

Ideology Critique from Hegel and Marx to Critical Theory

Karen Ng

In the postscript to *Traditional and Critical Theory*,¹ Max Horkheimer writes that critical theory must be understood as the heir to German idealism. More specifically, Horkheimer ties the project of a critical theory of society to a watershed moment in the history of philosophy that has come to be known as the Copernican turn — namely, Kant's insight that the objects of human knowledge and experience are inextricably tied to our spontaneous, productive activity. In binding the objects of experience to human activity, Kant sets in motion an entire project of critique in which what is continually subject to scrutiny is the very form and capacity of reason itself. Critique becomes, in essence, a form a self-critique, one in which reason itself is continually put on trial. However, this immediately creates a paradox for the very project of critique: in putting reason on trial, reason stands as both the accused and the judge in the case of its own legitimacy, for reason is both the object of critique and the very activity that makes critique possible. As the heir to German idealism, this paradox comes to define the critique of ideology, and cuts to the very heart of the methodology of critical theory.

To dwell a little longer on Horkheimer's suggestion, we can discern a second and connected sense in which critical theory can be understood as the heir of German idealism. The critique of reason, for Kant and even more emphatically for his successors, was essentially a project that aimed to understand the actuality of human freedom — the critique of reason is at once the demonstration of rational life as a free life. In the attempt to demonstrate the actuality of freedom, it was Hegel who first turned from the critique of pure reason to the critique of reason embedded in social, historical reality, and it is this move that has been definitive for critical theory from Marx all the way up to the present. With Hegel, idealism effectively becomes social philosophy and critique becomes inseparable from social critique.² In the transformation of the critique of reason into the critique of social reality, the critique of ideology has become an indispensable method for assessing the extent to which a form of life — at once a social formation and an actualization of reason — can enable or block the realization of freedom for its members. The critique of ideology becomes necessary as soon as reason ceases to be pure reason, as soon as the actuality of freedom becomes wedded to social reality.

In what follows, I explore and defend ideology critique as a method for critical theory whose operation

is best understood as descended from the project of the critique of reason. Tracing this genealogy is necessary for two reasons: First, it allows us to understand what critical theory calls the dialectics of immanence and transcendence (the classic problem of being embedded in the social reality we want to criticize according to a non-external standard) as a structural feature of ideology critique, which, contrary to popular opinion, need not be overcome. Rather, this essential characteristic of ideology critique is common to all modes of critique that accept a socialized and historicized version of the Copernican turn.

Second, by turning to Hegel and Marx in particular, what becomes evident is that the dialectics of immanence and transcendence must be understood more concretely as the dialectics of life and self-consciousness, a relation that defines the universal form of rational, free activity. Specifically, I will argue that there is an important structural parallel between Hegel's concept of the Idea and Marx's concept of species-being that allows us to view the problem of immanence and transcendence as it arises in ideology critique in a new light. Understanding the relation between life and self-consciousness is crucial for ideology critique because what ideologies distort is the relation between self-consciousness and life, a relation that is fundamental to the actualization of human freedom. In distorting this fundamental relation, ideologies characteristically turn the conditions of freedom into agents of repression, asserting transcendent authority over our most basic life activities and social reality itself. As a working definition, we can say that ideologies are at once social practices and forms of rationality that distort the relation between life and self-consciousness and block the full actualization of human reason and freedom. Ideologies are thus social pathologies, wrong ways of living.³

My argument will proceed in four parts. In the first part, I outline the fundamental logic behind the dialectics of immanence and transcendence and show how this logic defines ideology critique. After affirming that the dialectics of immanence and transcendence are unavoidable for critique, I turn in part two to an analysis of two central concepts that illuminate this method as the dialectics of life and self-consciousness: what Hegel calls the Idea, and Marx's conception of *Gattungswesen* (species-being). In part three, I turn to the ways in which ideologies operate by distorting the relation between self-consciousness and life, and part

four will conclude by proposing some possible strategies for the method of ideology critique in light of my analysis. My suggestion will be that Hegel and Marx provide the resources for an approach to ideology critique that allows us to diagnose social pathologies on the basis of the formal conditions of human freedom. The aims of this article are thus primarily programmatic rather than diagnostic; I am interested in identifying the structural features of the method of ideology critique, tracing its development through an undertheorized line of thinking in Hegel and Marx, and arguing that they can help us to address some of the ongoing impasses of critique.

1. Immanence and Transcendence

In order to determine exactly how the relation between life and consciousness can be methodologically instructive for a critique of ideology, I want to begin by clarifying the paradox inherited from the critique of reason that is constitutive of the critique of ideology. In its most general statement, and following Raymond Geuss' characterization, ideology critique is inherently reflexive or self-referential: a critique of a form of life as ideological necessarily belongs to the very "object-domain" that it both describes and criticizes.⁴ Just as the critique of reason operates within the bounds of reason, ideology critique belongs to and is conditioned by the very social formation that it seeks to understand, critique, and transform. This self-referentiality, necessitated by the project of self-critique, is perhaps *the* formal characteristic that distinguishes traditional from critical theories.

In traditional theory, critique and the object of critique (or more broadly, subject and object) are kept strictly apart and express no necessary or internal relationship. (Horkheimer associates this with the Cartesian point of view, whose contemporary incarnates include scientism or positivism). Critical theories, however, find themselves on both sides of the subject/object divide and must be able to account for themselves as parts of their objects of investigation. Far from a mere idiosyncrasy, the self-referentiality of critique tracks two essential and essentially connected modern developments that stem from the Copernican turn. The first is the modern conception of the self, most commonly conceived under the heading of "self-consciousness." In its most minimal determination, self-consciousness denotes a certain reflectiveness and self-awareness of one's own constitutive conditions from within those conditions themselves. For Kant, this meant coming to an understanding of the transcendental conditions of the possibility of knowledge within the limits of possible experience; for Hegel, it meant attempting to establish the totality of conditions necessary for spirit's development and self-understanding, a totality that he called, "actuality"

(*Wirklichkeit*); for Marx, it meant determining the conditions of the production of material life, a production that always takes place as a social and historical act. What we see in this progressive self-critical examination of one's own conditions from Kant to Marx is not only increasing concreteness (from the transcendental conditions of possibility to the conditions of actuality to material, economic conditions), but an increasing awareness of history and historical conditions as *self-determined*, and hence, as a potential site of freedom and transformation. Thus, the self-referentiality of critique at the same time tracks a second modern injunction, namely, the normative demand to live a free life.⁵ In seeking to understand and criticize our own constitutive conditions, ideology critique exposes the ambivalence of those conditions from within, exemplifying a distinctively modern form of reflective, historical self-consciousness.

