Non-ideal Theory as Ideology

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ABSTRACT: In the wake of the non-ideal theory turn in political philosophy, few have paused to ask: Is non-ideal theory a form of ideology? And perhaps even fewer have paused to ask: Is the debate between ideal/non-ideal theorists itself a form of ideology? To the first question, I argue that non-ideal theory is ideological in virtue of the fact that it rules out more utopian ways of theorizing by methodological fiat, and in so doing, risks entrenching an unjust status quo. To the second question, I argue that the debate between ideal/non-ideal theorists is itself a form of ideology, one which serves to reinforce the status quo by convincing political philosophers/theorists that the most pressing problems are problems about what we should think about what we are doing. But this is false. An upshot of my argument is that we ought to abandon the ideal/non-ideal theory debate and address the pressing problems of political philosophy head-on in pluralist fashion, oscillating back and forth between these two modes of theorizing without a decision procedure to tell us when we should take up one perspective or the other.

KEYWORDS: Ideal Theory; Non-ideal Theory; Ideology; Justice; Genealogy

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The idea of political philosophy as reconciliation must be invoked with care. For political philosophy is always in danger of being used corruptly as a defense of an unjust and unworthy status quo, and thus of being ideological in Marx's sense. From time to time we must ask whether justice as fairness, or any other view, is ideological in this way; and if not, why not? Are the very basic ideas it uses ideological? How can we show they are not?[1]

— John Rawls

§1 Introduction

Until the recent non-ideal theory turn in political philosophy, the following two propositions were relatively uncontroversial:

1. "The reason for beginning with ideal theory is that it provides [...] the only basis for the systematic grasp of these more pressing problems [i.e., structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression]."[2]

2. "[Until] the ideal is identified, at least in outline … non-ideal theory lacks an objective, an aim, by reference to which its queries can be answered."[3]

Yet shortly after their rapid ascent to common knowledge, these two dogmas of Rawlsian political philosophy came under fire. Critics who reject these two dogmas often take themselves to be rejecting a particular way of *doing* political philosophy, a way which emphasizes figuring out what justice requires under conditions of full compliance, only then to consider issues of implementation in conditions of

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[1] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 4, n.4.

[2] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 9.

[3] Rawls, *Law of Peoples*, 90.

partial compliance. These critics contend that this assumption, which forms the bedrock of so-called "ideal theory," veils a more pernicious political agenda, one which is antithetical to the proper goal of political philosophy as an enterprise.[4] As Charles Mills puts it, the problem with ideal theory is that it is the result of a "distortional complex of ideals, values, norms, and beliefs that reflects the nonrepresentative interests and experiences of a small minority of the national population—middle-to-upper-class white males—who are hugely over-represented in the professional philosophical population."[5] The safe haven for contemporary political philosophers, we are told, is in non-ideal theory, for it allows us to see what ideal theory obscures: structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression. But this now familiar narrative should strike us as strange, for even if we grant that ideal theory is a form of ideology, we have not yet stopped to ask ourselves: is non-ideal theory itself a form of ideology?

The goal of this paper is to examine this question. My thesis is that for all its merits, non-ideal theory is neither innocent nor insulated from ideology critique.[6] More precisely, I will argue that non-ideal theory is ideological in virtue of the fact that it rules out more radical utopian ways of theorizing by methodological fiat. But the goal of this paper is not to pit ideal theory against non-ideal theory, for I agree that ideal theory is just as ideological as its non-ideal counterpart. Instead, my goal is to argue for a deflationary resolution to the ideal/non-ideal theory debate. I aim to do so by asking what it says about ourselves that we are having a debate about whether we should be ideal/non-ideal

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[4] For a general overview of the ideal/non-ideal theory debate, see Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," §§1-3. See also Rossi and Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory." As Rossi and Sleat note, there may be significant overlap between political realism and non-ideal theory, but the two concepts are nevertheless distinct. Finally, for a more recent criticism of the bright-line distinction between ideal and non-ideal theory, see Levy, "There Is No Such Thing As Ideal Theory."

[5] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 172.

[6] I am not the first to raise this worry. Most recently, see, e.g., Adams, "An Ideology Critique of Nonideal Methodology." I am largely sympathetic to the overall efficacy of his critique. As such, in §4, I aim to offer my ideology critique of non-ideal theory at the level of principles, which are, I take it, still within the spirit of his critique.

theorists. I offer a pessimistic answer, which says that the debate between ideal/non-ideal theory is itself a form of ideology, one which serves to reinforce the status quo by convincing political philosophers/theorists that the most pressing problems are problems about what we should think about what we are doing. But this is false. It follows that we ought to abandon the debate and address the pressing problems of political philosophy head-on in pluralist fashion, oscillating back and forth between these two modes of theorizing without a decision procedure to tell us when we should take up one perspective or the other.

