social groups before it can seize state power whether by peaceful or violent means. In this sense, Lenin's idea of the vanguard of the proletariat and Gramsci's idea of hegemony are helpful to political struggles and compatible with my conceptions of ideology. The organised party can more easily create the

moral and intellectual leadership of the new revolutionary class over other social groups and create alliances with other social groups by using various party organs, such as publishing houses, party pamphlets, newspapers and so on.

In this sense, Marxism has its theory of ideology and also becomes an ideology. Ideology in Marxism is different from other ideological ideas because it claims to be scientific. And this ideological aspect of Marxism also makes it different from other theories in the social sciences. Marxism as a tradition not only tries to understand and uncover the real mechanism, as other scientific discipline does, but also attempts to change the world. However, Marxism, as the ideology of a social movement, cannot lose its status as a scientific theory, as the status of being developable and even refutable can prevent Marxism from becoming a secular faith or even a zealous religion. Unless Marxism remains scientific, even if it retains the support of its adherents, the future of the tradition is grim. The tradition will become a blind movement that has no direction to develop or will become some other abstract (or even utopian) movement that is no different to other movements, such as the other utopian socialist movements that Engels condemns.

The task of Marxism is to investigate the structures or mechanisms that allow capitalist societies to survive and transform, despite of the social contradictions within them. As part of this task, Marxism presents the theory of ideology as an idea for unifying social groups. The role of ideology can be used by the subordinate classes either to support the rule of the ruling class or to challenge that rule, depending on the contents of those ideologies.

My proposed conception of ideology can overcome the contesting interpretations by limiting the negative sense to the ideologies of the ruling class and ideological superstructure and retaining the neutral sense of ideology to refer to the function of ideology to unify the social groups whether they are revolutionary or ruling. However, my conception of ideology is not compatible with that of Althusser when it comes to the role of ideology in creating the subject and the dichotomy between science and ideology. As already shown in the fourth chapter, Marxism can be understood as scientific based on the idea of Critical Realism. Because it is trying to present a theory concerning the real cause of events (the exploitation of the capitalist system and the progress of the history), the tradition can claim its status as scientific. Thus, the tradition does not need Althusser's criterion of creating subjects or not being an ideology in order to be a science. The next section will present the relationships between Marxism, ideology, and science to examine the question of why Marxism has to be both a science and an ideology.

## **Marxism, Ideology, and Science: A Continuing Dispute**

Marxism has a long tradition of claiming to be a science of society rather than an ideology. Althusser sees it as an ideology, while a Marxist thinker like Lenin, claims that Marxism is a

scientific ideology. The differences in the status of Marxism as a science or ideology result from different views of the concept of ideology. As mentioned above, ideology has the function of uniting people into a particular group. In the case of a ruling ideology, the goal and the practice of that ruling ideology is supposed to unify all members of society under the rule of the ruling class and distribute its benefits unevenly amongst members of that society for the benefit of the ruling class. However, ideological ideas can operate not only for the ruling class but also for the dominated groups. Ideological ideas can be used to organise subordinated classes and unify them to challenge the rule of the ruling class. Ideology for subordinated classes can include ideas such as religion, science, political ideas, philosophy, etc. In this sense, Marxism is one of those ideas that can operate as an ideology to unify subordinated groups to make the struggle against the ruling class. Marxism is different from other ideologies of subaltern classes because it also claims to be a scientific theory. That is the reason why Lenin regards Marxism as a scientific proletarian ideology.

Lenin's idea of scientific proletarian ideology is suitable for the tradition, as it resembles Marx's ninth thesis on Feuerbach. The tradition does not only try to interpret or explain events, but also tries to change them. Thus, Marxism has two related dimensions: first, Marxism is a science of society, and second, it is a proletarian ideology. By combining these two dimensions, Marxism as a science of society has a superior status when compared to other socialist ideologies. The rationale of the superiority of Marxism over other ideologies is that Marxism does not merely try to replace one value with another, but also does tells us something about the world. For instance, Marxism does not rely on the abstract concept of human nature to support the idea of equality, but also explains why the current situation of capitalist society leads to the oppression of most of the subaltern groups. In this sense, its status as a scientific discipline provides Marxism and its adherents not only with a goal to be attained, but also with the explanation as to why the capitalist class always gains the upper hand when compared to other subordinated classes, and how to overcome this situation. Nevertheless, this double dimension of Marxism also presents the tradition with arduous tasks, unlike other ideologies that are based on abstract concepts (liberty, justice, equality, etc.) and are mostly incommensurable. Those ideologies merely need to develop convincing arguments to support their programs of operation. To compete against the ruling ideology, Marxism, as a scientific ideology, has to prove its superiority over bourgeois ideologies by showing that bourgeois ideologies are unscientific, mystified, outdated and irrelevant.