Another common way of characterizing this reflexivity is to identify ideology critique as a mode of immanent critique.⁶ Very roughly defined, immanent critique is a form of self-critique that arises out of the contradictions, inconsistencies, paradoxes, inversions, crises, failures, exclusions, and even tragedies of social formations. The *locus classicus* for the project of immanent critique is Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where the formation and experience of modern self-conscious life is traced according to the failures of the spirit to live up to its own self-given criteria for truth, goodness, and most importantly, freedom.⁷ More specifically, and in a way that is analogous to the distinguishing feature of critical theories, Hegel unfolds the experience, development, and transformation of consciousness by demonstrating the entwinement of subject and object at every stage. Critique is immanent not only because consciousness continually finds itself in its object (an object of thought, another person, social reality), but further, because the incongruencies and conflicts that arise immanently in the course of experience are transformative of both subject and object, producing new forms of consciousness, new norms, and new social realities.⁸ Continuing and radicalizing this Hegelian tradition, Marx sums up the aim of immanent critique succinctly: "We develop new principles to the world out of its own principles."⁹

From this very general description of the reflexivity of ideology critique, we can immediately identify two well-known problems with this approach, problems that have led many theorists — both within and outside the confines of critical theory — to abandon the project of ideology critique altogether.¹⁰ The first can be called the problem of totalization: in being unable to step outside of a form of life in order to criticize it, in living in, by, and through the very conditions that one seeks to understand, critique appears to be so fully integrated into that which it criticizes that it becomes very difficult to distinguish between ideology and

non-ideology.¹¹ Thus, Adorno writes of the “complicity of cultural criticism with culture,”¹² suggesting that practices of critique might come to merge so seamlessly with their object so as to render their critical edge entirely obsolete. It appears here that the closure of ideology is so complete, its reach so all-encompassing, that there is simply no place for the critic to stand.

Now if one wants to reject this characterization, we are led into a second problem: to avoid the notion of a fully ideologically saturated form of life, the critic can assume a position that is outside of, or transcends, her object of critique. In transcending the object of critique, the critic can easily identify its object as ideological from a neutral standpoint outside the reach of ideology. Of course, this conception is equally fraught with problems. In assuming a position of transcendence, the critic finds herself open to a whole host of objections, including paternalism, arbitrariness, foundationalism, a naïve conception of the relation between reality and appearances, and a platonic conception of truth. Most importantly, by ejecting itself from its object of critique, the position of transcendence reverts back to the traditional theory that ideology critique was meant to overcome in the first place.

Keeping in mind again that the reflexivity of ideology critique cannot be separated from its aim of freedom and emancipation, critical theory has traditionally taken up the paradox described above under the heading of the “dialectics of immanence and transcendence.”¹³ Thus, rather than taking the problem of reflexivity as a sign that ideology critique must be abandoned, critical theorists insist rather that this problem is not only unavoidable, but moreover, that navigating it correctly is the key for combining critique with the normative goal of emancipation. In fact, the pretense that one can avoid this circle is what brings us back to the specious forms of realism, scientism, or positivism that block emancipation, insofar as they present subjects and objects as naturalized, fixed, or reified in their respective and separated positions. In one of his clearest statements of what is at stake in social critique, Adorno describes the dialectics of immanence and transcendence in a way that highlights its status as a fundamentally Hegelian method:

The alternatives — either calling culture as a whole into question from outside under the general notion of ideology, or confronting it with the norms which it itself has crystallized — cannot be accepted by critical theory. To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel’s polemic against Kant. As Hegel argued, every method which sets limits and restricts itself to the limits of its object thereby goes beyond them.¹⁴

Rather than abandoning ideology critique, critical theory navigates the reflexive terrain of critique by trying to locate what Axel Honneth, following Adorno, has called an “intramundane transcendence”—an experience in which the normative interest in emancipation can still get a foothold — *within* existing social reality.¹⁵ Candidates for the experience of intramundane transcendence — the rose on the cross of the present — have included reason itself (Hegel), labor (Marx), modernist art (Adorno), the drives (Marcuse), communicative action (Habermas), and social recognition (Honneth).¹⁶

While it is clear that the dialectics of immanence and transcendence are central to the method of critical theory, in the following sections I want to suggest, via Hegel and Marx, that this method can more importantly be understood as the dialectics of life and self-consciousness. Turning to this more concrete relation allows us to see what initially appeared to be an idiosyncrasy of ideology critique in a more expansive light: whereas Hegel leverages the relation between life and self-consciousness to develop a concept of reason that is at once natural and historical, Marx comes to develop the dialectics of life and self-consciousness into the method of historical materialism. In both instances, it is the distinct intertwinement of the exigencies of natural creatures with the purposes of self-conscious, historical beings that provides a method and basis for critique, allowing us to track social pathologies and intramundane transcendences at once.

To begin to develop this thought, I want to turn now to two key notions on which the critique of reason and ideology critique turn respectively: Hegel’s *Idea* (*Idee*) and Marx’s species-being (*Gattungswesen*).

2. From Hegel’s *Idee* to Marx’s *Gattungswesen*

While it may appear intuitive to turn to the concept of species-being in order to say something about the relation between life and self-consciousness, turning to Hegel’s infamously obscure notion of the *Idea* initially appears strange if not ill-advised. However, if the *locus classicus* for the project of immanent critique is Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, then I want to suggest that the *locus classicus* for the explicit reflection on its method is Hegel’s *Science of Logic*. Although it may seem that turning to such an abstract text may confuse matters here, Hegel’s contribution should not be overlooked for two important reasons.