§2 Preliminaries

Let us take a moment to define the terms of the debate. It is not my goal in this section to offer up a real as opposed to a nominal definition of *ideology critique*. Nor is it my goal to definitively settle the conditions which demarcate an ideal theory from a non-ideal theory. This is not the place to settle these in-house disputes. What I can do, however, is prevent linguistic disputes from arising by outlining precisely what I mean when I use these terms. I aim to use these terms in a general and schematic manner so that the fine-grained details can be filled in as the reader pleases.

§2.1 Ideal Theory and Non-ideal Theory

Following Laura Valentini, I will say that a political philosophy/theory counts as an *ideal theory* just in case it satisfies at least one of the following three requirements:[7]

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[7] I add the qualifier "one of" to note that there are in-house disputes about which requirements are necessary conditions for making a theory an ideal theory. Cf. Rossi and Sleat, "Realism in Normative Political Theory," 690. One more qualifier: to make things streamlined, let us say that if one endorses, say, the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT, they cannot also endorse the PARTIAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT on pains of practical inconsistency. I leave open the possibility that some may not prefer to box themselves in and so may prefer to mix and match principles, e.g., endorsing the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT and the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT, but this, by my lights, does not count as ideal or non-

FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT: "(i) all relevant agents comply with the demands of justice applying to them; and (ii) natural and historical conditions are favourable – i.e., society is sufficiently economically and socially developed to realize justice."[8]

UTOPIAN REQUIREMENT: "Feasibility constraints play little to no role in theory construction: the point of the theory is to tell us what to think, not what to do."[9]

END-STATE REQUIREMENT: Theory construction ought to aim at a "long-term goal for institutional reform."[10]

Following Valentini again, I will say that a political philosophy/theory counts as *non-ideal theory* just in case it satisfies at least one of the following three requirements:[11]

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT: Not everyone (i) fully "complies with the demands of justice" and the (ii) "natural and historical conditions" are unfavourable.[12]

REALISTIC REQUIREMENT: Feasibility constraints play a large role in theory construction: the point of the theory is to tell us what to do, not merely what to think.[13]

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ideal theory but some hybrid variant thereof. I'll defend a view broadly sympathetic to (temporal) mixing and matching in section 5.

[8] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 655. Condition (i) is derived from Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8. Condition (ii) is derived from Rawls, *Law of Peoples*, 4-6.

[9] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 657. Influential representatives include but are not limited to: Cohen, *Rescuing Justice from Equality*; Simmons, "Ideal and Nonideal Theory."; Estlund, *Utopophobia*.

[10] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 660. Valentini cites: Rawls, *Law of Peoples*; Simmons, "Ideal and Nonideal Theory"; and Pablo Gilabert, "Comparative Assessments of Justice, Political Feasibility, and Ideal Theory."

[11] Mutatis Mutandis, see n.7.

[12] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 655.

[13] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 657.

TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT: Theory construction ought to proceed in piecemeal fashion, identifying near-term goals that are actually achievable.[14]

§2.2 Ideology

Following Charles Mills, I will define *ideology* as a "distortional complex of ideals, values, norms, and beliefs that reflects the nonrepresentative interests and experiences of a small minority of the national population."[15] Accordingly, to launch an *ideology critique* against some X, is to provide both a reason to reject the truth of X and to provide an account of *how* X functions to reinforce relationships of domination/exploitation/coercion/oppression.[16]

Because ideology critique plays both an epistemic and an explanatory role, it ought to be distinguished from so-called debunking arguments, which only play an epistemic role.[17] In brief, debunking arguments consist of a causal premise and an epistemic premise. The causal premise identifies what causes S to believe *p* (e.g., underlying psychological features). The epistemic premise asserts that the causal premise is an epistemic defeater for *p* (e.g., those underlying psychological features do not appropriately track the truth). Accordingly, the conclusion of a debunking argument is that S's belief that *p* is unjustified.[18]

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[14] Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory," 660. For recent discussion, see, e.g., Wiens, "Prescribing Institutions Without Ideal Theory," "Against Ideal Guidance," and Barrett, "Deviating from the Ideal."

[15] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 172.

