

Ideology Critique from the Perspective of the Global South

Ideology, both on its face and through its critique, perpetuates Eurocentrism. Ideology critique is built on the foundations of Marxism, using problematic, totalizing, and dogmatic notions of the Global South and its status among the world's nations. It leads to a denigration of epistemics which discounts non-Western knowledge as false and prevents true alternatives from being developed. Ideology is also a tool that has been weaponized by the Western world repeatedly and unapologetically through settler colonialism and wars (both traditional and economic). Ideology subjugates and exploits the Global South by enabling such acts by Western nations, while also functioning as an impossible ontological metric or aspiration that is placed on Southern nations. When these nations inevitably fail to meet these benchmarks of "good ideology," the West takes it upon itself to "discipline" these nations and provide solutions and alternatives, often to catastrophic ends. Ideology's critique does not mitigate these harms. Rather, the West's stranglehold on the field, perpetuated through its control of theory and its application, renders inaccessible the methodologies that would enable actors within the Global South to effectuate lasting change, instead drowning out their voices in a sea of ineffective solutions. This paper will explore the ways in which ideology critique's Marxist foundations worsen Eurocentrism and destroy epistemologies from the Global South, before interrogating how ideology is weaponized both descriptively and prescriptively by the West, and finally offering a solution to these harms through the methodology of epistemic interrogation.

Marxism's Eurocentricity

The tradition of Marxist analysis of ideology as a form of "false consciousness" has its roots in a strictly Western analysis of the world and its relations. Primarily, this Marxist view of capitalism arises from a purely European analysis that was then applied globally without adjustment. This creates a form of dogmatism wherein unitary understandings of capitalism are developed by the West and forced downwards onto the rest of the globe without question, creating forms of epistemic violence. This dogmatism is why women and queer folks have historically been attacked by Marxist groups; they cannot adhere to their dogmatic philosophy. Further, the scientific method of Marxism only perpetuates the idea of complete, Western logic that in turn creates more violence for marginalized groups in the Global South. This causes Marxist analyses to fail to explain forms of oppression not caused by European capitalism. For example, Jim Crow laws are not rooted in capitalism and are in fact directly contrary to capitalist dogmas that would prioritize any person, regardless of race, so long as they are able to produce for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. This gap ignores and in some cases inadvertently replicates the exact violence Marxism attempts to eradicate. All of these issues, while not directly connected to ideology critique itself, point to the Eurocentricity of Marxism as a methodology.

Most importantly, though, ideology critique that functions at the top level of Marxism supposes that all forms of ideology (and thus, epistemics) operate at the level of the superstructure and are therefore bourgeois falsities. This worldview creates a denigration of epistemics writ large that will always ignore and discount epistemologies that come from non-European frameworks and

non-capitalist organizations of production, i.e., Marxism will always discount any epistemology from the Global South as illegitimate. In this way, Marxism nearly begets the replacement of epistemologies stemming from the Global South with ones developed in the West and its nations; it is the inevitable path of Marxist critiques to misjudge the fundamental causes of oppression in the Global South and attempt to remedy them with solutions that only worsen conditions.

Notably, this is not an indictment of Marxism as a valuable critical framework; rather, it is simply an analysis of the ways in which Marxism can perpetuate Eurocentric understandings. This paper will still retain the Marxist underpinnings of ideology critique while carefully avoiding the ways in which its interpretations can perpetuate forms of Eurocentrism that erase non-Western viewpoints. This is not to say that capitalism is not responsible for many harms, ideological or otherwise. It is plainly true that the Global South is a byproduct of the global expansion of trade and unequal growth among nations that targeted subaltern groups and created colonies. It is also true that Marxism is the most complete and ubiquitous framework for deconstructing these issues and critiquing not only capitalism but the ideologies that enable and perpetuate it. In this way, this paper will perform *Aufhebung*, or sublation, of Marxist ideology critique. It will negate the Eurocentric components of the methodology while retaining the critical frameworks and understandings of capitalism and global oppression, ultimately raising the remaining aspects of Marxism to a new understanding of what it means to be a critical interrogation of epistemics and ideology.

