CHAPTER – 3

IDEOLOGY AND STRATEGIES OF LEGITIMISATION

We have discussed in the previous chapter the two interrelated aspects of Marx’s conception of ideology. The first is expressed as inverted and distorted forms of social consciousness. The second aspect is marked as legitimisation of sectional interests and relations of domination. Both the aspects of the concept of ideology found in Marx are closely related and there is an underlying unity between them.

This chapter focuses on the second aspect of Marx’s conception of ideology. The locus of this aspect also lies in *The German ideology*. This aspect unmistakably links the conception of ideology with the asymmetries of power relations in society. If distortions of reality are the necessary conditions for the concept of ideology, its support to the power relations is the sufficient condition for the concept of ideology.

The first section of this chapter discusses Marx’s concept of ideology as legitimisation of class domination. The second section discusses the relationship between the realm of ethics and the concept of ideology. The operation of ideology is linked with the manipulation of moral ideals in the service of domination. The third section discusses the strategies of legitimisations such as naturalisation, universalisation, dehistorisation, etc.
3.1 THE CONCEPT OF IDEOLOGY AS LEGITIMISATION OF CLASS DOMINATION

Marx links ideology directly to the sustenance of class domination:

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, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, 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 relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas; hence of the relationships which make the one class the ruling one, therefore, the ideas of its dominance.¹

Here it should be kept in mind that by ruling ideas Marx does not imply every type of idea, most certainly not the “ideas” of the natural sciences such as the law of thermodynamics, which was the dominating idea in the natural sciences in the mid-nineteenth century.² Rather ruling ideas denote mainly thoughts and beliefs pertaining to the nature and working of polity and society.

In the above quoted passage, two arguments can be identified.³ The first specifies the control of the means of ideological production by the ruling class. This argument is still very powerful in understanding the sociology of media and other related means of cultural production like popular music, films, photography, etc. Recent examples of its usage include books like manufacturing consent.⁴ This problematic also appeared in Althusser’s treatment of the “Ideological State Apparatus”, which includes media, school, press and family, etc.

The second argument points to the fact that the ruling ideas are the ideal expressions of dominant material relationships. We have discussed in the last section how the production relations of capitalism, based on formally free labour, generates the fetishism of commodities and money. The mechanism of this very fetishism generates the illusions of fair wage, freedom, equality, profit,
competition and individualism, etc. In this connection, Marx also provides the example of prevalence of aristocratic notions of honour, loyalty and piety in feudal societies. These notions can be explicated by the feudal production relations, which are based on bonded labour.5

The suggestion that ‘ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to the ideas of ruling class’ raises another question related to the process of subjection. Are the dominated sections of society passive recipients of thoughts of the ruling classes? More specifically, what is the relationship of the thought of ideologists with the commonsensical ideas and opinions of everyday life of the masses, which constitute popular culture? This question has two aspects. The first inquires into the relationship between everyday consciousness of masses and ideology as doctrines, created by the ideologists of the dominant class. The second aspect is concerned with the resistance of people in relation to ideologies.

In the last section, we have discussed the distinction put forward by Marx between “real existence” and “concealed essential patterns”. “Bearers and agents” of capitalist economic relations normally see only phenomenal forms. Here ideology does not amount to the ideas propounded by ideologists, but constitutes an essential part of the everyday working of a capitalist society. At the same time ideology is not merely a delusion or error, but a part of the reality itself, i.e. phenomenal aspect of reality. Marx gave another example of common person’s participation in the process of the operation of ideology:

In fact in the very garden of Eden rule the innate rights of man. There alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, say of labour power, are constrained only by their own free will. They contract as free agent, and the agreement they come to is but the form in which they give legal expressions to their common will. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent.6
The term "ideology" denotes not only the theoretical doctrine, but also forms of spontaneous consciousness. We have discussed in the last chapter that ideology exists at the core of complexity of many levels—at the level of unmediated reality, at the level of social being or alienated self-activity of human beings and at the level of social consciousness. At the level of social consciousness, it operates as theoretical consciousness as well as commonsensical ideas. However, some scholars tend to reduce the concept of ideology to only one aspect.

For example, John Torrance characterises Marx's conception of ideology as the doctrine, systematically put forward by ideologues. Torrance writes that Marx never defined ideology, but it is clear that ideology, for him, is a doctrine or theory. He defines Marx's conception of ideology as follows:

An ideology is a prescriptive theory whose prescription results from illusions engendered by social barriers to knowledge. The illusions may not directly be about society, but must be effects of society.

Thus Torrance counts two components of ideology in this definition: first, 'the prescriptive theory', second 'socially engendered illusions'. Contrary to this position, John B. Thompson rejects any attempt to define ideology as set of ideas or theories. Although Thompson does not claim to represent Marx's precise view on this matter, he asserts that there are three conceptions of ideology in Marx. One of them "the polemical conception", derived from Marx's polemics against Young Hegelians, which defines ideology as 'a theoretical doctrine and activity which erroneously regards ideas as autonomous and efficacious...'. Thompson discards this very conception and also the other conception, which he calls epiphenomenal conception of Marx.

He reworks Marx's third conception and names that as "latent conception." Thompson presents the view that any theory or doctrine per se cannot be characterised as ideology. A symbol system or set of ideas can be termed as ideological only when that is deployed for the legitimisation of power. It can be said here that Thompson, like Anthony Giddens asserts a contextual
view of ideology. According to this view, the same idea can be ideological in one context and non-ideological in another context.

Torrance's view of seeing ideology as theory generated from the social barrier to knowledge can be termed as the epistemological-genetic conception. Thompson's and Giddens' view can be characterised as functional conception for it explains ideology by the role it enacts in the sustenance of power relationships. We would consider the merit and de-merits of approach of Thompson and Giddens in chapter four. Here, we would be confined to the criticism that both the above-mentioned positions are unable to explain the link between the realm of theories and everyday life, a distinction, which certainly has a bearing on the conception of ideology.