[16] Cf. Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory.*

[17] Unfortunately, these two types of critique are sometimes run together. See, e.g., Amia Srinivasan's criticism of Jason Stanley's definition of ideological beliefs: "Now, on Stanley's notion of ideological belief, any belief that is resistant to counter-evidence—any belief that lies near the centre of one's doxastic web—counts as ideology. But that rules in too many items of knowledge as ideology: my belief that I have hands, that 2 + 2 = 4, that my mother loves me, all count as ideology on Stanley's schema." (Amia Srinivasan, "Philosophy and Ideology," 374.) What is therefore required, if the term "ideology" is to be extensionally adequate, is a functional counterpart to the epistemic deficiency.

[18] I borrow this general structure from Kahane, "Evolutionary Debunking Arguments."

Debunking arguments are ubiquitous, for all they require is that the debunker tell a story about how S's belief that *p* is improperly based. But to launch an ideology critique against some X (e.g., the naturalness of the male/female gender binary), is to provide both a reason to reject the truth of X *and* an account of how X functions so as to reinforce relationships of domination. As Tommie Shelby puts it: "A form of social consciousness is an ideology if and only if (i) its discursive content is epistemically defective, that is, distorted by illusions; (ii) through these illusions it functions to establish or reinforce social relations of oppression; and (iii) its wide acceptance can be (largely) explained by the class-structured false consciousness of most who embrace it."[19]

When we make an ideology critique against some X (e.g., ideal theory), what is the critique *about*? Two answers present themselves. On the cognitivist view, we might think that the target of ideology critique is the false *beliefs* of individuals, which function to reinforce/establish relationships of domination. Yet the cognitivist view seems to pass the explanatory buck, for it assumes that the skull is *the* holding cell for ideology. But to many philosophers, ideology seems to be just as much a matter of praxis as of belief. Indeed, as Sally Haslanger writes:

> [O]n the cognitivist account it remains the individual's thinking or reasoning that is in error, not the very tools that our language and culture provide us in order to think. But what we absorb through socialization is not just a set of beliefs, but a language, a set of concepts, a responsiveness to particular features of things (and not others), a set of social meanings. The cognitivist emphasis on shared beliefs and patterns of reasoning is too limited to accommodate all this.[20]

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[19] Shelby, "Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory," 183-184.

[20] Haslanger, "Racism, Ideology, and Social Movements," 9. See also Haslanger, "Political Epistemology and Social Critique."

Adopting Haslanger's pluralist view allows us to see ideology at work in more ordinary contexts. For instance, suppose a committee has finalized its plans to build a subway. Suppose further that none of the members of the committee have any explicitly held prejudicial beliefs against persons with mobility issues. As it turns out, the subway is widely regarded as a great success and the committee is praised for their careful and detail-oriented planning. "But detail-oriented for whom?" we might ask, which then prompts the ideology critique. The fact that the committee failed to include an elevator in the subway plans reveals something about what they took to be the social meaning of public transportation: a means of transporting people *like them*. Thus, even though nobody on the committee held any explicit ableist beliefs, their actions (and omissions) played a functional role of reinforcing exclusionary ableist norms.

In what follows, I will use *ideology* and *ideology critique* in Haslanger's pluralist sense, yet I will retain the general features of Shelby's definition. One reason for doing so is that it allows us to critique not only the particular beliefs of ideal/non-ideal theorists, but also the functional role that the practice of theorizing in such-and-such a way plays in society.

§3 Ideal Theory as Ideology

Let us now turn to Mills's ideology critique of ideal theory. For Mills, the orthodox orientation into political theorizing begins with the assumption that we should be doing ideal theory. According to Mills, the ideal theorist beings by asking the right question: "What is justice?" Where the ideal theorist goes wrong, Mills tells us, is that they then proceed to make a series of idealizations in order to answer that question.[21]

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[21] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 168.

First, they start with an idealized social ontology; that is, the assumption that we are all, deep down, moral equals and that "structural domination, exploitation, coercion, and oppression" are deviations from this natural equality.[22] They then build in idealized cognitive capacities. They then idealize away all oppression. Historical oppression, though it may exist in the past, is nonexistent in their thought experiments. Theorizing about reparations is not necessarily ruled out but if anyone does discuss it the discussion will be "vague and promissory."[23] Next, they idealize social institutions. The family, the economic structure, and legal system are assumed to operate according to yet another idealized model. This rules out discriminatory practices by judges and law enforcement officials, patriarchal domination and oppression in the family structure, and domination by the market.[24] Though this may sound strange, recall that for the ideal theorist, we ought to fix our ideals first before we deal with these real-world concerns, pressing as they may be. The next step for the ideal theorist is to the idealize the cognitive sphere: the typical person in the ideal theorist's thought experiment faces no "cognitive obstacles," and neither suffers from akrasia nor deluded self-interest.[25] As a last step, the ideal theorist idealizes compliance. That is, they assume, along with Rawls, that there is strict compliance with the principles of justice regulating a well-ordered society.[26]

Having isolated the six characteristics of ideal theorizing, Mills then asks us to "perform the operation of Brechtian defamiliarization," and ask ourselves: "*How in God's name could anyone think that this is the appropriate way to do ethics?*"[27]

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22 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 168.