We should aware that the relationship between these two aspects of Marxism is not one-directional. It does not move only from its theoretical aspect to its practical aspect. The task of making a revolution does not preclude Marxism from undertaking its task to pursue knowledge. On the contrary, it helps Marxism to improve the theory. Even failures in the implementation of its theories can be used as lessons for formulating a new theory that has greater explanatory power and may propose new answers for current class situations. The acceptance of failure will remain a

critical aspect of the tradition, and it will revitalise Marxism for its next historical task in the future. It might also help to prevent Marxism from becoming a secular faith that causes the masses to follow a leader like a flock of sheep following a herdsman. As a secular faith, Marxism becomes an ideological idea in Larrain's negative sense, against which Marx and Engels did their best to struggle.

## CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

This thesis aims to present a more coherent conception of ideology within the Marxist tradition and its relation to science. The relationship between ideology and science also affects Marxism itself, so the thesis also presents a more plausible reasoning for Marxism as a scientific discipline and for the status of Marxism as both ideological and scientific. To achieve this, the thesis begins with an examination of Marx and Engels' conception of ideology in Chapter I, and how it relates to the views of other Marxists, such as Lenin and Gramsci in Chapter II, and Althusser in Chapter III. Chapter IV shifts to the problem of the scientific status of Marxism. The concept of praxis and its relation to ideology is examined in Chapter V, while Chapter VI posits a more coherent conception of ideology within the tradition.

The first three chapters provide an historical examination of the usages of the concept. The conception of ideology within the Marxist tradition can be divided into two aspects: a critical tool and a political weapon. The chapter begins with its conception as a critical tool, as used by Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*, to criticise a particular kind of idea. With this purpose of criticising and exposing particular ideas that support the rule of the ruling class in a given society, the concept seems to be used in the negative sense. However, as shown in the first chapter, Marx also acknowledges the power of ideology to unite human beings under particular ideas, such as religion or nationalism. He even acknowledges the unifying power of ideology, but he still uses the term to criticise the content of ideas, such as German Idealism, or the ideology of the Catholic Church. Marx acknowledges the power of ideology to unite the masses under particular types of ideas, and this understanding is followed by Lenin when he uses the term in the neutral sense. This trend is even clearer when Marx uses the term 'ideological superstructure' or 'idealistic superstructure' in *The German Ideology* to present a structure of those ideas. Marx does not explicitly use the term ideology for his theory of history except in the *1859 Preface* when he describes it as a particular type of idea that can make human beings realise their conflicts and fight them out. This short sentence in the *1859 Preface* brings the discussion of the conception to its second aspect, where ideology is used as the political weapon.

Lenin transforms the concept of ideology from one used to expose a particular form of rule of existing ruling class domination to one used as a political weapon for supporting or destroying the rule. One can use ideology to represent any class; ideology does not belong solely to the ruling class. For Lenin, there are bourgeois ideologies as well as proletarian ideologies. Lenin also claims

that the function of ideology for the revolutionary class is to unify and create an organisation as a means of revolution. In Lenin's view, Marxism is a proletarian ideology and also a scientific theory. Lenin's claim of Marxism as a scientific ideology makes it different from opposing ideologies by claiming its superiority as an advanced form of science. Marxism as an ideology can become a political means that aims to destroy the rule of the ruling class in capitalist societies. Thus, there are only two types of ideology within a class society at the broader level: the ideology of the ruling class and the revolutionary ideology of the subordinated classes. The struggle against the ideology of the ruling class is not just to expose the oppressive content of that ideology; it is also to present a new ideology that can lead human beings to make a revolution and create a new form of society. Lenin's line of reasoning is largely based on Marx's short passage in the *1859 Preface*, when Marx points to ideology as a set of ideas that enables human beings to recognise their conflicts and try to fight them out. Lenin's conception of ideology presupposes two elements. First, ideology must present human beings with a true understanding of their situation, and for Lenin, that ideology is scientific. Second, just understanding alone is not enough to overcome those difficulties and make a revolution. Human beings need to be organised in a specific way to wage war against an existing ruling class and establish a new society. It is the function of ideology to unite and create a relationship between the leaders and the led. Thus, Lenin's conception incorporates the critical element of Marx and Engels' conception of ideology and applies it to the political and ideological struggle against the ruling class.