Prescriptive & Descriptive Ideological Imposition

These Eurocentric conceptions become especially problematic when considering the ways in which the West imposes its ideology, both prescriptively and descriptively, onto the Global South. First, one must examine how ideology is prescribed to the South, i.e., how Western ideologies are imposed upon nations and individuals in the South. This can result in two distinct outcomes: (i) the South becomes the subject of ideology and is thus interpellated and exploited by the West through its ideological framework, or (ii) the ideology is incompatible with the South and nations in the Global South are relegated to a state of perpetually failing to meet impossible standards. There are countless clear instances of this ideological imposition, especially as portrayed through acts of settler colonialism.

i. America's invasion of Iraq illustrates case (i). It is now common knowledge that the invasion was executed in the interest of oil extraction (Juhász), but this invasion was only truly possible after the ideological interpellation of both Iraq as a nation and individual actors within America. Analysis of the interpellation of Americans into the state and military apparatuses that place the West as the arbiter of world affairs is a valuable exercise but not the focus of this paper. Instead, it will be taken for granted that such phenomena do occur. Of more interest to this paper is the exploration of how Iraq itself was interpellated in order to facilitate resource extraction with more ease. Interpellation in this sense is not as simple as Saddam Husein acceding to the ideological hail of the United States government. Rather, it was a prolonged and indirect process whereby the Western world systematically weakened Iraq by exerting its

ideological force over the nation until it was vulnerable enough to invade. Western states employed a policy of containment that involved heavy economic sanctions by the UN Security Council, cutting off Iraq from its monetary supply. No-fly zones limited Iraq's ability to exercise its military power and UNSCOM carried out frequent inspections to prevent Iraq from developing weapons.

Take, now, the classic case as outlined by Althusser of a police officer shouting "Hey, you!" at a person as they walk down the street. In this example, the shout is the ideological hail and acts as the subject-creating interpellation. The typical response to this hail is for the subject to turn around and heed the call, accepting the authority of the officer as garnered through repressive state apparatuses. Notably, though, it is not the act of turning around that constitutes the interpellation but rather that the subject has any response at all. The common ground understanding of the relative power statuses between the object and subject of the hail enables the conditions that cause any hail to create a form of interpellation. Stalnaker explains that "It is common ground that ϕ in a group if all members accept that ϕ , and all believe that all accept that ϕ , and all believe that all believe that all accept ϕ , etc." It is this cascade of understanding that therefore positions the United States and the Western world as the hailer relative to Iraq. If the United States didn't believe themselves to be in a position of global dominance, able to assert the previously outlined restrictions, and if they didn't believe that Iraq believed the same, then America would have no ideological power over Iraq. But, this continued probing of the nation for weaknesses, enabled by the West's regard for itself as a dominant force, created the conditions whereby any security check or sanction or no-fly zone becomes the symbolic officer shouting "Hey, you!" and any response from Iran causes the passerby to turn around.

ii. The descriptive case of ideology is exemplified by the West's imposition of sanctions during the Venezuelan crisis that began in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Throughout the course of numerous Western sanctions, it became evident that the West believed that the only way for Venezuela to emerge from its economic upheaval was by acceding to the ideological standards of the United States and similar nations, such that even after such measures were proven ineffective, they continued to be utilized.