23 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 168.

24 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 169.

25 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 169.

26 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 169.

27 Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 169.

Although mainstream political philosophers may balk when presented with this question, Mills goes on to explain why the question is intelligible and worthy of consideration. He writes:

> If we start from what is presumably the uncontroversial premise that the ultimate point of ethics is to guide our actions and make ourselves better people and the world a better place, then the framework above will not only be unhelpful, but will in certain respects be deeply antithetical to the proper goal of theoretical ethics as an enterprise.[28]

Expanding on this point, we might say that according to Mills's ideology critique, when the ideal theorist endorses the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT this leads them to systematically ignore issues of partial compliance, for example, facts about gender and racial subordination. Herein lies the epistemic horn of the ideology critique: these issues are salient injustices; thus, a theory is epistemically deficient insofar as it fails to account of them. The functional horn of the ideology critique naturally follows: the best explanation for why ideal theorists utilize the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT is that it allows them to endlessly defer these issues.[29] Thus, for Mills, both the principles of ideal theory and the practices of ideal theorizers function to obscure the importance of such issues.[30] The proper way to highlight and theorize about such issues is to start doing non-ideal theory. Put otherwise, we ought to ditch the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT for the PARTIAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT when theorizing about justice. This is because the PARTIAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT avoids both the epistemic and functional horn of ideology critique. That is, it does not idealize away oppression to

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[28] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 170.

[29] As Mills notes, this issue is not only a problem for Rawls himself; it is a problem for his followers. Mills writes: "[In] a 1999 five-volume collection of eighty-eight essays from three decades of writing on Rawls [...], only one of the included essays deals with race, that being an article by the African-American philosopher Laurence Thomas. [...] What does this say about the evasions of ideal theory? Is it that the United States has long since achieved racial justice, so there is no need to theorize it?" (Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 179.)

[30] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 179.

the benefit of non-oppressed persons; and in so doing, a non-ideal theory of justice has the potential to actually illuminate—rather than obscure—these pressing matters.

Of course, some ideal theorists will claim that they do not assume the FULL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT. Instead, they might characterize their view, for example, as one which endorses the END-STATE REQUIREMENT. Yet this move does not escape Mills's critique, for Mills can run a similar gambit on the END-STATE REQUIREMENT, claiming that it too leads to epistemic distortions which function to reinforce relations of domination. Perhaps no book better exemplifies the END-STATE REQUIREMENT than Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.[31] But Mills contends that the book, though almost half a century old, has failed to incite a discussion about reparations for Native Americans and Black Americans—and this is despite the fact that, for Nozick, the "principle of rectification is explicitly demarcated as one of the three basic principles of justice."[32]

"Whence this silence?" Mills asks.[33] An inference to the best explanation takes us to the functional horn of the ideology critique: the reason why ideal theorists utilize the END-STATE REQUIREMENT is that it allows them to bypass theorizing about how we might think about justice in

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[31] Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.

[32] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 180. Indeed, one of the most prominent reviews of the Nozick's book neither mentions "historical injustice" nor "reparations." See Nagel, "Libertarianism without Foundations: Review of 'Anarchy, State and Utopia' by Robert Nozick." This is despite the fact that such a discussion would seem to, as Mills might put it, "logically follow" upon reading Nozick's book. But it is not as simple as seeing what follows from what. After all, publications citing Nozick's book which mention "reparations" are relatively few in the years following its publication: 1974-1984 = 18 instances of "reparations" within citing articles. The 1990s to the early 2000s is also quite slim: 1984-1994 = 31; 1994-2004 = 78. It is only following Mills's influential article, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," that many readers of Nozick seem to draw the connection *en masse*, with 2004-2014 reaching 293 instances of "reparations" within citing articles. That said, as Katrina Forrester notes, there was *a* debate going on in the late 1960s and 1970s about reparations within political philosophy. See Forrester, *In the Shadow of Justice*, 133, n.156-158. What is presumably at issue for Mills, however, is that relatively few readers of Nozick took seriously what followed from his theory. One notable exception, however, is Bernard Williams's 1975 review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, recently reprinted as Williams, "Anarchy, State and Utopia, by Robert Nozick."