The idea of a Marxist ideology as a political means to make a revolution is further developed by Antonio Gramsci. When revolutionary parties failed to make social revolutions in Western Europe before the Second World War, Gramsci developed his own formulation of ideology to explain why those revolutions did not occur. Gramsci introduces several terms to explain why the ruling class, especially in Italy before the Second World War, retained its rule even in the face of several economic crises. He introduces the idea of hegemony. Hegemony is the dominance of a particular class over other classes and social groups. The hegemony of a particular class is apparent in the contents of the ideology of that class. The contents of a hegemonic ideology can include economics, morality, political ideas, etc. As long as a social group, with its intellectuals, can establish hegemony within their class to unite and rule over other classes, the rule of that class will prevail.

From Gramsci, the conception of ideology in the tradition gradually turned back to

emphasise its theoretical aspect. This trend is clearly apparent in Althusser's writings on ideology. Althusser shifts attention away from ideology as a political means, back to an explanation of the general and particular functions of ideology. The general function of ideology is to transform human beings into subjects and give them meaning and purpose in their lives, and an understanding of how they can live and behave toward each other. This general function exists in any society and it cannot be discarded or overcome. However, the particular function of ideology in a given society can be changed and eradicated. The particular function of ideology is to reproduce a particular type of society itself. In capitalist society, the particular function of ideology helps that society to reproduce itself and, at the same time, supports the rule of the ruling class within that society. Marxism for Althusser is a scientific theory that helps human beings to create a new society that can root out the capitalist ideology and its particular function. Althusser also develops the idea of a dichotomy between ideology and science, arguing that an idea can be either scientific or ideological, but it cannot be both at the same time. Althusser uses this dichotomy to support the idea of Marxism as a scientific theory and to differentiate it from other forms of socialism. However, Althusser's conception of ideology faces a difficulty regarding to the status of Marxism. As shown in the third chapter, in one place, Althusser regards Marxism as a proletarian ideology. If there is a dichotomy between ideology and science, how Marxism can be both at the same time? If one accepts the dichotomy between science and ideology, then there can be no such thing as a scientific ideology, as in the case of Marxism.

The conceptions of ideology within the tradition obviously present a specific trend. This trend starts from the development of ideology as a conceptual tool to understand, criticise, and expose the peculiarities within the class society in Marx and Engels' writings. It further develops into the political means for both the ruling class and the revolutionary class in Lenin's works, and then turns back to understand the political and economic situations that prevent the coming of the revolution in Gramsci's and Althusser's works. This trend represents the nature of Marxism and its projects, which are not just to interpret and understand social reality but to also transform social reality. However, the process of transforming requires the proper knowledge to lead that transformation. Marxism has a long tradition of claiming that it is a scientific theory. To use the framework of being scientific knowledge, we should place Marxism on the idea of Critical Realism. The idea of Critical Realism is the scientific theory must provide the real mechanism that cause the event. Moreover, we should treat Marxism as a Lakatosian research program and develop safety belt theories or peripheral theories to support the core theory. The scientific status of a given

scientific theory remains until there is another theory that has more explanatory power, and that earlier theory fails to produce supportive theories or find new facts and new predictions to manage the abnormalities at the core. The Marxist theory of capitalism, as a core theory, also needs supportive theories, such as a theory of the state and a theory of ideology. If that sort of theory can be developed, then Marxism will still be a progressive scientific theory.

Marxism also has another way to evaluate a theory or idea and that is through practice. Practice or praxis presupposes a duality between idea and practice. Practice in the Marxist tradition has two different roles: the epistemological role and the idea guidance role. If an idea or theory can be applied to transform social reality, we may suppose that this idea or theory is unified in terms of three elements: theory, practice, and its material condition. On the other hand, if the idea cannot be applied successfully, it shows that there is a problem when applying or that idea does not meet the requirement in its material condition. This unsuccessful application can be caused by one of those three elements, or two of them, or even all of them. The idea of practice can affect and help theorists to modify the theory to have more explanatory power by learning from the success or failure of the application of the theory. Practice within class societies at the level of society as a whole can be divided into two types: ideological practice of the ruling class and revolutionary practice of subordinated classes. Both of those practices relate to the concept of ideology by using ideology to unify classes and create acceptance and support from the other class. But the aims of the two practices are different. The ideological practice of the ruling class operates to reproduce and maintain the rule of the class; however, the revolutionary practice of the new class aims to create a new type of society.

From Marx to Althusser, the concept of ideology in the Marxist tradition is used as a conceptual tool to understand and expose the complex structure of the ruling class, especially in a capitalist society, and to criticise the ruling ideology. However, ideology can also be used as the idea that unifies social classes, whether it is the ruling class or the subordinated class. Thus, ideology should be understood in two senses: ideology of the ruling class and the ideology of the new revolutionary class. Both of those ideologies function to unify their own class and attract support from other classes. However, in class societies, the ideology of the ruling class has two specific roles: to legitimise and to rationalise the rule of that class. These two roles, once they successfully operate, can conceal social conflicts and contradictions within that society and make most members of the society accept the rule of the existing ruling class. The result of the success of those two roles of the ruling ideology is to reproduce the relations of production that the ruling

class gains the most benefit. The ideological superstructure is a set of ideas operating within a society to support the social structures and organisations within that society.