First, the notion of reason provided by Hegel’s *Logic* is, in fact, articulated precisely with a view against abstraction and towards an understanding of reason as fundamentally embedded in our lived animal existence, in the activities and purposes of species-life. What Hegel achieves in the *Logic* is the radical, methodological

insight that the critique of reason ultimately rests on the ongoing determination of the relation, opposition, and necessary connection — the ongoing dialectic — between the activities of life and the activities of self-consciousness. Thus, given the ongoing significance of the concept of reason for critical social theory, and even if Hegel's conception may ultimately need to be refined, tracing this genealogy is nonetheless important here in order to rethink the problems of immanence and transcendence for ideology critique.

Second, turning to Hegel's *Logic* in particular provides the groundwork for a formal reading of Marx's concept of species-being that avoids some of the traditional pitfalls of referring to a human essence, while nonetheless retaining the critical core of Marx's materialism that is at the heart of the concept of ideology. Reading Hegel and Marx together, we can see that Hegel's insight about reason in the *Logic* is radical in precisely Marx's sense, insofar as he gets to the root of the very activity and form of reason. If the Copernican turn lays claim to the authority of the human standpoint — that the root of reason is reason itself — Hegel's radical version of this claim is to suggest that *life* is the root of reason.¹⁷

Hegel's somewhat unhelpful term for this far-reaching thesis is the Idea, and the most thorough exposition of this thesis can be found in the concluding section of the *Science of Logic*. This section begins with the presentation of the basic activities of living individuals within a species as the immediate form of rational activity, takes us through the theoretical and practical forms of self-conscious cognition, and culminates with the determination of absolute method as an expression of their ongoing dialectic.¹⁸ There are two central claims that are important here for understanding Hegel's argument behind the notion of the Idea. The first is his somewhat ironic use of the term: what the Idea denotes is simply the form and activity of reason, and by using the term Idea, Hegel means first of all to suggest that contrary to popular opinion, ideas are not "in the head," something transcendent, something beyond our grasp, or something abstract that has no correspondence to concrete material reality.¹⁹ Rather, the Idea for Hegel means quite the opposite: the Idea is Hegel's term for the dynamic and negative unity of subject and object, concepts and reality, and it is key for Hegel that the Idea denotes something concrete and actual, that ideas are not *mere* ideas (the same can of course be said of ideology: ideology is composed of a set of ideas but are not *mere* ideas, for they are also composed of a set of material practices that shape physical, psychic, and social reality).

More specifically — and this is Hegel's unique contribution — the Idea presents the thought that the

form of reason itself has a life/more than life structure. That is, what rational activity expresses, delimits, and determines is some configuration of the relation between life-activity and self-conscious life activity, that the distinction and connection, identity and difference between these human modalities simply *is* the actuality of reason. I call this the thesis of double constitution: the determination and activity of reason always expresses itself as double. Self-conscious activities are actualizations, transformations, and explicit appropriations of basic life-activities, and the particular self-relation of self-consciousness is constituted by the fact that it is a life that knows itself as life, a life that can consciously grasp and determine the conditions of its life. Insofar as human activities are at once expressions of life and something more than life, we can in turn come to view social formations, always the results of human activity, as expressing the same double structure. We can say that at the conclusion of the *Science of Logic*, Hegel transforms the critique of reason into a critique of rational forms of life, arguing that the reflexive activities of reason's own self-examination require us to examine reason as the collective and historical product of living human beings as they reproduce their life-form in an infinite variety of self-conscious, and also unconscious, ways.

The second claim that is behind Hegel's notion of the Idea is that, as the result of the critique of reason, the Idea constitutes a critical philosophical method. Thus, the dialectic between life and something more than life characteristic of human activities is not a metaphysical or ontological concept; rather, this doubling of form is a method — a mode, a way, a manner — with both theoretical and practical dimensions (this is key, and will be especially important when we get to Marx). It may be helpful here to recall Kant's definition of method given near the end of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in the "Transcendental Doctrine of Method:" method is "the determination of the *formal conditions* of a complete system of pure reason."²⁰ Hegel's method, likewise, is a determination of the formal conditions of the ongoing actualization of reason. In other words, the relation between life and self-consciousness determines the necessary, formal conditions of the actualization of a free and rational life.

It is important to see here how Hegel's version of method addresses both the *theoretical* problem of reflexivity and the *practical* problem of freedom and self-determination that are definitive of ideology critique. On the issue of reflexivity, the relation between life and self-consciousness can be understood as the paradigmatic case in which what is taken up as an object is at the same time constitutive of the subject. For both Hegel and Marx, what constitutes self-consciousness in the first

instance is consciousness of life. Self-consciousness takes up its life as an object of thinking and willing while at the same time *being* that life — it is this relation of reflexivity that constitutes self-conscious activity.²¹ Self-conscious activity is characterized by this reflexivity for it both is life (life constitutes an essential part of its subjectivity) and is more than life (it can take its life as an object of further self-determination). Taking up this reflexivity at the level of critique, the relation between life and self-consciousness constitutes a method in precisely the sense noted above, for it constitutes the formal condition of the ongoing actualization of reason. Self-consciousness neither fully merges with its life (total immanence), nor does it take up its life as an object from a neutral standpoint outside the conditions of life (total transcendence). The reflexivity of ideology critique thus reflects the very dialectic of self-consciousness and life that is the mode of all human activity.

From here we can perhaps already begin to see how Hegel's conception of method addresses the practical interest of ideology critique in freedom and emancipation: insofar as the dialectic between self-consciousness and life is the mode of all human activity, this relation in fact expresses the universal form of self-determination. Although this appears to be a rather ambitious claim on Hegel's part, it falls squarely within the project of the critique of reason, and further, it follows quite simply from the fact that being both the subject and object of determination is to express the relation of self-determination. To put the point less abstractly, it will be helpful here to turn to Marx, particularly his conception of species-being (*Gattungswesen*). We can think of species-being as Marx's version of the double constitution thesis: what species-being denotes is the reflexive and reciprocal relation between life and self-consciousness that is the form of all human productive activity, (and now switching to Marx's language) the form of human labor.²² To understand how the relation between life and self-consciousness expresses the universal form of freedom and self-determination, it will be helpful to quote some of his most famous lines in full:

The animal is immediately identical with its life-activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life-activity. The human being makes her life-activity itself the object of her will and of her consciousness. She has conscious life-activity. It is not a determination with which she directly merges. Conscious life-activity directly distinguishes the human being from animal life-activity. It is just because of this that the human being is a species-being [*Gattungswesen*]. Or it is only because she is a species-being that she is a conscious being, i.e., that her own life is an object for her. Only because of that is her activity *free activity* [*freie Tätigkeit*].²³