[33] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 180.

the real-world, as opposed to a hypothetical world where free and equal persons engage in just original acquisitions of property. The epistemic horn of the ideology critique naturally follows. It is a truism that there are salient injustices related to unjust transfer and acquisition of property; thus, a theory is epistemically deficient insofar as it fails to account for such facts. But the END-STATE REQUIREMENT leads us to theorize in such a way that excludes these facts, thereby making it an instance of ideology. The proper way to theorize about rectificatory justice, Mills might say, is to ditch the END-STATE REQUIREMENT for the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT. This is because the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT evades both the epistemic and functional horn of ideology critique; it takes the issue of how to achieve rectificatory justice head-on, as opposed to marginalizing the issue to an endnote, as Nozick does.[34]

Mills concludes that not only is ideal theory not useful; it is pernicious and antithetical to the proper goal of ethics—to figure out what to do, how to live, and how to be. The lesson Mills draws from his discussion of the many vices of ideal theory is that the "best way to bring about the ideal is by recognizing the nonideal, and that by assuming the ideal or the near-ideal, one is only guaranteeing the perpetuation of the nonideal."[35]

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[34] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 181.

[35] Mills, "'Ideal Theory' as Ideology," 185. I should note that there is an extensive literature devoted to rescuing ideal theory from Mills's critique. The literature exemplifies a common feature of many philosophical debates, with some holding that ideal theory can be fully vindicated, others claiming that it can only be partially vindicated, and still others finding Mills's critique particularly worrisome. But let us set these concerns aside for now. My goal in the following section is to apply a structurally similar critique to non-ideal theory—one that is appropriate by Mills's own lights—in order to show that non-ideal theory does not get off on the cheap. I should note that some readers may be skeptical about the very possibility of ideology critique as construed by Mills, Haslanger, Shelby, etc. See, e.g., Sankaran, "What's New in the New Ideology Critique?"

§4 Non-ideal Theory as Ideology

The familiar origin story told about the non-ideal theory turn takes the form of a two-stage redemption narrative, whereby a particular group of theorists are delivered from the distorting illusions produced by ideal theory, thereby allowing them to finally begin the hard work of theorizing about the real-world, *sans* ideology. But the origin story is false—or at least the "sans ideology" qualifier is.

Now as I mentioned in section 1, I am not the first to raise the worry that non-ideal theory is subject to ideology critique. To give a recent example, Matthew Adams sums up his ideology critique of non-ideal theory as follows:

> [...] the rejection of the orthodox ideal theory paradigm can be explained by the increasing infiltration of capitalist and managerial social attitudes into academia. These social attitudes have commodified people's conception of justice and, consequently, induced suspicion of ideal theory, which is not construed as having direct practical value. Consequently, nonideal methodology performs the distorting social role of reifying and enforcing unjust features of the status quo: the hegemonies of capitalism and managerialism that induced suspicion of ideal theory.[36]

In what follows, I aim to build on Adams's ideology critique. At a macro-level, both Adams and I are offering ideology critiques of non-ideal methodology. At a micro-level, Adams focuses on applied ethics to show how the rising interest in non-ideal methodology coincides with the growing demand for "relevant" research, where "relevance" is construed as having a demonstrable and calculable (social) impact that can be weighed by university administrators for the long-term goal of expanding

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[36] Adams, "An Ideology Critique of Nonideal Methodology," 676. See also Stahl, "What (If Anything) Is Ideological about Ideal Theory?," for disucssion of Adams's point.

a withering undergraduate enrollment, acquiring research grants, and so on. At a micro-level, I am interested in our thought and talk about justice in the workplace. I will take Elizabeth Anderson's *Private Government* as a recent paradigmatic example of non-ideal theorizing about justice in the workplace.[37] The main claim I will argue for in this section is that non-ideal theory is ideological in virtue of the fact that it rules out more radical utopian ways of theorizing by methodological fiat. And both friends and foes of radical utopian political views should find this fear of utopia troublesome because a first-order view about what justice in the workplace requires should not be ruled out by one's particular second-order methodological commitments.

Following a few recent and influential non-ideal theory critiques of the workplace, let us take three things for granted. First, let us take for granted that workers are *dominated*; that is, that they are subject to the arbitrary and unaccountable will of their employers in the workplace.[38] Second, let us take for granted that this domination is *pervasive*; that is, that it occurs both inside and outside the workplace. Domination occurs inside the workplace, for example, when workers are not permitted to take "adequate bathroom breaks" and are thus "forced to wear diapers" to keep up with their productivity targets.[39] Domination occurs outside the workplace, for example, when workers are "pressured by their bosses to favor some political candidate or issue, by threats of job loss, wage cuts, or plant closure."[40] Finally, let us take for granted that the *severity* of workplace domination is often

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[37] Anderson, *Private Government*.