Torrance's position shuts its eyes to the realm of everyday knowledge and overemphasises the role of theory. It also entails the idealist or dogmatic materialist fallacy of education of the masses, which we delineated earlier. It is not ideology as a theory, which percolates down to the masses from above and befools them; rather it is socially and historically situated masses themselves, who produce and reproduce ideological consciousness because of the fact of their subjection to the phenomenal forms of reality in their daily praxical engagement with power relations. Torrance admits that it is social reality, which generates ideology, but accepts only one form of it as theory.

On the other hand, Thompson claims to decipher the social uses of symbolic forms. It puts under the label of "symbolic forms" a variety of things including actions, utterances, expressions, visual images, combination of images and words, texts, etc. This enables, no doubt, one to focus on the myriad forms of popular culture, but this also puts a constraint by equating the doctrine or theory to everyday actions, utterances, images, words and sounds.

The blurring of the distinction between theory and other symbolic forms is a typical post-modernist move. If Torrance does not count forms of everyday symbolic forms in the realm of ideology, Thompson blurs the very distinction of
theory and commonsensical forms of knowledge. The realm of doctrine and the more spontaneous forms of social consciousness are distinct entities but at the same time closely related with each other. There can always be found stereotypes, narratives, jokes, etc., in short, 'half baked, diffuse, and crude ideas' in the realm of social consciousness. Ideologists give a systematic shape and reasoning to all these more or less spontaneous forms in the course of their theorizing. The forms of legitimisations, actively produced by ideologists of dominant class, caste, gender and other power relations, also enter into the realm of social beliefs and norms.

Now we come to the second aspect of the above-mentioned question. Regarding the question of the passivity of masses, we have already discussed that for Marx both the consciousness and the reality are contradictory in nature. Marx's position does not entail passivity of the subjects as he sees fetishism not as an accomplished fact, but as an ongoing process, which also has a possibility of defetishisation.

For Marx alienation is not something to be discovered in the realm of absolute spirit, but an actual state of affairs confronted directly by human beings. In The Holy Family he says:

Workers of different factories are most painfully aware of the difference between being and thinking, between consciousness and life. They know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and the like are no ideal figments of the brain but very practical, very objective products of their self-estrangement and that therefore they must be abolished in a practical, objective way for man to become man not only in thinking, in consciousness, but in mass being, in life...Critical Criticism, on the contrary, teaches them that they cease in reality to be wage-workers if in thinking they abolish the thought of wage-labour.

This also means that every agent, who participates in social life, has a minimal level of knowledge of those structures, which s/he reproduces. In this passage, the difference between the resolution of alienation in consciousness and the resolution of the same at the level of reality is articulated. Marx introduced the importance of the concepts of praxis and activity as the
mediation between being and thinking and as the basis of potential resolution of
relations of domination. Overall, it can be said that for Marx human praxis is the
category, which on the one hand prevents the reduction of being to knowing,
characteristic of idealism and the reduction of knowing to being, characteristic
of mechanical materialism.

At this point, the question arises: does reality deceive the subject and
produces a passive ideological consciousness. Is the subject a very passive
entity and has no role in the state of affairs? Marx hints at a more complex
relationship operating at the site of ideological reality. It is not the case that
phenomenal forms impose themselves on consciousness mechanically, but
through the praxis of situated individuals: Ideology should not be described
merely as imaginary tales designed by the subject. Nor it is a mechanical
imposition of phenomenal reality on a passively structured subject. Larrain
explains:

Phenomenal forms are spontaneously reproduced in
consciousness, not as an unavoidable, automatic result, but as a
consequence of men's own result in the reproductive practice which
produces them.

Ideology as the fetishism of consciousness operates on the one hand at
the level of objective reality and on the other hand at the level of human being's
praxical engagements. Here a hint at the subjection of the human being by the
process of exchange can be noticed, which has developed in the problematic of
subjection or interpellation in the structural Marxism of Althusser.

Moreover, in Marx's scheme there is a place for criticism of ideology and
its subversive practice. Ideology cannot be destroyed by mere criticism, but it
does not mean that there is no place for theoretical engagements in the wider
realm of revolutionary practice. Marx holds the position that ideology cannot be
overcome by the simple wish of ignoring or suppressing appearance, because
appearance is constitutive of reality itself. Without abolishing the social relations
as the source of appearance, nothing could be achieved. This is the reason
Marx rejects any utopian overcoming of ideology. Theoretical unmasking of
phenomenal forms certainly contributes in the exercise of practical resolution of ideology. Marx remarks that ‘once the interconnection is grasped, all theoretical belief in the permanent necessity of existing conditions collapses before their collapse in practice.’

Theoretical exposition can motivate one towards the realization that s/he should see beyond the surface level and should not treat the representation of reality as independent and autonomous from reality. Here it can be recalled that for Marx the category of essence is not static or fixed, but as a historical one, which can be expressed, as we have discussed in the last section, as the “ensemble of social relations.”

Turning to the problematic of the “ruling class” again, it must be emphasised that this expression consists of two aspects. The first is related to classes, which hold the dominant position in society by virtue of their domination in the sphere of economic relations. Secondly, the ruling class refers to the control of state power, i.e. political rule. Both aspects are closely related in the sense that those who are dominant in the production relations also control state power for the maintenance of existing forms of economic relations. State power serves the interests of ruling class. But for Marx the state is not merely a passive instrument of the ruling class. At least since The German Ideology the state has life of its own. This implies that the State apparatus is not oppressive simply because of being instrument of the ruling classes. The state would remain oppressive even in the hands of socialist or proletarian ruling classes, because the very nature of state makes it oppressive. That’s why it needs constant legitimisation. Even coercive apparatus of state like military, police and jail need legitimisation in the name of law. However, the ruling class's understanding or definition of law and order prevails finally.