Marx's explanation of species-being provides us with the basis for thinking about the dialectics of immanence and transcendence in a way that grasps the connection between reflexivity and the interest in freedom, a connection that fundamentally hinges on the relation between self-consciousness and life. There are three aspects of species-being that I want to highlight here. The first thing that species-being denotes is a specific dialectic between life-activity and conscious life-activity that is characteristic of the human being. Whereas the animal is fully immersed in its life-activity (perhaps an instance of pure immanence), what defines the human being for Marx is our ability to take our life-activity as an object of volition and consciousness. Insofar as we do not fully merge with our life-activities, consciousness allows us to achieve a degree of transcendence. Human activity is thus defined by this, now, specified version of the dialectics of immanence and transcendence, namely, a dialectic between life and consciousness of life.

Second, in calling this dialectic *species-being*, Marx makes it explicit that our conscious relation to life-activity has a universal status as a part of species-life, one that allows me to not only take my own life-activity, but the life-activity of the species, as an object. For human beings, there is a reciprocal relation between species-being and self-consciousness, and a familiar way of understanding this relationship is through relations of recognition (another key idea that Marx inherits from Hegel). Although relations of recognition are often viewed as what lifts us out of the domain of life into the domain of spirit, what we see here instead is that sociality is intrinsic to species-life in a way that irreducibly serves both the ends of life and the ends of self-consciousness at once.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the concept of species-being is supposed to denote a form of free activity, that what characterizes human self-determination is this reflexive relation of self-consciousness and life. The ability to take one's life-activity as the object of further determination simply is the relation of self-determination. The interest in freedom is thus not merely incidental to the reflexive self-relation, but rather, it is intrinsic to its very structure, its very form.

Now although Marx inscribes free activity as internal to the very structure of species-being, he in fact says very little, apart from some vague allusions (hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, rearing cattle in the evening, criticizing after dinner),²⁴ concerning the concrete content of a free life. Instead of using the notion of species-being to provide a positive account of human freedom, I want to argue that Marx takes a critical, negativist approach, working instead to identify distortions, inversions, pathologies, illusions, paradoxes, contradictions, and crises that arise in a historically

specific form of life defined by the capitalist mode of production.

Contrary to many traditional interpretations of the concept of species-being as putting forth a determinate notion of human nature or human essence,²⁵ the specific relation between life and self-consciousness identified by Marx serves rather as a method of critique that allows him to identify a constellation of *negative* concepts — alienation, reification, exploitation — that help to determine varieties of human *unfreedom*. Read together with Hegel's Idea, we can understand the concept of species-being as providing formal, anthropologically rooted conditions of self-actualization that are subject to historical variation and yet substantial enough to help us identify social pathologies. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx identifies one of the keystones of alienation as the inversion of life and self-consciousness where human beings feel free only in their animal activities (eating, drinking, sex, home life) but feel reduced to their animality and hence unfree in their human activities of labor and work. It is important for this negativist approach that concepts such as alienation, and more importantly for our purposes, the concept of ideology, do not require us to presuppose a position of pure and positive non-alienation or non-ideology. Presupposing that critique requires such a position of transcendence is to revert to the false and absolute opposition between immanence and transcendence that critical theory, following from the insights of Hegel and Marx, explicitly rejects.

In fact, as I hope to show in the following section, rejecting the separation of immanence and transcendence and the concomitant privileging of transcendence characteristic of traditional theory is the hallmark of all critique of ideology, and further, that such separation and privilege is itself what defines ideology *par excellence*. If Hegel's Idea provides us with a method that transforms the critique of reason into a critique of rational forms of life, then the notion of *Gattungswesen* can perhaps provide us with a method that explicitly transforms the latter into a critique of ideology, anchoring the dialectics of immanence and transcendence in the relation between life and self-consciousness.

3. Ideology Critique

In order to take up the notion of species-being as a formal, negativist concept for ideology critique, it is important to see the connection between this early concept in Marx and the subsequent development of historical materialism, a method defined by an understanding of history as the self-conscious mediation of the reproduction of natural and social life. Although the language of species-being is ultimately abandoned by Marx, taking the dialectic between life and self-consciousness

as a condition of history and critical method is not only never abandoned, but appears again and again as central to both the materialist conception of history and Marx's mature critique of capitalism.

In his classic text, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, Alfred Schmidt (who also argues for a non-ontological, negativist understanding of the dialectic between self-consciousness and life as the defining feature of Marx's materialism) suggests that the term metabolism (*Stoffwechsel*) can be taken as the successor concept to Marx's early attempts at articulating the identity and difference between the natural and the social.²⁶ According to Schmidt, the metabolic exchange between life-activity and self-conscious life-activity provides insight into the theoretical and practical dimensions of the materialist method, articulating both a theory of knowledge, and a conception of socialist freedom. Having studied under Horkheimer and Adorno, Schmidt's reading of Marx is highly significant for the history of critical theory, but for our purposes, what is important is that the formal description of species-being in the early Marx becomes, in subsequent works, the condition for history and critique.

Turning now directly to *The German Ideology*, it should almost go without saying that just as Hegel's Idea is not something merely in the head, ideology, and especially its effects, are also not to be taken as mere ideas. In fact, the first instance of ideology (the "German" ideology of the young Hegelians) is the conviction that only changing our ideas will thereby suffice to change reality. Marx and Engels begin their analysis of ideology by laying out the premises of a materialist conception of human history, starting with a fairly straightforward presupposition: "the existence of living human individuals" and the material conditions of productive activity through which they reproduce their life.²⁷

Recalling Adorno's Hegelian assessment that to set a limit is also thereby to go beyond it, Marx and Engels clearly suggest that the material conditions of life are both found as given and already existing (appearing as immediate, "natural," necessary), and as something that is produced and reproduced by the activities of living human individuals (mediated, social, self-determined). The logic of species-being is again used to distinguish human life from animal life, and Marx and Engels now specify that taking life activity as an object of volition and consciousness is, minimally, to produce one's means of subsistence (*Lebensmittel*). In actively producing their means of life, in self-consciously producing the conditions of life, human beings are in effect, already in the process of "making history."²⁸ Historical activity and the labor-process are structured around the dialectic between life and self-consciousness: life is continually reproduced through self-conscious, socially

mediated activity; self-conscious, socially mediated activity is continually conditioned by the necessities of the reproduction of life. The metabolism between natural and human elements simply *is* history.