[38] See, e.g., Pettit, *On The People's Terms*; O'Shea, "Are Workers Dominated?," and "Socialist Republicanism."

[39] Anderson, *Private Government*, 135. Anderson cites the following study: Oxfam America, "No Relief: Denial of Bathroom Breaks in the Poultry Industry."

[40] Anderson, *Private Government*, 135. Consider, as another example, cases of wage-slavery, whereby workers are dominated by the demands of the market. If they try and strike there may be a reserve of unemployed workers who are ready and willing to take their place thus rendering their resistance inefficacious. It is in this sense, then, that for Marx all wage workers are wage slaves in the sense that they are bound to work within the wage system, i.e., the capitalist mode of production. Karl Marx, *Capital*. For a contemporary examination of "wage-slavery" see Gourevitch, "Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work," 595. Thanks to an anonymous referee for asking me to clarify this footnote.

positively correlated with one's social/political/economic status. For instance, Anderson notes that the abuses suffered by "hundreds of thousands" of undocumented migrant workers "include fraud, being forced to work without pay, rape and sexual harassment, beatings, torture, confinement to the workplace and to squalid housing for which extortionate rent is charged, exhausting hours, isolation, religious compulsion, and psychological manipulation and intimidation."[41]

So what is to be done? Anderson says that there are "four ways to improve the freedom and equality of workers: exit, rule of law constraints on employers, constitutional rights, and voice."[42] Note that these four ways of improving the freedom and equality of workers nicely align with the methodological commitments of non-ideal theory that I outlined in section 2. Improving the exit rights of workers—either through prosecuting employers who arbitrarily interfere with employees' rights to exit or by promoting a universal basic income—can all be done in a piecemeal fashion thus satisfying the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT.[43] So too with modifying the rule of law constraints on employers. Whether the problem is with flawed anti-trust law, inefficient market signals, outmoded foreign trade policies, rent seeking, or some combination thereof, one can simply chip away at the margins of law as it is and thereby construct the right constraints on employers.[44] In working along any of these axes, we take seriously the feasibility constraints within our liberal constitutional market society and therefore satisfy the REALISTIC REQUIREMENT. All the necessary changes being made, we can run the same gambit on the domain of constitutional rights. And finally, the recognition that workers need *voice* in the workplace assumes that not all firms comply with the demands of justice and

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[41] Anderson, *Private Government*, 137.

[42] Anderson, *Private Government*, 133.

[43] On skepticism about the sufficiency of universal basic income, see Gourevitch, "Labor Republicanism and the Transformation of Work."; Nieswandt, "Automation, Basic Income and Merit."

[44] For a recent influential criticism of consumer welfare model of antitrust law, see Khan, "Amazon's Antitrust Paradox."

therefore need to be held accountable to the workers that they govern.[45] Of course if things were otherwise, then perhaps workers would not need *voice*. But in the real world, the domination exerted by firms is persistent, pervasive, and severe, and so we should theorize with the PARTIAL COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENT if we want to figure out what to do in the here and now.

But are these reforms enough to bring about freedom both within and outside of the workplace? Or do they preclude a more revolutionary politics? Two answers present themselves.

The Steadfast Reformist will say that the freedom of workers will be greatly improved by instituting any one of these reforms. Of course, no Steadfast Reformist completely agrees with one another on the details. Some believe that a universal basic income is the solution. Others say that we also need workplace democracy. And others think that we need to tinker with some combination thereof and also tackle outdated anti-trust law, and so on. But all Steadfast Reformists agree on one thing: the solution lies somewhere *within* the standard liberal package and so we should nudge ourselves towards a comprehensive rethink of liberal democracy.[46]

The Radical Revolutionary thinks that Steadfast Reformist is naïve and misguided. No doubt, the Radical Revolutionaries find it hard to agree with one another on the details. Some believe that we need to *smash capitalism* because the system is rotten and cannot be reformed, while others believe that we need to *tame capitalism* with radical Anticapitalist reforms much stronger than those recommended by the Steadfast Reformist.[47] Yet despite their disagreements, all Radical Revolutionaries agree on one

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[45] On workplace democracy see, e.g., Frega, Herzog, and Neuhäuser, "Workplace Democracy—The Recent Debate"; Landemore and Ferreras, "In Defense of Workplace Democracy: Towards a Justification of the Firm–State Analogy."

[46] I borrow the phrase "standard liberal package" from Patten, *Equal Recognition*. For proponents who are broadly sympathetic with the Steadfast Reformist position as I describe it here, see, e.g., the bibliography of Courtland, Gaus, and Schmidtz, "Liberalism."