Taking a more specific look at the situation elucidates many details. First, what is the ideology that Venezuela was challenged to meet? In many ways, the force of neoliberalism was the benchmark against which Venezuela was judged. Jodi Dean, in her book *Democracy and Other Neoliberal Fantasies*, notes that neoliberalism as an ideology proper creates subjects of all individuals within its sphere of influence by likening them to microcosms of the market itself. This has the dual effect of causing subjects to seek infinite growth as well as explaining away lack of enjoyment (in the psychoanalytic sense) as a symptom of overconsumption. In the case of the subjectification of Venezuela, this sort of market assimilation was done descriptively by the hailing nation; the United States regarded Venezuela writ large as a microcosm of the American neoliberal free market. Note that this description is not referring only to the

Venezuelan economy but rather to Venezuela as a composite (though their economy is certainly a part of that composite). Given this understanding, it's easy to see why sanctions were repeatedly implemented, even when unsuccessful. If the failure of the Venezuelan economy can be seen as a failure to accede to America's neoliberal ideation of Venezuela then the solution must be the reinforcement of such standards until the goal is attained. Dean notes that this effect creates a destruction of Foucault's "disciplined subject of civil society," requiring an outside authority to take on the role of disciplining the subject. In this way, Venezuela was doomed from the start. The West always-already considers the Global South as lacking a sort of discipline requisite of subjects of civil society, ensuring that when they fail to meet standards designed to be unattainable, nations such as the United States are able to exploit the subject in order to help them realize their potential. This potential, of course, is wholly fictitious and relegates affected nations to perpetual loops of failure.

Why Ideology Critiques Fail

As previously noted, Marxist frameworks create a denigration of epistemics and prevent critics from fully conceptualizing solutions to ideological exploitation. How does this function with regard to the example of Venezuela? First, ideology critique and its methodology rely on the principle of rejection, i.e., it supposes that ideology is unquestionably bad and works to eradicate it. This methodology can have success when the destruction of ideology is done from within the physical-temporal space of ideological occupation and filtered through the ruling class. For example, the rejection of Keynesian policy in favor of neoliberal ideology in America and Europe was a largely successful effort when compared to rejections of corporate capitalist ideology through movements such as Occupy Wall Street. The difference in the efficacy of these efforts lies in the fact that Keynesian economics was a tool of the Western elite, and as Reagan and Thatcher perceived their failure in the 1980s, those same individuals who imposed the ideology endeavored to replace it. In a sense, the original proponents of neoliberalism partook in a kind of ideological critique, though it may not have been a critique of ideology writ large. Regardless, the critique was successful because those who levied Keynesianism were in positions to not only destroy it but to succeed it. Contrast this to the case of Occupy Wall Street, wherein those who leveled critiques of corporate capitalism may have indeed been those affected and displaced by it, but were not those in a position to uproot and replace it. The failure lay not in a lack of physical proximity to the ideology (protestors literally lined the streets of Manhattan), nor in the absence of a clear plan to fill in the void left by capitalism's demise (most participants were outspoken socialists). Rather, the movement's eventual end was a result of the protestor's lack of agency within the system. Similarly, look to the Chipko movement in India and the Himalayas. This ecological movement saw local mobilization in order to preserve natural wilderness in the region, acting as a critique of anthropocentric ideology among indigenous women. The movement was successful at achieving its short-term goals by ensuring the survival of forestlands in places such as Gopeshwar but failed to achieve long-term rejection of anthropocentrism. Participants physically inhabited the forestlands and worked with the government to pass legislation ensuring the forest's protection. Why, then, did the movement fail? Ultimately, there was no agreed-upon replacement for

anthropocentrism. Some members identified as ecosocialist while others acted fully in alignment with ecofeminism, and still others endorsed deep ecology or early forms of object-oriented ontology. This created uncertainty regarding how to continue once the Chipkos' preliminary goal was met. How does this relate to the case of Venezuela? It can be seen that three tenets are required for an ideology to be physically removed and replaced:

- i.* Physical proximity to the ideology
- ii.* A clear replacement for the ideology being critiqued
- iii.* Agency within the system that can create ideological change

The absence of any of these three requirements dooms a critique to failure. In the case of Venezuela, it may appear at first glance that each point is met. Those living in Venezuela, and especially those within its government, are not only physically affected by the West's imposition of neoliberalism but also are in a position to reject neoliberalism and replace it with a purer form of socialism. However, this is a flawed analysis. Because neoliberalism is not an ideology that originated within Venezuela of its own volition, the actual locale of subjectification is not within Venezuela but rather in the governments of America and Europe. This makes efforts from Venezuelans nearly futile to actualize. Additionally, because the ideologies are located in the West instead of within Venezuela's own borders, agency is difficult or impossible for Venezuelans and the Venezuelan government to achieve. However, even if these issues were to be remedied, the second tenet would still present a major problem; this is where Marxism's epistemic denigration precludes solvency.