What is interesting here is that Marx and Engels describe the emergence of ideology almost seamlessly from these very same presuppositions of human history in two stages. The first is a very general claim that ideas, conceptions, and consciousness itself must be understood as the products or results of the activities of human beings. Far from being a reductionist claim, all that is being suggested here is the Hegelian thought that ideas are not in the head, that the ideas and conceptions of consciousness must have some necessary relation to the productive activities of real, living individuals.²⁹ Their simple and straightforward formula for this claim is that “life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.”³⁰

Just as Hegel objected to Kant’s purely transcendental critique of reason, Marx and Engels are suggesting that we cannot simply attack ideas we don’t like — Christianity, individualism, private property, patriarchy — as if ideas were entirely self-sufficient, as if ideas could swing entirely free from the material conditions and practices from which they draw their life. More accurately, what constitutes ideology in the first instance is the belief that concepts autonomously control and determine material conditions and practices, rather than the other way around. This is a fairly common way of understanding ideology, and accounts for the use of term when we talk, for example, about political or religious ideologies (religion of course is always the first example of ideology for Marx). The self-sufficiency and transcendence of the products of consciousness also in part account for the purportedly eternal or “natural” character of ideologies (for example, sexist and racist ideas are true, in and of themselves, independent of material conditions, and we must use these ideas to determine and organize reality). In “ascending from earth to heaven” instead of the other way around, ideology critique, following from the presuppositions of the materialist conception of history, is not a critique of ideas at all, but rather, a method that aims to reveal the embeddedness of ideas and conceptions in the actual activities of human beings as they individually and collectively reproduce their lives.³¹

However, the matter is a little more complicated, for this inversion of the life/self-consciousness relation in which consciousness and its products come to be falsely viewed as self-sufficient, is only half the story. To cite another famous passage from *The German Ideology*:

In all ideology human beings and their circumstances [*Verhältnisse*] 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.³²

The other half of the story is this: the illusion that the ideas and conceptions of consciousness autonomously determine and control the material conditions of life, and the inversion of life and self-consciousness that this represents, is itself an idea that arises from a determinate configuration of the material conditions of production, of the practices and institutions that organize a society. That is, the very belief in the uncoupling of self-consciousness from life, the belief in an upside-down or inverted version of that relationship, the belief in the absolute transcendence of consciousness, is itself a product of the material circumstances and relations that obtain in a particular form of life.

This is why it is not simply enough to attack ideas *qua* ideas, and why, instead, critique must navigate the dialectic of immanence and transcendence in which ideologies thrive. To turn to an example that illuminates the entire problematic: when Marx and Adorno criticize idealism as a philosophy, the suggestion is not simply that idealism is a bad idea. Rather, it is no accident that idealism as a philosophy emerges with the development of the bourgeois class, and even while idealism asserts its autonomy from the conditions of life, it is nonetheless a philosophy that is decidedly, perhaps even necessarily, a product of the bourgeois form of life. Insofar as idealism in fact corresponds to the reality of bourgeois life, idealism as a philosophy is very much true — precisely because it corresponds with reality. What is wrong or false about idealism is not its status as a mere idea, but that it corresponds to a wrong or false reality, that it is an ideological reflex or echo of a wrong and false form of life. This is why the critique of German philosophy is concomitant with the critique of political economy. Philosophical critique becomes social critique, as soon as ideas become wedded to reality.

It will be helpful now to sum up two interconnected aspects of the concept of ideology defended here. First, given the analysis above, ideology critique operates through the dialectics of immanence and transcendence, and more specifically, through the dialectics of life and self-consciousness. Thus on the one hand, ideologies *qua* products of consciousness purport to transcend the material conditions of life, feigning self-sufficiency and autonomy, operating as both eternal and naturalized. On the other hand, ideologies necessarily arise out of the material conditions of life from which they purport to swing free, and thus, are not exclusively products of consciousness but products of the very organization of the activities of life. In their movement between immanence and transcendence, ideologies are phantoms that emerge from material practices, phantoms that then often acquire the power to shape the very reality from which they arose.

Second, as has been carefully documented by Adorno, ideologies are in fact both true and false, where truth and falsity express determinations that have both epistemic and normative import.³³ Adorno defines ideology as follows:

[Ideology] is consciousness which is objectively necessary and yet at the same time false, [it is] the intertwining of truth and falsehood, which is just as distinct from the whole truth as it is from the pure lie.³⁴

Without being able to do full justice to Adorno's suggestion, we can quickly summarize four main senses in which ideologies can be said to be both true and false. Epistemologically, ideologies are true and objectively necessary because they correspond to the realities from which they arose. Idealism is true and objectively necessary for a bourgeois form of life; the belief that women are more submissive than men is true and objectively necessary under conditions of patriarchy and male dominance.³⁵ But ideologies are also false insofar as they can be seen as expressions of false consciousness, where individuals may or may not have adequate knowledge of their interests, the conditions and causes of individual and social suffering, or the possibilities for the actualization of their freedom.³⁶ An equally, if not more important, dimension of false consciousness can also be found in what Charles Mills calls an "inverted epistemology" or an "epistemology of ignorance," whereby those who benefit from a global or local ideological formation systematically "misinterpret the world" and have "[learned] to see the world wrongly."³⁷ Mills suggests that such instances of false consciousness, while cognitively dysfunctional, are socially and psychologically functional. Given our materialist premises, it is key that what is at issue are not simply false *beliefs* (an all too common way of approaching ideology), but that individuals benefit materially, socially, and psychologically from misinterpreting the world by remaining systematically ignorant of certain facts and relations. Put another way, we could say that even false beliefs find a certain material realization in a wrong reality.