The process of making a social revolution needs a new revolutionary idea; however, as time passes, the new revolutionary idea, once grasped by the masses, tends to become a dogmatic idea that receives unwavering support from members without any questions. This tendency, when it occurs, reduces the critical element of that revolutionary idea. Marxism's role as a scientific theory can prevent it from becoming a kind secular faith that demands dogmatic support from its adherents. If Marxism can be modified and be developed to be more than just *ad hoc* arguments, it can avoid the paternalistic tendency that resides in Lenin's idea of the vanguard of the proletariat.

The concept of ideology in Marxism has two aspects: theoretical and practical. However, from the birth of this conception within the tradition, the usages of the concept have swung back and forth between those two aspects. For instance, in its theoretical aspect, when the concept is used to understand and criticise the ideological ideas of the ruling class, the term is used mostly in the negative sense. On the other hand, in its practical aspect, when the term is used to unify the masses and create the leadership of the party, the term is always used in the neutral sense. The confusion between these two aspects results in an overemphasis on one of these two aspects over the other. However, as shown in Chapters II and III, several concepts within the conceptions of ideology, such as ideological superstructure, hegemony, vanguard of the proletariat, war of position and so on, can also be used to understand the class situations of the class society and how the ruling class maintains its rule, while some of the concepts are used in the political strategies to make a revolution. One of the tasks of this thesis has been to emphasise these two aspects of ideology and present a unified conception of ideology within the tradition. The unified conception of ideology must include these two aspects of the concept to overcome the apparent contradictory conceptions from various authors.

Not only does the thesis present a unified conception of ideology, but it also seeks to present the scientific status of Marxism. The problem of the scientific status of Marxism, especially in its theory of capitalism, is not merely a problem of the philosophy of science, but the application of Marxism in practice. Making a revolution demands sacrifices of time, resources and even the lives of various people who participate in such activities. As a Lakatosian scientific research program, Marxism relies on other scientific communities to develop auxiliary theories to support the core. This means that Marxism is not a supreme science that governs or dictates other scientific

theories, and it is not a truth that needs only to manifest. It needs to develop, so that it does not become a degenerative research program which contributes nothing. As already shown in Chapter V, Marxism still has a vacant space to develop, and it can borrow ideas from other disciplines, such as the idea of mechanical explanation, to incorporate into the tradition. With this attitude, Marxism can still be a lively scientific discipline which can attract attention from other intellectuals from other disciplines. In this respect at least, the function of ideology for overthrowing the ruling class will be facilitated by gaining support from other intellectuals, and the task of making a revolution will be revitalised again by making that ideology public and attracting intellectuals into its own ranks.

The two tasks of Marxism, which are to understand and change social reality, need a lot of energy and resources to fulfil; however, the second task is more challenging than the first. The problem rests on the scientific status of the theory itself. If the theory can be changed, modified, or even abandoned to create a new theory, then when that kind of theory is translated into ideology, its power to unify the masses and create a relationship between the leaders and the led becomes unstable. The superseded or abandoned theory cannot lead to any fruitful contribution to the tradition, and it can no longer claim to be an advanced theory. Once the masses find out its superseded status, they can no longer adhere to that type of theory. From another perspective, this instability is not a weakness because it prevents Marxism from becoming a secular faith. It also presents a need for a new type of the leadership to unify the masses in contrast with Lenin's idea of the vanguard of the proletariat.

However, the problem of paternalism in Lenin's idea of the party or the idea of the vanguard of the proletariat that relates to his conception of ideology, are problems that remain unresolved. The very idea that members of the party have to obey the orders of the leaders, and that there must be no apparent conflicts within the party, is problematic. In the present society, where there are various kinds of mass media and a compulsory education system, is this paternalistic model still valid and suitable for leading the masses to revolution? This question raises further questions, such as: is the party still necessary or not? Do we still need organisations to carry out the task of revolution? These questions might be answered in another thesis elsewhere.