The state is not merely an instrument, it might attain “relative autonomy” by striking balance between the conflicting sections of the ruling class and ensuring stability in social order. D.P. Chattopadhyaya calls it ‘the possibility of
the battle of ideas and ideologies within the state-structure, which itself is an expression of the irreconcilability of different class-interests.\textsuperscript{24} These functions of the state can be characterised as its ideological function, by which it projects sectional interests of dominants as general interests of all.

For this reason, the capitalist state should be understood not merely as the state of the capitalist class, but as state of capital and the defender of property relations.\textsuperscript{25} This non-instrumentalist characterisation of the state compels us to have a second look at the above-quoted passage of Marx. By the statements ‘ideas of ruling class are the ruling ideas’ Marx does not mean that every idea of the ruling class is ideological. Nor does it implicate that ruling class sustains itself by any conspiracy or strategy. Larrain argues that the ‘class origin of ideas is not a sufficient condition to make them ideological.’\textsuperscript{26}

Marx’s approach looks at the emergence and mutation of classes in a historical process. He sees the process of ideology as a historical phenomenon. In \textit{Theories of Surplus Value}, Karl Marx distinguishes between the ‘ideological component parts of the ruling class’ and the ‘free spiritual production of this particular social formation’.\textsuperscript{27} He cites art and poetry as the instance of the later: ‘for instance, capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production, for example, art and poetry’.\textsuperscript{28} In this context, Marx also observes that ‘certain periods of the highest development of art stand in no direct connection with general development of society, not with the material basis and the skeleton structure of its organisations.’\textsuperscript{29} Marx clearly distinguishes between ‘the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic—in short, ideological forms’ and ‘the material transformation of the economic condition of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science.’\textsuperscript{30}

Marx’s comment on the common struggle of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat against feudal forces is important in this respect. At that time, the interest of the new ruling class bourgeoisie also represented the interest of exploited classes including the peasants and proletariat. However, after the
emergence of a new social order based on the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and proletariat the same ideas became ideological by concealing, naturalising and legitimising new forms of power. Marx comments:

Their real contradictions were not yet developed. What at time was an adequate expression of the real position is today merely an escape from the existing situation. What had substance then is today just a relic.\(^{31}\)

It means that ideology arises only after the emergence of contradictions, which are consequently veiled. The above-stated instrumentalist approach to the phenomena of the state, in fact, generates the same approach to ideology, in which ideology is seen as manipulative and strategic. In this approach, the media, academic establishments and other means of intellectual production lose their relative autonomy. This approach forgets that ideology is not the creation of the mind. Simultaneously there is always the phenomenon of fragmentation, contradiction and discord within the realm of the ruling class itself, which the state and ideology try to iron out. We can recall here Marx’s criticism of the “defects” of Feuerbachian materialism, which fails to perceive human sensuous activity and practice.

Contrary to the instrumental conception, for Marx, the state too is a fetishised form of a social relation, inseparable from the contemporary production relations. Thus, instead of speaking about the state in feudal society or the state in capitalist society, one should speak of the feudal state or the capitalist state.\(^{32}\) Besides, the separation of the political sphere from the economic sphere of society is itself an ideological mechanism. The separation exists only at the phenomenal level. The separation of the political from the economic realm of private property provides the semblance of neutrality to the state. In this process, the division of labour and bureaucratic procedures related to the state are reified and people’s own products begin to control them in the form of political fetishism, similar to the process of commodity fetishism.\(^ {33}\)

In this sense, the state itself is viewed as an ideological or inverted entity. Claude Lefort argues that Marx linked the notion of ideology with the
concealment of social divisions, characteristic of modern capitalism. He says in this context:

The denial of class division, articulated with the division of social labour; the denial of temporal division, the destruction-production of forms of social relations; and finally, the denial of the division between knowledge and practice that it reflects, and on the basis of which it is instituted as such.\textsuperscript{34}

According to Marx, forging a representation of its unity is an essential condition for the existence of any human society. The restricted social relations to which we referred earlier as "limited mode of activity", project an imaginary community, which presents real, particular and historical relations in naturalised, universal and atemporal forms.\textsuperscript{35}

It can be argued here that this can be called as a process of legitimisation. All three above-mentioned processes of naturalization, universalisation and dehistoricisation can be expressed as a process of legitimisation, because all three processes provide the justification for the relation of domination. It can also be argued because of this it is wrong to assume that the problematic of legitimisation was not present in Marx. However, Marx does not give this process the name of legitimisation.

As we have discussed earlier, one important aspect of Marx's theory of ideology is its link with the phenomena of division of labour. The division between mental and manual labour is the key to understand the semblance of "pure theory". Marx comments in this context:

Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, priests, is coincident)...From now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy, morality, etc.\textsuperscript{36}

Here Marx attributes the genesis of ideology to the process of division of labour. He describes the division of labour in his early writings as 'the
estranged, alienated positing of human activity as a real activity of the species or as activity of man as a species-being.37

In the context of the above-mentioned passage on the self-estrangement of labour, it should be contended that for Marx the working and capitalist classes constitute the necessary condition for their mutual existence and destruction. The destruction of category of capital entails the destruction of category of labour as well. Division of labour dehumanises not merely the dominant classes, but everyone in society. Regarding the effect of alienation on the classes, Marx observes:

The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-estrangement. But the former class feels at ease and strengthened in this self-estrangement, it recognises estrangements as its own power and has in it the semblance of a human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in estrangement; it sees in it its own powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence.38