Supplementing the epistemological senses of true and false highlighted above, we could say that normatively, ideologies contain a truth content or a moment of intramundane transcendence as cited above. For example, under the conditions of capitalist production, labor for Marx has become a source of alienation, suffering, and unfreedom. Nonetheless, the labor process in which the relation between life and self-consciousness is actualized is also a distinctive form of human free activity. Finding the normative truth content of a particular social formation has been central to the methodology of critical theory from its inception, and is a distinctive approach to social critique that stems

from a left Hegelian tradition.³⁸ Finally, we can say that ideologies are false in what is perhaps a relatively straightforward normative sense; namely, they are instances of injustice, productive of human suffering, a source of alienation and unfreedom, and are emblematic of the general condition of social pathologies.

4. Conclusion

In tracing the dialectic of immanence and transcendence to the dialectic between self-consciousness and life, we have rethought ideology critique as fundamentally tied not only to the critique of reason, but also to the insights of a materialist conception of history. In order to conclude these reflections on ideology critique as a method, I now want to consider some ways in which critique can use the notion of an intramundane transcendence guided by the dialectics of life and self-consciousness. Diagnosing ideologies as social pathologies not only moves us away from the temptation to view ideologies exclusively or primarily in terms of false ideas or beliefs. More importantly, it allows us to recover a non-reductive, critical naturalism that I have suggested is common to both Hegel and Marx that is absolutely central if the appeal to immanence is to be non-arbitrary, and yet, carry some normative weight. Roughly, a critical naturalist approach to ideology critique would acknowledge first, the dialectic of life and self-consciousness as a structural feature of social critique, and second, that social pathologies in some way distort or exploit our doubly constituted existence and deform the conditions of human freedom. It is important that such an account is formal (identifying the form, shape, and conditions of human activity that are subject to historical development and analysis), without being abstract (existing only in thought or in principle) or ideal (serving the function of a perfected end-point, ultimate goal, or final *telos*).³⁹

Two considerations will help to motivate these claims here. First, the appeal to immanence as an empirical reference point for critique can become arbitrary and obscuring when it is not anchored in some minimal, formal account of human reason and activity along the lines of Hegel's Idea or Marx's species-being. Thus, for example, in his exchange with Nancy Fraser, Honneth I think correctly objects to Fraser's appeal to new social movements (such as feminism, the gay rights movement, environmentalism, and multiculturalism) and folk paradigms of social justice as immanent, empirical reference points for critique (instances of intramundane transcendence).⁴⁰ Although such phenomena are immanent to the social order, they are, on the one hand, already the results of complex processes of struggles for recognition guided by the struggle over the social configuration of the relation between

self-consciousness and life (for example, struggles over the ways in which we reproduce our means of life, struggles over the division of labor, struggles over the private and the public, the personal and the political, and so on). On other hand, new social movements and folk paradigms that have attained publicity and legitimacy can obscure hidden and yet to be articulated social pathologies, and are also subject to ongoing cooptation and ideological distortions (witness “girl-power” and “lean-in” feminism, green marketing tactics employed by corporations, and marketing campaigns that target racial minorities in the name of diversity).⁴¹

Second, and in order to avoid the dangers of appealing to immanence that runs the risk of being arbitrary, I want to suggest that ideology critique needs to be guided by a historically sensitive formal anthropology in which our constitution as both living and self-conscious places demands on social formations that carry significant normative weight, without resorting to abstract principles or substantial ideals. If the genealogy of ideology critique I have reconstructed is defensible, then the problem of immanence and transcendence is in fact already guided by formal anthropological considerations, whether this has been explicitly acknowledged or not.

Looking at the candidates for intramundane transcendence that have been most influential for critical theory cited above, an argument could be made that their normative and explanatory force have all rested upon some conception of formal anthropology. The case for the formal anthropologies of Hegel and Marx have been argued for throughout this article and I will return briefly their accounts below. Adorno’s commitment to modernist art can be traced to his attempt to retrieve the mimetic dimension of meaning-making excised by the absolute critique of anthropomorphism; Marcuse’s understanding of liberation is built upon a Freudian anthropology; Habermas’ uncovering of the significance of communicative action is founded upon an anthropologically guided reconstruction of historical materialism; Honneth’s recognition paradigm is founded upon the claim that human beings require recognition from others as a condition for self-realization. Although claims about the human being are of course, highly (and rightly) contestable, historically variable, empirically testable, and need to be assessed with extreme caution, I am in agreement with Honneth when he suggests that “the survival of social philosophy . . . depends on the success with which the claim of a weak, formal anthropology can be justified in the future.”⁴²

Drawing on resources from Hegel and Marx, I have argued throughout that the relation between self-consciousness and life identifies a specific form of human freedom with the hope that this formal condition of the actualization of a rational life can provide us with some criteria for identifying reality and ideologies

as false, without presuming a positive or ideal conception of non-ideology. A pathological social practice, which equally reflects a pathological expression of rationality, would be one that distorts the relation between self-consciousness and life, a distortion that blocks the possibility of the actualization of human freedom.⁴³ Here, Marx’s conception of alienation perhaps still provides us with the most basic resources to identify the various ways in which the relation between life and self-consciousness can become something false: in becoming alienated from nature, alienated from my own body, alienated from my life-activities, and alienated from others. Thus, for example, even while a misogynist ideology may correspond to certain material realities, this ideology can nonetheless said to be false insofar as it determines the relation between life and self-consciousness for women in a way that does not allow for the actualization of their freedom, generating various forms of alienation and restricted possibilities for self-determination (historically, the most common way in which women have been oppressed is by being reduced exclusively to the sphere of life and its reproduction). In distorting the relation between self-consciousness and life, social pathologies are characteristically accompanied by human suffering (physical, psychic, and social), a further signal of the falseness of a particular form of life.⁴⁴

Given that ideologies in some way distort or block the very relation between life and self-consciousness, two strategies propose themselves as criteria for assessing material practices and the possibilities of intramundane transcendences within them. The first is to consider the necessary formal constraints of the reproduction of a human life-form. For both Hegel and Marx, and concluding our reconstruction of the Idea and species-being, human activities are bound to three very important conditions, conditions that present themselves both as limitations and as the very site of our freedom.⁴⁵

The first condition of life-activity is embodiment: all human productive activity is realized in a specific body. My body is not only the condition of my productive activity, but my productive activities in turn work to produce and reproduce my body. Embodied life activity — “the moment of the flesh”⁴⁶ — is the first site to register suffering under conditions of social pathology, and in fact, it is only because embodiment is a condition of productive activity that suffering has a place as a normative concept. While embodiment can be the source of great suffering under the control of ideology, embodiment also contains the possibility of intramundane transcendence, for example, in the experience of aesthetic and erotic pleasure, in the appropriation of the body against dominant definitions, or bodies coming together in public spaces in acts of political

protest. Embodiment as a formal condition of free activity could also perhaps provide a basis for critiquing and assessing ideological distortions of practices surrounding health, for example, the commodification of health care, or the increasing scope of bio-power.