With all these chapters, this thesis presents a more coherent theory of ideology to support the theory of history. The conception of ideology in the tradition, from Marx to Althusser, even though some parts do conflict with each other, can be a conception that includes the strengths and avoids the apparent contradictions of former conceptions. Thus, ideology may be understood in a neutral sense, a positive sense, or a negative sense, depending on the way it is used. For example,

the ideology of the bourgeoisie was used in a positive sense when it was used by that class to struggle against the feudal lords in Western medieval ages; but the same ideology is used in a negative sense when it becomes the ruling ideas and operates as an ideological superstructure in a capitalist society. The thesis also shows that in terms of the theoretical aspect of Marxism, there is still room for further development. With this development, Marxism will not fall into becoming a degenerative research program at best, or a secular faith at worst. This thesis also tries to show that the idea of ideology in Marxism can be used on Marxism itself, as a scientific ideology that combines both theoretical and practical aspects. Marxism is not just another theory that tries to understand the world; it also tries to change material reality itself. The process of understanding and changing reality do not just make Marxism different from other revolutionary theories but can be used to support and develop new theories within the tradition. The failure of applications of the theory does not mean that Marxism fails as a scientific theory, but it shows that Marxism needs to develop further to fulfil what it lacks. The aim to break down the rule of the ruling class within capitalist society will not succeed after just several decades of effort by intellectuals and adherents of the tradition. It takes more than a century for Western feudal societies to become capitalist societies. In this sense, the task of this thesis is to develop a safety belt theory, such as a theory of ideology, to support and enable the tradition to be a progressive research program, and to use it as a scientific theory to organise the masses to prepare for the coming socialist revolution.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackerman, James M., 'Interest Rates and the Law: A History of Usury. (Monetary Control Law)', *Arizona State Law Journal*, 1981 (1981), 61–110
- Althusser, Louis, and Étienne Balibar, *Reading 'Capital'* (London: NLB, 1970)
- Althusser, Louis, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971)
- , 'Marxism and Humanism', in *For Marx*, trans. by Ben Brewster (London: Allen Lane, 1969), pp. 219–48
- , 'Theory, Theoretical Practice and Theoretical Formation: Ideology and Ideological Struggle', in *Philosophy and the Spontaneous Philosophy of the Scientists & Other Essays*, trans. by James H. Kavanagh (London; New York: Verso, 1990)
- Anderson, Perry, *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: NLB, 1976)
- , 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci', *New Left Review*, I, 1976, 5–78
- Andrew, Edward, 'A Note on the Unity of Theory and Practice in Marx and Nietzsche', *Political Theory*, 3.3 (1975), 305–16 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/009059177500300306>>
- Aronowitz, Stanley, 'Gramsci's Concept of Political Organisation', in *Perspectives on Gramsci: Politics, Culture and Social Theory*, ed. by Joseph Francese, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 64 (London; New York: Routledge, 2009)
- Arrillaga, Jos, *High Voltage Direct Current Transmission* (London, UK: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2008)
- Atkins, P. W., *The Laws of Thermodynamics: A Very Short Introduction*, Very Short Introductions (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Ayer, Alfred Jules, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1970)
- Baradat, Leon P, *Political Ideologies: Their Origins and Impact*, 5th edn (London: Prentice-Hall, 1994)
- Bhaskar, Roy, *A Realist Theory of Science*, Classical Texts in Critical Realism (London; New York: Routledge, 2008)
- Bechtel, William, and Adele Abrahamsen, 'Explanation: A Mechanist Alternative', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 36 (2005), 421–41 <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2005.03.010>>
- Bell, Daniel, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, [Nachdr. der Ausg.] London 1974 (Niedernberg: Repro Pfeffer, 1991)

- Bhaskar, Roy, *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy*, Classical Texts in Critical Realism, 1st rev. ed (New York: Routledge, 2010)
- Bienkowska, Barbara, 'The Heliocentric Controversy in European Culture', in *Scientific World of Copernicus: On the Occasion of the 500th Anniversary of His Birth 1473-1973.*, ed. by Barbara Bienkowska (Place of publication not identified: Springer, 2013)
- Blum, Jerome, *The End of the Old Order in Rural Europe* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Browne, E. J., *Darwin's Origin of Species: A Biography* (London: Atlantic, 2007)  
<<http://public.ebib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=932261>> [accessed 14 December 2016]
- Bryant, Christopher G. A., 'Kuhn, Paradigms and Sociology', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 26.3 (1975), 354 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/589851>>
- Callinicos, Alex, *Althusser's Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 1976)
- , *The Revolutionary Ideas of Karl Marx* (London: Bookmarks, 2004)
- Cambridge University Press, ed., *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, 3rd ed (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
- Chalmers, A. F., *What Is This Thing Called Science?*, 3rd ed (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 1999)
- Christenson, Reo Millard, Alan S. Engel, Dan N. Jacobs, Mostafa Rejai, and Herbert Waltzer, *Ideologies and Modern Politics*, 2d ed (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1975)
- Cohen, G.A., *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Princeton Paperbacks, 7. print., 1. expanded ed (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Comte, Auguste, *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte*, trans. by Harriet Martineau, 3 vols (London: George Bell & Sons, 1896), III
- , 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- Crocker, Lawrence, 'Marx's Use of Contradiction', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 40 (1980), 558 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2106848>>
- Donald, James, and Stuart Hall, *Politics and Ideology: A Reader*, Open University Set Book (Milton Keynes; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986)
- Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London; New York: Verso, 1991)
- Eddy, W. H. C., *Understanding Marxism: An Approach Through Dialogue* (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979)
- Elliott, Gregory, *Althusser: The Detour of Theory*, Historical Materialism Book Series, v. 13 (Leiden;

