

Lecture: Mills

- Most controversial claim: that ideal theory is an **ideology** (in the pejorative sense).
- Perhaps most accurate to say that the distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory doesn't survive close scrutiny.
- Using tools and argumentative strategies developed by ideal theory and use them in different way.
 - Instead of asking what people would think abstracting away from oppression, ask what they would think knowing those facts about the world.

- Options that Mills rejects.
 - **Particularism**: there are no general moral claims; particular features of situations in which questions arise determine the answers.
 - **Relativism**: general claims can only be correct relative to some perspective
 - Mills' basis for rejection is at least as much political as anything else
 - Giving up generality and objectivity is giving up the leverage to make forceful critiques of the status quo.
- If not ideal theory, then what?
 - Needs to be:
 - Suitably general & objective, but still
 - Intended for mapping/understanding the non-ideal reality.
 - Need to come up w/ ideal-as-descriptive models.
 - Some examples:
 - Marxist models of capitalism
 - Concepts like patriarchy & white supremacy
 - Sexual harassment
 - We need tools/theories for cognizing features/dynamics of society as it actually operates.
- Is there still a place for Ideal theory?
 - Mills is skeptical
 1. Ideal theory may still lead to illegitimate ethical concepts (e.g. purity)
 2. Even with legitimate ideals, application is often distorted
 3. Important concepts will be overlooked

} Abstract, essentialized models that are grounded in observation and don't abstract away too far.