The second condition of life-activity is a relation to external nature, the sensuous external world. Productive activity depends upon materials from the external world, but in using and working on materials in the external world, my activity in turn creates the external world as a distinctively human world. In our exchanges with the external world, reification and alienation are the representative experiences under conditions of ideology, and the inversions and abstractions of both subjects and objects under conditions of capitalism are well documented by both Marx and Lukács.⁴⁷ As the location of intramundane transcendence, the most perspicuous experience in our relation to the sensuous world is the creation of aesthetic objects, or perhaps, following Arendt, the creation of a permanent and durable world.⁴⁸ Given that the relation to the environment is a necessary, formal condition of human freedom, this could also provide the basis for assessing, for example, the increasing commodification of natural resources, and the general destruction of the planet in the name of profit and progress, as instances of social pathology.

The third condition of life-activity is a relation to other human beings: my productive activity depends upon necessary bonds with other human beings, but I also create and recreate those bonds through individual and collective productive activities. Intersubjective life-activity has certainly received the most attention in recent critical theory, and Honneth's work on recognition is exemplary here for attempting to identify both the social pathologies of recognition (under the headings of misrecognition, disrespect, and, more recently, reification) and the normative potential of practices of recognition (intramundane transcendences under the headings of love, rights, and solidarity).⁴⁹ These three conditions of life-activity represent the three main sites in which the dialectic between life and self-consciousness takes place, and are three important sites in which both ideologies and intramundane transcendences can take hold, providing the basis for an intersectional approach to critique. Given the Marxist background of this approach, a critique of capitalism following from the dialectics of life and self-consciousness would also be a necessary component in the assessment of social pathologies along these three conditions.⁵⁰ Here I aim to demonstrate only how such a strategy might begin, and how identifying the formal conditions of life-activity can be useful for a renewed understanding of ideology critique.

Finally, a second, very general strategy for locating intramundane transcendences is to articulate a constellation of concepts that can bridge animal

life and self-consciousness life.⁵¹ Without the appropriate bridge concepts, it is immensely difficult to articulate the necessary connection between self-consciousness and life that is distinctive of human freedom. Some examples of bridge concepts might be love, second nature, purposiveness, or negativity. As with the first strategy, these concepts, along with the approach to ideology critique I have proposed in this article, are by no means exhaustive. It is important for critique that there are many ways to navigate the complicated dialectics of immanence and transcendence. Nonetheless, by returning to insights found in Hegel and Marx, it is clear that ideology critique remains an indispensable resource not only for critical theory, but for anyone attempting to understand the persistent coexistence of reason and unreason in human society.

NOTES

Thanks to Amy Allen, Jay Bernstein, Matthew Congdon, Jaime Edwards, Rahel Jaeggi, Daniel James, Lukas Kübler, Andreja Novakovic, Francey Russell, Frieder Vogelmann, and Rocío Zambrana for helpful comments and conversations on earlier drafts. Various versions of this article were presented at Vanderbilt University, Bremen University, Humboldt University, the Critical Theory Roundtable at St. Louis University, Dartmouth College, the University of Oregon, and the University of Chicago, and I am grateful to these audiences for their comments and questions.

1. Max Horkheimer, "Postscript," in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell et al. (New York: Continuum, 1975), 245.

2. Horkheimer, "The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research," in *Between Philosophy and Social Science: Selected Early Writings*, trans. G. Frederick Hunter et al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 3.

3. On the idea of social pathology, see Axel Honneth, "Pathologies of the Social: The Past and Present of Social Philosophy," in *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 3–48; "A Social Pathology of Reason: On the Intellectual Legacy of Critical Theory," in *Pathologies of Reason*, trans. James Ingram et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 19–42; and "Die Krankheiten der Gesellschaft. Annäherung an einen nahezu unmöglichen Begriff," *WestEnd—Neue Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1 (2014): 45–60.

4. See Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 55.

5. Robert Pippin has documented the significance of this injunction of modernity in his book, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

6. Rahel Jaeggi makes an interesting and important distinction between internal and immanent critique, associating the latter with a critique of ideology. See Rahel Jaeggi, "Re-thinking Ideology," in *New Waves in Political Philosophy*, eds. Boudewijn de Bruin and Christopher F. Zum (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 63–86.

7. See G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)/ *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, vol. 3 of *Werke in zwanzig*

Bänden, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969–1970), especially the introduction. On the issue of immanent critique in Hegel, see Karin de Boer, “Hegel’s Conception of Immanent Critique,” in *Conceptions of Critique in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy*, eds. Karin de Boer and Ruth Sonderegger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 83–100.

8. *Phenomenology of Spirit* ¶86/3:78.

9. Karl Marx, “For a Ruthless Criticism of Everything Existing,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1978), 14/*Marx-Engels Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1982), 1:345.

10. See for example Richard Rorty, “Feminism, Ideology, and Deconstruction: A Pragmatist View,” in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 1994); and Michael Rosen, “On Voluntary Servitude and the Theory of Ideology,” *Constellations* 7 (2000): 393–407.

11. See Ernesto Laclau, “The Death and Resurrection of the Theory of Ideology,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1(1996): 201–21; Slavoj Žižek, “Introduction” to *Mapping Ideology*; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (New York: Verso, 2007), chap. 1. For some interesting defenses of ideology critique that take this problem into account, see James Bohman, “‘When Water Chokes’: Ideology, Communication, and Practical Rationality,” *Constellations* 7 (2000): 382–92; Robin Celikates, “From Critical Social Theory to a Social Theory of Critique: On the Critique of Ideology after the Pragmatic Turn,” *Constellations* 13 (2006): 21–40; and Maeve Cooke, “Resurrecting the Rationality of Ideology Critique,” *Constellations* 13 (2006): 4–20.