Under the reign of the division of labour, human beings do not overpower their profession or the occupation, but are overpowered by them. Their personality and potentiality of free activity is generally moulded by social relations, which are themselves mediated and truncated by the mode of division of labour. Marx observes that labour not only produces commodities; it also produces itself and the workers as a commodity—and this at the same rate at which it produces commodities in general.39 In this context, He further observes:

If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation. In the estrangement of the object of labour is merely summarised, the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself.40

In the Manuscripts of 1844, Marx discusses the four characteristics of the process of alienation:
In estranging from man (1) nature, and (2) himself, his own active functions, his life activity... estranged labour turns thus: (3) man's species-being, both nature and his spiritual species-property, into a being alien to him, into a means for his individual existence. It estranges from man his own body, as well as external nature and his spiritual aspect, his human aspect. (4) An immediate consequence of man's estrangement from the product of his labour, his life activity, his species-being, is the estrangement of man from man.41

What is the difference between Marx and Hegel on this count? Bhuvan Chandel observes:

Unlike Hegel, for whom man was alienated from himself in proportion to the degree in which he still fell short of being one with the Absolute, Marx held that man is alienated from himself as a consequence of historically conditioned striving for the capitalistic absolute.42

In this reference, it can be recalled that Marx criticizes Hegel for identifying objectification with alienation, thus presenting historically specific forms of objectification with the "self-alienation of an absolute subject." This Hegelian position excludes any possibility of a 'non-alienated mode of human objectification'.43 Marx sees the process of objectification as the externalisation of humanity in nature and society. Alienation takes place in a situation of commodity production where humans externalise themselves, in such a way that their own activity becomes alien and oppressive to them. Marx characterises the emergence and continuation of institutions like religion, the state and money as alienated "pseudo-essences" of humanity. This alienated "pseudo-essence", in turn, dominates and devours them. Marx also mentions Hegelian the idea of labour as the essence of humans (menschliche Wesen):

Hegel’s standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps labour as the essence of man— as man’s essence, which stands the test: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labour. Labour is man's coming-to-be for himself within alienation, or as alienated man.44

Marx calls the non-alienated or non-fetishised form of activity "praxis" in his earlier writings and "self-activity" in his later writings.45 In this sense, praxis
is a mode of self-activity through which humans freely and universally create, recreate and transform their environment and themselves. Two questions can be raised concerning this position. If human beings are historically situated and thus alienated, then how it can possible for them to freely and universally create the world. Then, are underlying assumptions of the concept of praxis like "freedom", "universality" and "creativity" purely normative and thus unrealizable? To both questions Gajo Petrovic's response is that the concept of praxis is neither descriptive nor normative, but which indicates basic human potentialities, something distinguished 'both from what simply is and from what merely ought to be.'

Marx also discusses ideologists who produce dogmas, beliefs and illusions in the service of their respective classes. Ideologists do not do this always wittingly. Marx gives the example of the German ideologists, whose idealism and contemplative materialism helped the sustenance of system by obliterating the social origin of their ideas. Marx sees the German ideologists as bounded unconsciously with the interest of the middle class as against the interest of the working class. For Marx ideologists play an active role in concealing the contradictions of the ongoing class conflict. He gives example of the doctrine of the separation of power, on which modern parliamentary bourgeois democracy is founded. Marx writes:

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 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."

It emerges from this statement that Marx deals with the phenomena of ideology at two levels, first at the level of institutional analysis or the level of
social being, regarding which we discussed earlier and second at the level of the strategic conduct of active ideologist, who constitutes the section of spokespersons and apologists of class domination. 49

Marx provides an interesting distinction between active ideologists and more or less passive members of a class. Division of labour is such an endemic virus of class societies that it operates even in the upper echelon. Marx writes in this context:

The division of labour, which we already saw above 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 perfecting of the illusion 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. 50

However it should be made clear that Marx does not simply says that every person working in intellectual establishments is an agent of the ruling class, for the reason that these institutions reflect also the contradiction of society, which is itself divided into dominating and dominated class. These institutions, especially under bourgeois liberal regimes also assert their "relative autonomy". Simultaneously, the class origin of individuals does not directly recruit one into the rank of ideologist, because for Marx there is always a chance for an individual to rise above the interests of the class s/he belongs.

It can be said that the concept of the division of labour is the link between the aforementioned conception of inverted forms of social consciousness and the conception of legitimisation of sectional interests and relations of power. The concept of division of labour on the one hand links ideology to the alienated forms of human praxis and thus to the inversion of human subjectivity and on the other hand links the concept to the materiality of means of intellectual production and thus to the process of legitimisation of domination.
The division of labour and the category of social divisions works as underlying structures for the process of ideology formation.

3.2 IDEOLOGY, ETHICS AND FORMS OF LEGITIMISATION

How do theories function as ideology in society? We will now discuss this question with reference to ethics. We would restrict ourselves to the discussion of ethics and would not go to the other areas, disciplines, or theories. We would also be confined to the relationship of ideology with the realm of morality; and would not attempt to provide an exhaustive treatment of Marx' theory of ethics or his normative theory, which is an area of independent research.51

We have discussed the processes by which ideology holds the mind of those whose interests are undermined by it. We have also seen how ideology levels social contradictions and projects them as natural. The question arises: how do ruling ideas sublimate their interest-bound character in the forms of morality, theology, economics and other doctrinaire or commonsensical forms? Marx points towards the ideological function of theories, when he comments that ‘all economists share the error of examining surplus value not as such, in its pure form, but in the particular forms of profit and rent.’52

He also remarks that ‘in their appearance things often represent themselves in inverted form is pretty well known in every science except “Political Economy”’.53 We have discussed earlier the epistemic fallacy of reducing of being to knowing and also the speculative fallacy of the separation of the realm of ideas from social reality. Philosophical theories and ideas, after their emergence out of social relations obliterate successfully the birthmarks. Marx explains this process of wiping out of the footsteps:

Relations can be expressed only in ideas, and thus philosophers have determined the reign of ideas to be the peculiarity of new age... This error was all the more easily committed, from the ideological standpoint. As this reign exercised by the relations...
appears within the consciousness of individuals as the reign of ideas.54

It implies that if philosophers start from the reign of abstract ideas, the economist can be obsessed with the reign of things.55 We have seen above that Marx links the ‘formation of “pure” theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc.’ to a division of material and intellectual labour. He also called these ideological. We have quoted another passage in which he says ‘morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology’ cannot be separated from the material intercourse of human beings. In these passages, Marx presented morality as an example of ideology. What does it mean? Is he simply saying that moral norms, outlooks or ideals are not some kind of ungrounded didactic statements and rather should be considered as contextual and as the outcome and reflection of social and historical condition? This is, in short, a historical approach to morality rather than a moral approach to history.56

Nevertheless, this alone must not be the reason for discussing morality as the basis of ideology, as we have already discussed that Marx’s approach is not simply based on the sociology of knowledge. When Marx’s approach is viewed within the framework of positivist dichotomy of fact and values, then it looks like on the one hand as an ethical and moralizing doctrine and on the other hand a kind of moral relativism, ‘anti-moralism or moral- scepticism, which has the effect of rejecting all values as mere “ideological illusions”’.57

Steven Lukes suggests that there are basically two kinds of conceptions of morality in Marx: ‘it is the morality of Recht that it condemns as ideology and anachronistic, and the morality of emancipation that it adopts as its own.’58 Here morality of Recht refers to principles of justice and rights, which are relative to not only existing social relations, but also have an imprint of legal and juridical ideologies linked to the state and ruling classes. In *Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, Marx shows:

[Hegel] expounds the civil law and morality as such abstractions; from this he does not deduce that the state and the ethical life based on them can be nothing but the society (the social life) of
these illusion, but on the contrary, he concludes that they are subordinate elements of this ethical life. But what is civil law other that the law, and what is morality other than the morality of these subjects of the state?\textsuperscript{59}

Further, in \textit{The Jewish Question} he says:

None of the so-called rights of man, therefore, go beyond egoistic man, beyond man as a member of civil society -- that is, an individual withdrawn into himself, into the confines of his private interests and private caprice, and separated from the community.\textsuperscript{60}

Moral ideals are most often expressed in the form of \textit{impartial, universal and elevated} forms, but actual history of changes in norms of societies reveals that these lofty values have also been used for the sustenance of slavery, racism, casteism, suppression of women, exploitation of workers and other relations of domination. The realm of rights and duties in every society links with the asymmetries of power relations.\textsuperscript{61} Marx's insistence can be understood in the context of his statement that 'morality, religion, metaphysics and all the rest of ideology... have no history, no development.' These spheres have no history, which is independent of 'material activity and material intercourse. Idealists confer sociality of man exclusively to the realm of consciousness that remain autonomous and unmediated from materiality.\textsuperscript{62}

In this context, DP Chattopadhyaya observes that for Kant 'morality and justice based on Good Will are products of absolutely free rationality of man'. In his attempt to shield the concept of Good Will 'both from social existence and human existence', he ultimately 'dehistoricises and dehumanises anthropology.' If the 'free rational man' of Kant is the legislator of 'universal morality', 'in the rational philosophy of Hegel the world spirit finds its consummation.\textsuperscript{63}

The exploited classes accept even those ideas, which go against their interests, just because of the ostensible neutrality, independence and disinterestedness of moral ideas. The above-discussed phenomena of division between mental or intellectual and physical labour explains how ideologists attain semblance of neutrality in the eyes of the masses. Rosen remarks that
'the ideologist, on this view, is like a bribed referee: able to influence the outcome of a game all the more effectively for the fact that he is falsely believed to be impartial.'\textsuperscript{64} It must be made clear that Rosen used this analogy to explain only the efficacy of the ideology.

Rosen raises a point that according to Marx, ideologists sincerely have a faith in the independence of their ideas and this faith gives them a persuasive force. Then the question arises that if the ideologist is biased towards the interest of the ruling class, then how at the same time he remains 'sincerely unaware' of the fact of his interest-bound character. Rosen asks, 'why do they think that they are independent when in fact they are not?'\textsuperscript{65} It seems to us on the account of Marx's various comments that Marx perceives it on both levels—firstly, at the level of strategic conduct of ideologist and secondly, at the level of institutional and existential materiality. This approach keeps the possibility for both the situations, firstly, the ideologist being aware of his complicity, and secondly, the ideologist being unaware of his role in the legitimisation of existing system.

A third possibility can also arise, in which the ideologist can act in a state of "bad faith". Nevertheless, even when he knows the fact of his inclination and his bias, he can still claim to be objective and neutral. For a liberal thinker, bourgeois democracy can be a conscious political choice and a matter of commitment against other alternative forms of governments, which s/he considers as totalitarian. This does not necessarily have an effect on his perceived sincerity and independence.