[47] I borrow these terms and general framing from Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century*, 38-42. For proponents of each, see Wright's book. There are of course more proponents to consider, and the sketch I have given

thing: the solution lies somewhere *outside* the standard liberal package and so we should overthrow the system and strive towards utopia.[48]

Notice that from the point of view of the Radical Revolutionary, the background presuppositions of non-ideal theory will seem ideological in virtue of the fact that they rule out more radical utopian ways of theorizing by methodological fiat.[49] They will say that what the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT *does* in practice is encourage us to frame our political problems *as* policy problems that can be resolved through clever nudge schemes, constitutional tinkering, etc. But the Radical Revolutionary holds that the *cause* of our contemporary workplace ills—i.e., capitalism—is not properly addressed by focusing on piecemeal reform. Moreover, the Radical Revolutionary will say that in adopting the REALISTIC REQUIREMENT, we inaccurately represent certain features of our global market order as fixed, but that part of the point of thinking critically about domination in the workplace is to *denaturalize* these oppressive orders.[50] And herein lies the epistemic horn of the ideology critique: these issues of workplace domination are salient injustices; thus, a theory is epistemically deficient insofar as it fails to account for the true cause of such injustices. The functional horn of the ideology critique naturally follows: the best explanation for why non-ideal theorists utilize, say, the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT is that it allows them to endlessly defer these issues: rather than theorize beyond what is possible *outside* of capitalism, they encourage us to endlessly tinker *within* it. Thus, for the Radical Revolutionary, both the principles of non-ideal theory and the practices of non-ideal

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here is intentionally vague on a few important details. But the reader is free to fill in those details in whatever way they deem most plausible.

[48] For proponents who are broadly sympathetic with the Radical Revolutionary position as I describe it here, see, e.g., the bibliography of Leopold, "Analytical Marxism." N.b.: all the qualifiers in the previous footnote apply here too.

[49] See also ideal anarchists, e.g., G. A. Cohen, Jacob T. Levy, Christopher Freiman, and Jason Brennan as cited in Brennan and Freiman, "Why Not Anarchism?." All the necessary changes being made, one could perhaps run the same critique against non-ideal theory from an ideal anarchist point of view.

[50] Cf. Queloz, *The Practical Origins of Ideas*, 102.

theorizers function to obscure the importance of such issues. The proper way to highlight such issues is to start doing ideal theory. Take up the UTOPIAN REQUIREMENT, the Radical Revolutionary says, and ask how we would behave if we were to transcend the capitalist market order.

No doubt the Steadfast Reformist will find the Radical Revolutionary's ideology critique unpersuasive. They might even grant the sociological fact that the methodological commitments of non-ideal theory—e.g., the TRANSITIONAL REQUIREMENT—does function in such a way so as to eliminate a more revolutionary politics from the frame of inquiry. Yet they will contend that there is nothing wrong with this because the best we can hope for is a modest form of liberalism, warts and all. They will further point out that the Radical Revolutionary's ideology critique only holds if we cannot imagine a fully just liberal society which functions within a global capitalist order. But they will say that we can imagine such a reasonable utopia and therefore do not need to *smash capitalism*.[51] Of course the Radical Revolutionary will regard this sort of reply as evidence that the Steadfast Reformist is wholly caught up in their bad ideology. And the Steadfast Reformist will provide their arguments yet again for why their view is not ideological. Eventually, both sides will reach a point at which neither can provide the other a non-question-begging response because there is so little common ground that is agreed upon.

For the sake of argument, let us grant that the Steadfast Reformist is right in holding that some subset of the Radical Revolutionaries are misguided in thinking that we need to *smash capitalism*, and that anyone who disagrees with them is caught up in bad ideology. Still, it seems harder for the Steadfast Reformist to evade the charge by a different sort of Radical Revolutionary who claims that we simply need to *tame capitalism* with radical Anticapitalist reforms much stronger than the sort of

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[51] See Wright, *How to Be an Anticapitalist in the Twenty-First Century*, 38-42. Again, unfortunately I lack the space here to fill in the necessary details of what exactly makes one reform *R* count as an instance of taming or smashing capitalism. The details will in turn depend on how one wants to carve up the distinction between the Radical Revolutionary and the Steadfast Reformist.

reforms recommended by the Steadfast Reformist.[52] Here there is *some* common ground. And so it seems open for this sort of Radical Revolutionary to ask the Steadfast Reformist: "How sure are you that non-ideal theory escapes ideology critique? Isn't it possible that the framing of political problems vis-à-vis non-ideal theory—that is, the eschewing of utopia in favor of realism—sometimes functions to preclude revolutionary politics? Of course, this may not always be the case. We may be able to nudge ourselves towards freedom on a wide variety of issues. But surely we can't rely on piecemeal reform for everything."