Western ideology critics supplant true solutions for ideological ills by utilizing the same problematic frameworks that created harm in the first place. Venezuela was sent into turmoil by the foreign imposition of neoliberalism—it cannot be saved by the same methodology. Western critics correctly isolate a problem with the handling of the Venezuela crisis yet fail to recognize that their framework invariably creates the same problems. American economists saw the supply shortages plaguing the nation as a symptom of their lack of global economic cooperation and rejection of neoliberal policy, causing them to believe that the best solution was, therefore, the injection of such ideologies into Venezuela. When this inevitably failed, sanctions were imposed (regardless of whether sanctions are verily neoliberal, it is indisputable that they were leveled in the name of neoliberalism), worsening the crisis. Not only did this cause a feedback loop of destruction, but it also created a crowding out of non-Western ideologies (and methodologies) that could better solve the situation. For example, *dependencia*, or dependency theory, was developed in order to explain Latin America's lack of development and industrialization and increased reliance on Western nations following World War II. It has largely been shown to not only accurately explain the causes of Latin America's stagnation but also provides a viable methodology for building independence. However, the cacophonous din of ideology critics approaching the crisis in Venezuela from a solely Western, Marxist perspective drowns out any epistemological methods that originate from subaltern voices.

Redefining Ideology: Epistemic Interrogation

It is now evident that ideology is most frequently used as a tool to oppress and exploit the Global South, and that its critique fails to address the root cause of problems in the Global South. This, however, begs the question: must ideology always be a detrimental force towards the South? If we understand ideology in the traditional, critical sense, then the answer seems to obviously be yes; forms of false consciousness are undesirable regardless of location. However, even with a more neutral understanding of ideology as a framework that shapes our understanding of our material conditions, ideology still is a problematic notion. Indeed, the crowding-out effect that is created through ideology critique will always discount Southern epistemologies as false and prevent them from being heard at all. In this way, a more fundamental epistemic interrogation functions as a viable alternative for the practice of ideology critique.

Epistemic interrogation involves the questioning not only of things deemed ideological but of all knowledge indiscriminately. It attacks any form of one's own epistemology from all angles such that it is only left standing if it is true. Notably, epistemic interrogation as an exercise is impossible for epistemologies not belonging to one's self; intimate knowledge requisite of proper interrogation is inaccessible to those not actively engaged with the epistemology. As such, it solves the harms outlined in this paper. While methodologies such as *dependencia* would still be interrogated for their veracity, the same would be done to all Western ideologies like neoliberalism, corporate capitalism, and global trade. This firstly prevents the crowding out effect by scrutinizing the ideologies that purport to take the place of epistemologies from the Global South. Additionally, epistemic interrogation is in no way impositional. There is no way for the United States to hail the Iraqi government in an attempt at interpellation when their ideological methodology only deconstructs forms of knowledge known by the critic; interrogation cannot be imposed on a subject because that subject has no knowledge of the interpellative ideology and thus cannot engage in the exercise. Finally, it also aligns with the three tenets of successful critique as outlined above. The requirement of direct knowledge in order to engage in the interrogation ensures that physical proximity to the ideology is achieved. And, while epistemic interrogation does not guarantee access to the levers of power, it also does not preclude it. Finally, the methodology allows room for those engaging with the interrogation to refine the epistemologies in question; the impossibility of imposition renders impossible the potential for crowding out.

Works Cited

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