12. Theodor Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967), 22.

13. See Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*, trans. Joel Golb, James Ingram, and Christiane Wilke (New York: Verso, 2003), chaps. 3 and 4; Honneth, “On the Social Dynamics of Disrespect: On the Location of Critical Theory Today,” in Honneth, *Disrespect*; and Maeve Cooke, *Re-Presenting the Good Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), chap. 3.

14. Adorno, “Cultural Criticism and Society,” 31.

15. Honneth, “On the Social Dynamics of Disrespect.”

16. See J.M. Bernstein, “Suffering Injustice: Misrecognition as Moral Injury in Critical Theory,” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 13 (2005): 303–24.

17. Hegel’s treatment of life is indebted to, among other things, his reading of Kant’s third *Critique*. On the connection between life and freedom in Hegel’s philosophy, see the contributions in *The Freedom of Life: Hegelian Perspectives*, ed. Thomas Khurana (Berlin: August Verlag, 2013).

18. The three concluding chapters in Hegel’s *Science of Logic* take up life, cognition, and absolute method, respectively. See *Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Press, 1969), 755–844/*Wissenschaft der Logik*, vol. 6 of *Werke*, 462–573.

19. See Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I*, trans. H.S. Harris et al. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1991)/*Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse* (1830), vol. 8 of *Werke*, §142 Addition.

20. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: Palgrave, 2003), A708/B736; my emphasis.

21. See *Phenomenology of Spirit* ¶172–73/ 3:143.

22. Here I am suggesting that Marx’s understanding of labor as formative activity is thoroughly Hegelian and heavily informed by Hegel’s conception of freedom. For a similar view

defending the Hegelian influence and arguing against narrower conceptions of labor in Marx, see Sean Sayers, “The Concept of Labor: Marx and his Critics,” *Science and Society* 71 (2007): 431–54.

23. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 76/MEW 40:516; my emphasis.

24. See *The German Ideology*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 76/MEW 3:33.

25. See for example, Erich Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man* (New York: Continuum, 2004). Two other important texts on the debate surrounding Marxist humanism are György Márkus, *Marxism and Anthropology: The Concept of ‘human essence’ in the Philosophy of Marx*, trans. E. deLacay and György Márkus (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1978); and Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971). For the anti-humanist view, see Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 2005).

26. Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Verso, 2014), 76–79. Although this metabolism can take various determinate forms in history, Schmidt also makes the stronger argument that this principle of metabolism is also “independent of any historical form” (136). He quotes from *Capital*: “The labor-process . . . is human action with a view to the production of use-values, appropriation of natural substances to human requirements; it is the general condition for the metabolism between man and nature; it is the everlasting nature-imposed condition of human existence and therefore is independent of every social form of that existence or rather, is common to every such form” (Marx, *Capital, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes [New York: Penguin, 1990], 290; quoted in Schmidt, 136).

27. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 149/MEW 3:20.

28. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 155–156/MEW 3:28.

29. “Consciousness [*Das Bewußtsein*] can never be anything else than conscious existence [*das bewußte Sein*], and the existence [*Sein*] of human beings is their actual life-process” (Marx, *The German Ideology*, 154/MEW 3:26).

30. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 155/MEW 3:27.

31. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 154/MEW 3:26.

32. Marx, *The German Ideology*, 154/MEW 3:26.

33. Jaeggi also addresses the paradox of the truth and falsity of ideologies in “Rethinking Ideology,” especially pp. 66–9. See also Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 72–91.

34. Adorno, “Ideology,” in *Aspects of Sociology*, Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, trans. John Viertel (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 189. Adorno also tracks the genealogy of ideology in this essay, tracing the critique of false consciousness to Francis Bacon, even though the term “ideology” itself originated from Destutt de Tracy. On ideology as objectively necessary false consciousness, see Maeve Cooke, “Resurrecting the Rationality of Ideology Critique.”

35. The first example recurs in Marx and Adorno; the second is Sally Haslanger’s, in “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground,” in Sally Haslanger *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 449. Haslanger’s argument is that although generic statements such as “women are submissive,” “cows are food,” or “blacks are criminal,” appear to correspond to certain “facts” at face value, it is important to avoid the mistaken inference that such statements identify the essence or nature of their subjects.

36. For an acute and nuanced analysis of the various dimensions and levels of false consciousness and how ideology critique might operate in a non-paternalistic or non-elitist way,

see Geuss, *The Idea of Critical Theory*, 82–5. On the idea of interests, see chap. two.

37. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1997), 18.

38. Honneth, “On the Social Dynamics of Disrespect,” 64.

39. See Honneth’s account of formal ethics in “Pathologies of the Social,” 36.

40. See Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition*, 114–20.

41. Fraser is, of course, aware of neoliberal appropriations of feminism and offers her own account of this problem. See, in particular, the last two chapters of her book, *Fortunes of Feminism: From State-Managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis* (New York: Verso, 2013). Fraser’s own dialectic of immanence and transcendence moves between new social movements on the one hand, and her theory of justice founded upon the principle of parity of participation on the other.

42. Honneth, “Pathologies of the Social,” 42.

43. For an excellent account of the possibilities of such a method of diagnosis along Hegelian lines, see Frederick Neuhauser, “Life, Freedom, and Social Pathology,” unpublished mss.

44. See Honneth, “A Social Pathology of Reason,” 39; and Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 2004), 203.

45. Here I follow the three conditions presented by Hegel in the “Life” chapter in the *Science of Logic*. See 761–74/6:469–87.

46. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 203.

47. See also Honneth, *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Rahel Jaeggi, *Alienation*, trans. Frederick Neuhauser and Alan E. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

48. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

49. Habermas’ account of communicative rationality and its potential distortions would also fall under this third condition.

50. See, for example, Martin Hartmann and Axel Honneth, “Paradoxes of Capitalism,” in *Constellations* 13 (2006): 41–58; Rahel Jaeggi, “What (if Anything) is Wrong with Capitalism? Three Ways to Critique Capitalism,” unpublished mss.

51. See Haslanger, “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground,” 475.

Karen Ng is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University. She is working on a book entitled *Hegel’s Concept of Life: Freedom, Form, and Logic*.