Slovaj Žižek gives a new turn to this question, when he explains the cynical frankness of the ideologist of post-modern times. It should also be noted here that Marx does not rule out the possibility of attainment of a "relative autonomy" by these ideological spheres. Simultaneously for Marx the constituents elements of bourgeois rights are such 'principles', with which 'practice' of the very capitalist society remains at loggerheads.\textsuperscript{66}
Marx does not restrict himself to the division of mental and physical labour, but further conceives the division of intellectual production as consisting of different and often conflicting disciplines. Each discipline applies 'different and even opposite yardsticks' to human being and 'each stands in an estranged relation to other.' Marx asks:

Do I obey economic laws if I extract money by offering my body for sale... — Then the political economist replies to me: You do not transgress my laws; but see what Cousin Ethics and Cousin Religion have to say about it. My political economic ethics and religion have nothing to reproach you with, but — But whom am I now to believe, political economy or ethics? — The ethics of political economy is acquisition, work, thrift, sobriety — but political economy promises to satisfy my needs. —The political economy of ethics is the opulence of a good conscience, of virtue, etc; but how can I live virtuously if I do not live? And how can I have a good conscience if I do not know anything? It stems from the very nature of estrangement that each sphere applies to me a different and opposite yardstick — ethics one and political economy another; for each is a specific estrangement of man and focuses attention on a particular field of estranged essential activity, and each stands in an estranged relation to the other.67

Political economy sees humans from the viewpoint of private property and labour, whereas ethics asserts an abstract concept of humanity. Marx exposes the hypocrisy behind the division of disciplines:

Political Economy regards the proletarian ... like a horse; he must receive enough to enable him to work. It does not consider him, during the time when he is not working, as a human being. It leaves this to criminal law, doctors, religion, statistical tables, politics, and to the poorhouse overseer.68

This results in the fact that 'the same complex phenomenon remains hidden from the representatives of both speculative, moralising philosophy and empiricist political economy'69 On this Bhuvan Chandel remarks:

Marx criticises the ethics of political economy for being the ethics of acquisition and existential egotism, of self-denial, the denial of life and all human needs. He calls it the science of asceticism for which the highest moral ideal is the worker and not the man.70
In the context of Marx's approach towards morality and ideology, it is useful to discuss his notion of the human essence (das menschliche Wesen). Unlike Feuerbach Hegel's approach overall does not suffer from the danger of the dissolution of ontology into anthropology. This is one of the reasons that Marx finds Hegel more of use for his historical approach even though in Hegel, the movement of history manifests abstractly, speculatively and logically. Marx's dialectical method conceives 'the specific anthropological factor (humanity)' based on 'historically developing ontological totality (of nature)'. Ignorance of this dialectical relationship leads to the notion of a 'fixed human essence' and then to the denial of all historicity as happened in the case of Feuerbach right up to structuralism.

As has been discussed earlier, the notion of "fixed human nature" has a history of its ideological employment. Marx remarks in the sixth thesis on Feuerbach:

Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality, it is the ensemble of the social relations. Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is hence obliged: 1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract- isolated- human individual. 2. Essence, therefore, can be regarded only a "species", as an inner, mute, general character which unites the many individuals in a natural way.

We do not intend to go into the details of the debate that was generated around the exact status of the notion of human essence in Marx. Nevertheless, for the sake of explanation, it can be said that there is a change in the emphasis in Marx after the Theses on Feuerbach (1845). Before that, he emphasizes on the species character of humanity, the realization of which, however, is not possible in alienated social relations. In Theses on Feuerbach, Marx sees the essence only as an 'ensemble of the social relations', which is historically transient. In The German Ideology, he says:
This restricted character of development consists not only in the exclusion of one class from development, but also in the narrow-mindedness of the excluding class and the 'inhuman' is to be found also within the ruling class... The positive expression 'human' corresponds to the determinate predominant relations appropriate to a certain stage of production and to the way of satisfying needs determined by them. Just as the negative expression "inhuman" corresponds to the attempt to negate these predominant relations and the way of satisfying needs prevailing under them without changing the existing mode of production, an attempt that this stage of production daily engenders afresh.  

Contrary to Althusser's reading, Marx does give up the idea of human essence altogether. Firstly, his theory is not vulnerable to historicism and secondly, the notion of human essence provides, in a way, the vision of radical societal change. Marx provides a historical and social grounding to Feuerbach's abstract human. Bhuvan Chandel suggests:

Marx makes a distinction between the essence of man and the existence of man, i.e. the original human nature or the true self of the man and the man as “becoming” subject.  

This implies that Marx's dialectical method avoids both the philosophical positions of his time— rationalism or metaphysical apriorism and empiricism in dealing with the question of the human essence. Marx's sixth thesis, therefore, should be read in association with his above-discussed concept of creative praxis or self-activity of humans, which manifests concretely in 'the ensemble of social relations', i.e., the actually existing society— in class societies in its inverted or alienated form. This relates to Marx's vision of the establishment of "self-derived humanism" or communist society, which finds mention in his later writing as the mode of associated producers, in which self-activity would replace labour.

When Marx talks about human essence as an 'ensemble of social relations', then he not only alters the notion of man, but also reworks the notion of essence. For him essence is not just an idea or an abstraction. If we see the interrelationship between three overlapping domains— "ensemble", "social", and "relations", then it reveals that Marx transcends on the one hand a realist
position that ‘genus or essence precedes the existence of individual’ and on the other hand a nominalist position that ‘individuals are the primary reality, from which universals are “abstracted”.’

One can witness a shift in Marx’s terminology after 1845. For example, the concept of “self-activity” is preferred to the concept of “human essence”, however, at the same time “self-activity” has an affinity with “conscious life activity” of the 1844 Manuscripts. For Marx the human being is a unique person and a social being at the same time as he remarks that ‘above all we must avoid postulating “society” again as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual.’ Here we can recall a passage from Capital, which sums up the historical potentiality of human emancipation:

In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour, which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations, ceases... Freedom in this field can only consist in socialised man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of Nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of, their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite.

Now we come to the question that what is the relationship between the conception of morality and historical development of theory of alienation. István Mészáros explores this relationship and discusses it in four phases. The first phase, ranged from Rousseau to Schiller, which was the result of the advent of directly alienating capitalistic production. Rousseau did not perceive the material causes behind this dehumanisation. He critically engaged with the phenomena by taking recourse to the moralizing educational appeal to resist corruption, calculation, temptation of wealth and profit. He advises ‘to follow the natural course’ of moderation instead of becoming a victim of all these vices. This ought-centeredness and emphasis on moral education was followed by
Kant who, however, introduced a new element in it by insisting that 'ought implies can'. Skillen comments that in both Bentham and Kant 'we find a debasing ideology of natural desire on the one hand and an aggrandisingly sublimated account of that which regulates desire on the other.' The problematic of the voice of conscience and Schiller’s principles of aesthetic education can also be seen as advancement over merely moral appeals.