Boston: Brill, 2006)

- Engels, Friedrich, 'Appendix to the American Edition of the Condition of the Working Class in England', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882 - 89*, 50 vols (Moscow: Progress Publ. [u.a.], 1990), xxvi
- , 'Engels's Preparatory Writings for Anti-Dühring', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Engels: Anti-Dühring, Dialectics of Nature*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1987), xxv
- , 'Engels to Franz Mehring, London, 14 July 1893', in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895*, trans. by Dona Torr (New York: International Publishers)
- , 'Engels to Joseph Bloch, London, 21-22 September 1890', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Engels 1890-92*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2001), xlix
- , 'Karl Marx', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- , 'Karl Marx's Funeral', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- , 'Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi
- , 'Marx and Robertus', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi
- , 'Origin of the Family, Private Property and State', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi
- , 'Preface to the 1888 English Edition of the Manifesto', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Frederick Engels: 1882-89*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), xxvi
- , 'Socialism: Utopian and Scientific', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- Evans, William McKee, 'From the Land of Canaan to the Land of Guinea: The Strange Odyssey of the "Sons of Ham"', *The American Historical Review*, 85 (1980), 15  
<<https://doi.org/10.2307/1853423>>
- Filmer, Sir Robert, *Patriarcha and Other Political Works of Sir Robert Filmer*, ed. by Peter Laslett (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1949)
- Glennan, Stuart, 'Rethinking Mechanistic Explanation', *Philosophy of Science*, 69 (2002), S342-53

<<https://doi.org/10.1086/341857>>

- Godfrey-Smith, Peter, *Theory and Reality: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science*, Science and Its Conceptual Foundations (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)
- Goodwin, Barbara, *Using Political Ideas*, 5th edn (Chichester; New York: Wiley, 1992)
- Gramsci, Antonio, *Letters from Prison*, trans. by Frank Rosengarten, 2 vols (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), ii
- , *Prison Notebooks*, trans. by Joseph A Buttigieg, 5 vols (New York; [Chichester]: Columbia University Press, 2007), iii
- , *Selections from Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, trans. by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971)
- Gross, Leo, 'The Peace of Westphalia, 1648-1948', *The American Journal of International Law*, 42 (1948), 20 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2193560>>
- Hanley, Chris, 'An Exploration of Educative Praxis: Reflections on Marx's Concept Praxis, Informed by the Lacanian Concepts Act and Event', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49.10 (2017), 1006–15 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2016.1273087>>
- Hayek, Friedrich August von, Bruce Caldwell, William Warren Bartley, and Friedrich August Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom: Texts and Documents; the Definitive Edition*, The Collected Works of Friedrich August Hayek, founding ed.: W. W. Bartley; general ed. Bruce Caldwell; Vol. 2 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008)
- Hedström, Peter, and Petri Ylikoski, 'Causal Mechanisms in the Social Sciences', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 36 (2010), 49–67 <<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.012809.102632>>
- Hempel, Carl G, 'Aspects of Scientific Explanation', in *Aspects of Scientific Explanation, and Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, 1970)
- Hinton, William, 'Why Not the Capitalist Road?', in *The Privatization of China: The Great Reversal* (London: Earthscan, 1991)
- History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short Course* (New York: International Publishers, 1939)
- Hoskin, Michael, 'From Geometry to Physics: Astronomy Transformed', in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Astronomy*, ed. by Michael A. Hoskin, Cambridge Illustrated History (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Keat, Russell, and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1975)
- Kennedy, Emmet, '“Ideology” from Destutt De Tracy to Marx', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 40 (1979), 353–68
- Kitcher, Philip, and Wesley C. Salmon, eds., *Scientific Explanation*, Minnesota Studies in the