The second phase begins with Hegel, who ‘approaches the question of a transcendence of alienation not as a matter of moral ousht but as that of an inner necessity,’ as inherent in the actual dialectical movement of the absolute mind. The utopian socialists constitute the third phase by relating the moral condemnation with the criticism of existing social relations. In this backdrop, Marx appears who gave an ontological foundation to the phenomena of alienation and discusses it concretely. In this context, Marx’s comment in Theses on Feuerbach can be recalled:

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that the educator must himself be educated.

We have discussed in the first chapter that philosophers before Marx and especially Enlightenment thinkers were obsessed with the role of the educator, who, they thought, can rescue the masses from the ills of money, conceit and other vices and temptations. This educator was conceived in a sense, outside of the crisis-ridden society and above the masses, so the question of education or ‘grounding’ of the educator did not arise before Marx.

3.3 IDEOLOGY, POWER AND FORMS OF LEGITIMISATIONS

While discussing power, a distinction can be made between power-to and power-over. Power-to expresses transformative capacity associated with the concept of action. Power-over may be termed as domination. Power-to is
related to the 'can-ness, capacity-to-do, the ability to do things.' Power-to is connected with doing, thus is inherently social in character. One's doing presupposes and anticipates the doings of others. On the other hand, power-over or domination fractures the social flow of doing. Domination estranges the doer from the process of doing and its objectification, i.e., done. In this way, power-to in its estranged form sustains power-over.

Michael Foucault conceptualises power as 'multiplicity of force relations.' He was against the seeing of power in binary terms. Nevertheless, his microphysics of power excludes the possibility of human emancipation. Unlike this Nietzschean view of power, the theory of historical materialism does not see relations of dominations as immutable or permanent features of social-historical life. We will discuss Foucault's view of power in chapter 6 in detail. Holloway asserts that the notion of emancipation assumes not only antagonism but also the unity in the power relations. It leads us to the realisation that ultimately capital depends on labour, done depends on doing, the powerful depend on the powerless.

This entails a dialectical relationship between power-to and power-over. This relationship of power-to and power-over and doing and done does not exclude the possibility of multiple forms of domination in society. There are many forms of power in society. These cannot be reduced to any single form of power, but at the same time, the underlying unity of the power relations should not be ignored. In fact, the very logic of power-over or domination fragments social relations.

If we apply this insight to the actual resistance-movements, then we find two one-sided tendencies. The first, characteristic of new social movements, sees no interrelation between different identities and power relations. The second, the orthodox Marxist position tends to reduce all forms of power into class domination. However, there is a growing realization that one form of inequality or exploitative relation reinforces these types of other relations. The exploitative capitalism not only degrades humans and turns subjects into...
things, and things into subjects, but also sustains and maintains relations of patriarchy, caste hegemony, environmental degradation, war and colonialism. Therefore, there emerges the question of the solidarity of various organized and scattered, planned and spontaneous resistances and movements.

The above lacuna of Foucault's theory also manifests in the perspective and programmes of new social movements. These movements and resistances usually have no theory of the centralised power of the state. The theory of the state needs an understanding of production relations and political economy. The state cannot be understood only as a form of patriarchal or varna relations. One may ask: is there not intersection of class with gender, caste, etc? Is the patriarchal subjugation of women not related with the non-recognition and non-payment of domestic labour as productive labour?

On the other hand, the orthodox conception of class tends to collapse the oppression of women, dalit, and adivasi into the problem of class and exploitation, while ignoring the specificities and relative autonomy of these forms of domination. They perhaps pretend that there are no such categories such as white workers, brahmin worker, male workers, etc.

Therefore, the concept of domination includes, not only power relations concerning class, but also concerning caste, race, gender and political and bureaucratic apparatus, etc. These power relations have the structural or institutional aspects as well as the aspects of interaction of 'situated persons' during the course of daily lives. The sites of these interactions may include homes, the work places, educational institutions, clubs, factories, and other socio-spatial settings.

Domination through coercive means or through rewards is rather visible. However, in actual life, domination is never so overt. It is secured not always by tanks, censorships, and prisons, but also by turning a person's psyche into a prison, i.e., normative prison. It may be emphasised that less the magnitude of coercion used in power relationship, the more it is prevailing at the compliance.
Power is in particular need of moral legitimisation because of its inherently constraining and repressive character. However, in actual life-processes coercive and legitimised power structures do not operate in complete isolation from one another, but in a complex companionship. Moreover, the degree of legitimisation varies from situation to situation e.g. from an absolute consent to more pragmatic or sceptical acceptance. The hidden sides of power are more complex, subtle, sophisticated and mystified and for that very reason difficult to resist.

The conception of ideology refers to the manipulation of norms and meaning in favour of the dominant sections of society. Dominations, norms and meanings should not be conceived in total isolation and exclusion of each other. Signification is structured in and through language. At the same time, codes involved in signification have normative force. Language and normative sanctions also incorporate differential of power. Further, domination is mobilised in connection with signifying normative elements. Finally, legitimisation involves normative regulation and signification to establish as well as sustain power relations. Hence, communication, domination and legitimisation should to be grasped in connection with each other.92

Legitimised power is linked with ideology not coincidently but necessarily. As distinct from coercive power, it is an ideologically constituted power. The concept of legitimised domination involves framework of shared norms and meanings through which dominated see their dominants as possessing the right to dominate.

The process of ideological subjection uses many strategies, which can also be termed as strategies of legitimisation. John B. Thompson discusses the strategies of symbolic construction as modes of operation of ideology.93 While explaining the process of ideological subjection Murzban Jal suggests that ideology has to be seen in two perspectives: 1. Ideology as “projected lack”, where ideology is seen as the estrangement of the human essence, and 2. fetishized perception, which articulates ideological consciousness as emanating
from reified bourgeois existence. As bourgeois existence is based on the bi-polarity of use-value and value, where use-value is negated to posit the ghostly value form, so too consciousness develops a bi-polar form with its distinct dualism of material/ideal, social/natural and historical/anti-history; followed by the erasure of the former elements in each binary set to produce a psychotic-phantasmagorical consciousness. Ideology thus becomes an idealized anti-historical ghost.  

This implies that ideologies represents particular as general or universal, social as natural, the contingent as necessary, the profane as sacred, the effect as cause. The other ideological strategies includes the confusion between the relative with the absolute; presentation of the relation of analogy (A is like B) as with identity (A is B).

Ideology legitimises power relations by representing sectional interests of dominants as universal ones. For example, when patriarchal ideology advocate against the working of women in the public sphere, it argues that ‘family’ life would be disturbed. Here the interest of the male is represented as the interest of the family.

Another strategy for the legitimisation of domination is the representation of social or cultural as natural. For example, the unequal social division of labour between male and female is represented as given and eternal. The reifying of the present makes it taken-for granted. There is yet another legitimizing strategy, which is termed as metaphysical mystification. Sometimes subjugated sections explain their domination in terms of some supernatural phenomena such as will of the God, fate, the forces of underworlds, etc. Tommie Shelby says:

Those who embrace such ideologies insist that their beliefs cannot be refuted by ordinary empirical evidence or reasoned argument, since the apprehension of their truth is allegedly beyond the reach of science, logic, or rational disputation.
Even when there is no supernatural phenomena is involved, subjected human beings tend to view certain historical-social entities as if they are God-like creatures. In the context of human being’s subjection to the mystified sources of authorities, Max Horkheimer observes:

Well-informed cynicism is only another mode of conformity. These people willingly embrace or force themselves to accept the rule of the stronger as the eternal norm. Their whole life is a continuous effort to suppress and abase nature, inwardly or outwardly, and to identify themselves with its more powerful surrogates—the race, fatherland, leader, cliques, and tradition. For them, all these words mean the same thing—the irresistible reality that must be honored and obeyed. However, their own natural impulses, those antagonistic to the various demands of civilization, lead a devious undercover life within them.

All these modes of legitimisation have a power of mystification, which indicate towards epistemological and cognitive distortions. However, not every cognitive distortion has the effect of legitimisation. Here the context of cognitive distortion is equally important. If a mystification sustains a power relationship, then only it works ideologically. We can also recall here that Marx links the power of appearance not to the incapacity of human consciousness, but to the ‘limited material mode of activity’, which we discussed earlier. This limited mode of activity also conceals the ‘real character of practice itself’.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:


10 Thompson describes this conception as follows: 'ideology is a system of representations which serves to sustain existing relations of class domination by orienting individuals towards the past rather than the future, or towards images and ideals which conceals class relations and detract from the collective pursuit of social change.' See, ibid, p. 41.


18 Ibid, p. 60.


22 Here we are not going into the detail of the positions that either prescribe the withering away of state or advocate a minimal state. We are concerned at this point only with the characterisation of state.

See ibid. It should be added here that art or literature is not completely free of ideological motifs and can be employed in the service of power relations, but these levels enjoy an ‘distinct’ autonomy from the production relations of the time. For Marx arts as the manifestation of human creativity can exercise ‘an eternal charm’ as he cites the example of Greek art, but at the same time art cannot be immune to the time of its creation, as reflects in changing styles of art work with the change of material relations of society. On the one hand, art expresses the non-alienating human essence, but on the other hand, it can be commoditised in given circumstances. This consideration, however, is not applicable to the realm of aesthetics which being a form of theory is more vulnerable to the charges of ideology.


Ibid, pp. 91-8.


Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 'The German Ideology', pp. 44-45.


Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism, p. 43.

Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844, p. 68.
44 Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, p 141.
49 Here we employed the distinction between institutional analysis and strategic conduct, suggested by Anthony Giddens. He, however, did not apply it to the works of Marx. See Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, pp. 190-192.
55 See ibid, p. 59.
57 Steven Lukes quoted in Ibid, p. 113
58 Ibid, p. 125

62 D. P. Chattopadhyaya, _Sri Aurobindo and Karl Marx: Integral Sociology and Dialectical Sociology_, p. 270.


66 Karl Marx cited in Ibid, p. 41.

67 Karl Marx, _Economic and Philosophic Manuscript of 1844_, pp. 113-114.

68 Ibid, p. 28.


70 Bhuvan Chandel, _Marxian Ethics_, p. 80.


72 See ibid, p. 43.


75 Bhuvan Chandel, _Marxian Ethics_, p. 49.


77 Étienne Balibar, _The Philosophy of Marx_, pp. 29-30.

78 Lawrence Wilde, _Ethical Marxism and its Radical Critics_, p. 21.

79 Karl Marx, _Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844_, p. 99.


81 See István Mészáros, _Marx’s Theory of Alienation_, pp. 59-64.

84 See ibid, p. 62.
85 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, ‘Theses on Feuerbach’, p. 4.
88 See ibid, pp. 34-42.
89 See ibid, pp. 38-39.
91 See ibid, pp. 32-42, and 72-75.
92 Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory*, pp. 81-83, and 97-99
95 See Peter Railton, ‘Morality, ideology, and Reflection; or, The Duck Sits Yet’, p. 131.