- Philosophy of Science, v. 13 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989)
- Kolakowski, Leszek, 'Althusser's Marx', *Socialist Register*, 8 (1971)
- Kuhn, Thomas S., *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996)
- Labriola, Antonio, *Socialism and Philosophy*, trans. by Ernest Untermann (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1912)
- Ladyman, James, *Understanding Philosophy of Science* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002)
- Lakatos, Imre., 'Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes', in *Philosophical Papers*, 2 vols (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), I
- , 'Science and Pseudoscience', in *Philosophical Papers*, 2 vols (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), I
- Larrain, Jorge, *Marxism and Ideology*, Contemporary Social Theory (London: Macmillan, 1983)
- , *The Concept of Ideology* (London: Hutchinson, 1979)
- Lasch, Christopher, 'Toward a Theory of Post-Industrial Society', in *Politics in the Post-Welfare State: Responses to the New Individualism*, ed. by M. Donald Hancock and Gideon Sjoberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972)
- Lenin, V. I., 'A Comparison of the Stolypin and the Narodnik Agrarian Programmes', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), XVIII, 143-48
- , 'A Talk with Defenders of Economism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), V
- , 'Lev Tolstoi and His Epoch', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), XVII
- , 'Materialism and Empirio-Criticism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), XIV
- , 'One Step Forward, Two Step Back', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), VII
- , 'Political Agitation and "the Class Point of View"', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), V
- , 'Position and Tasks of Socialist International', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), XXI
- , 'Revision of The Agrarian Programme of The Workers' Party', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), X

- , 'The Agrarian Programme of Social Democracy in the First Russian Revolution', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), XIII
- , 'The Campaign for the Elections to the Fourth Duma', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), XVII
- , 'The Conference of the R.S.D.L.P. Group Abroad', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), XXI
- , 'The Economic Content of Narodism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), I
- , 'Three Component Parts of Marxism', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), XIX
- , 'Under the False Flag', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), XXI
- , 'What Is To Be Done?', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), V
- , 'What the "Friends of the People" Are and How They Fight the Social Democrat', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), I
- , 'Where to Begin', in *Collected Works of Lenin*, 4th edn, 45 vols (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), V
- Lih, Lars T., *Lenin Rediscovered: What Is to Be Done? In Context*, Historical Materialism Book Series (Chicago, Ill. : [Minneapolis, Minn.]: Haymarket Books; Distributed by Consortium Book Sales, 2008)
- Lobkowitz, Nikolaus, *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967)
- Locke, John, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. by Ian Shapiro, Rethinking the Western Tradition (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2003)
- Lukács, György, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*, trans. by Nicholas Jacobs (London; New York: Verso, 2009)
- , 'Preface to the New Edition 1967', in *History and Class Consciousness; Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1971)
- Machamer, Peter, Lindley Darden, and Carl F. Craver, 'Thinking about Mechanisms', *Philosophy of Science*, 67 (2000), 1-25
- Mackenzie, Ian, 'Introduction: The Arena of Ideologies', in *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 3rd edn (London; New York: Routledge, 2003)

- McMurtry, John, *The Structure of Marx's World View* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1978)
- Marcuse, Herbert, *Soviet Marxism: A Critical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985)
- Margolis, Joseph, 'Praxis and Meaning: Marx's Species-Being and Aristotle's Political Animal', in *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth-Century German Social Theory and Classical Antiquity*, ed. by George E. McCarthy, Perspectives on Classical, Political, and Social Thought (Savage, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1992)
- Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. III*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1998), xxxvii
- , 'Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke and Others', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- , 'Manifesto of the Communist Party', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976), vi
- , 'The German Ideology', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v
- , 'The Poverty of Philosophy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-48*, Collected Works, 6 (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1976)
- Marx, Karl, 'Capital: A Critique of Political Economy Volume 1', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx: Capital, Vol. 1*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), xxxv
- , 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1874-83*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), xxiv
- , 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-44*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), iii
- , 'On the Jewish Question', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Marx and Engels: 1843-44*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1975), iii
- , 'Preface to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1857-61*, 50 vols (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987), xxix
- , 'Theses on Feuerbach', in *Collected Works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1845-47*, 50 vols (New York: International Publishers, 1976), v
- Matsumoto, David Ricky, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- McCarney, Joe, *The Real World of Ideology* (Brighton; Atlantic Highlands: Harvester Press;

Humanities Press, 1980)

McLellan, David, *Ideology*, Concepts in the Social Sciences (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986)

Moore, Barrington, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993)

Mouffe, Chantal, 'Hegemony and Ideology in Gramsci', in *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*, ed. by Chantal Mouffe (London; Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979)

Nielsen, Kai, 'The Concept of Ideology: Some Marxist and Non-Marxist Conceptualizations', *Rethinking Marxism*, 2.4 (1989), 146–73 <<https://doi.org/10.1080/08935698908657894>>

Pannekoek, Anton, *Marxism And Darwinism*, trans. by Nathan Weiser (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1912)

Parekh, Bhikhu C, *Marx's Theory of Ideology* (London: Croom Helm, 1982)

Petrovic, Gajo, 'Praxis', in *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, ed. by T. B. Bottomore, 2nd ed (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell Reference, 1991), pp. 435–40

Pigman, Geoffreya, 'Civilizing Global Trade: Alterglobalizers and the 'Double Movement'', in *Global Standards of Market Civilization*, ed. by Brett Bowden and Leonard Seabrooke, Routledge/RIPE Studies in Global Political Economy (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006)

Popper, Karl R., *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, 3rd ed. (revised) (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1969)

——, 'Normal Science and Its Danger', in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. by Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (presented at the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)

——, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, 2 vols (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), II

——, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002)

——, *The Poverty of Historicism*, 2nd edn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960)

——, *Unended Quest* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002)

Radek, Carl, 'Bertrand Russell's Sentimental Journey', *The Living Age*, 12 February 1921

Rancière, Jacques, *Althusser's Lesson*, trans. by Emiliano Battista (London; New York: Continuum, 2011)

Resnik, David B, 'A Pragmatic Approach to the Demarcation Problem', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part A*, 31 (2000), 249–67 <[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0039-3681\(00\)00004-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0039-3681(00)00004-2)>

Ritzer, George, 'Sociology: A Multiple Paradigm Science', *The American Sociologist*, 10.3 (1975),

156–67

- Rius, *Marx for Beginners*, trans. by Richard Appignanesi (London: Writers and Readers Pub. Cooperative Society, 1976)
- Rosenberg, Alexander, *Philosophy of Science: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy, 2nd ed (New York; London: Routledge, 2005)
- Rosenberg, Alexander, and Daniel W. McShea, *Philosophy of Biology: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge Contemporary Introductions to Philosophy (New York, NY: Routledge, 2008)
- Rudolf Carnap, *The Logical Structure of the World and Pseudoproblems in Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967)
- Ruse, Michael, *Charles Darwin* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2008)  
<<http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/9781444301366>> [accessed 29 September 2015]
- Sargent, Lyman Tower, *Contemporary Political Ideologies: A Comparative Analysis*, 8th edn (Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Pub, 1990)
- Schwarzmantel, J. J., *Ideology and Politics* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2008)
- Seliger, Martin, *The Marxist Conception of Ideology: A Critical Essay*, International Studies (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
- Shaikh, Anwar, *Capitalism: Competition, Conflict, Crises* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Sigmund, Freud, *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1920)
- Simon, Roger, *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction*, 1st publ (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982)
- Sinclair, John, ed., *Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners*, 3. ed (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 2001)
- Sosnovsky, L., 'Examining Communists', *The Living Age*, 1 October 1921
- Tabery, James G., 'Synthesizing Activities and Interactions in the Concept of a Mechanism\*', *Philosophy of Science*, 71 (2004), 1–15 <https://doi.org/10.1086/381409>
- Tang, Shiping, 'Foundational Paradigms of Social Sciences', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 41.2 (2011), 211–49 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393109355294>>
- Targ, Harry R., 'Global Dominance and Dependence, Post-Industrialism, and International Relations Theory: A Review', *International Studies Quarterly*, 20 (1976), 461–82  
<<https://doi.org/10.2307/2600095>>
- Thagard, Paul R., 'Why Astrology Is a Pseudoscience', *PSA: Proceedings of the Biennial Meeting*

*of the Philosophy of Science Association*, 1978 (1978), 223–34

*The Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, 9th ed (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

Therborn, Göran, *The Ideology of Power and the Power of Ideology* (London: NLB, 1980)

——, 'What Does the Ruling Class Do When It Rules? Some Reflections on Different Approaches To the Study of Power in Society', *Critical Sociology*, 25.2–3 (1999), 224–43 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205990250021101>>

Thomas, Paul, *Marxism and Scientific Socialism: From Engels to Althusser*, Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought, 57 (London; New York: Routledge, 2008)

Thompson, Edward P., *The Making of the English Working Class*, 1. Vintage ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1966)

Vincent, Andrew, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 3rd ed (Chichester, U.K.; Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by Talcott Parsons, Routledge Classics (London; New York: Routledge, 2001)

Williams, Howard, *Concepts of Ideology* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books [u.a.], 1988)

Yeomans, D. K., and T. Kiang, 'The Long-Term Motion of Comet Halley', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 197 (1981), 633–46 <<https://doi.org/10.1093/mnras/197.3.633>>

Žižek, Slavoj, ed., *Mapping Ideology*, Mapping (London; New York: Verso, 1994)