At this point, I think epistemic humility requires that the Steadfast Reformist concede at least *something* to the ideology critique of the Radical Revolutionary. They do not of course have to abandon their framework. But it does seem reasonable for them to respond not by digging their heels in. Insofar as the Steadfast Reformist regards their Radical Revolutionary interlocutor as reasonable, they ought to acknowledge that they cannot rule out that they are *not* in ideology and should therefore investigate the possibility further. Indeed, this is just what Rawls—a Steadfast Reformist *par excellence*—prompts his readers to do in a footnote of *Justice as Fairness*:

> The idea of political philosophy as reconciliation must be invoked with care. For political philosophy is always in danger of being used corruptly as a defense of an unjust and unworthy status quo, and thus of being ideological in Marx's sense. From time to time we must ask whether justice as fairness, or any other view, is ideological

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[52] As an anonymous referee points out, there is perhaps something strange with using the label "Radical Revolutionary" to describe such a view, since, by some philosophers' lights, it is not revolutionary at all. But the labels are not too important, so feel free to swap them if you please.

in this way; and if not, why not? Are the very basic ideas it uses ideological? How can

we show they are not?[53]

§5 What Was the Point of the Ideal/Non-ideal Theory Debate?

Nothing I have said here will fully resolve the debate between ideal and non-ideal theorists. Like most

philosophical debates, the one side will respond by modifying their view so as to evade the objections

of the other side, and the other side will in turn respond by saying that the modified view either

inadequately addresses the objection, misunderstands it, or illegitimately evades the objection by

means of an ad hoc patch. If that is how things proceed, then I do not purport to have provided a

clean resolution to the dialectic. But perhaps we can dissolve the apparent need for a resolution by

asking whether a dissolution is possible. For given the persistence of the debate, both sides may benefit

from taking a step back to ask: What does it say about ourselves that we are having a debate about

whether we should do political philosophy using ideal theory or non-ideal theory?[54]

Here is one sort of answer we might give—let us call it the *optimist answer*. We are having the

ideal/non-ideal theory debate because, in part, we are trying to figure out if the Rawlsian paradigm is

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[53] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*, 4, n.4. It is curious that non-ideal theorists inspired by Rawls have not taken up this task in a detailed and thorough manner. No doubt I have only provided the contours of how these questions posed by Rawls might be answered. But I hope to have laid something of a groundwork for future inquiry. For what it is worth, I am largely sympathetic of Anderson's diagnostic of our contemporary workplace ills, and I agree with her on the solutions, but still, I think it is false to think of myself as wholly insulated from ideology critique. One of the targets of this essay is therefore, somewhat ironically, myself.

[54] Cf. Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, and *Not Enough*. Moyn also poses a similar question regarding the rapid ascendancy of human rights discourse, thereby calling into question their neutral political status. "To know what to make of human rights," Moyn provocatively suggests, we must first "understand what they have made of us." (Moyn, *Human Rights and the Uses of History*, 169.) In a similar vein, we might also ask the participants to this debate, of which I am one: "What is it about our particular historical moment that brought us to have *this* debate? What has the debate over ideal/non-ideal theory made of us?"

correct. And the Rawlsian paradigm tells us that we cannot grasp the pressing problems of political philosophy unless we can see them clearly and distinctly. Yet in order to see them clearly and distinctly we need to figure out the correct ideal theory. Thus, we must theorize in *stages*: first, we get all the details of the correct ideal theory specified, and then we turn to the messy, non-ideal world and apply the theory.[55]

On this telling, the ideal/non-ideal theory debate is born out of the disagreement with the Rawlsian paradigm. Understood as a game of choosing sides, it is now increasingly common to hear philosophers and theorists self-identify as either an "ideal theorist" or "non-ideal theorist." Most parties to this debate seem to think that providing a resolute answer to the ideal/non-ideal theory debate will give us some firm ground upon which we can build a systematic theory of justice. Simply put, they say that we are having the debate because we are trying to figure out what we should think about how we think about justice.

Here is another sort of answer we might give—let us call it the *pessimist answer*. Our having the ideal/non-ideal theory debate is *itself* a form of ideology, one which serves to reinforce the status quo by convincing political philosophers/theorists that the most pressing problems are meta-problems, i.e., problems about what we should think about what we are doing. But this *framing* simply moves the bump under the rug, for if Rawls's view was mistaken, then surely it is wrong to hold the neighbouring view which says that "The reason for beginning with [the debate over ideal/non-ideal] theory is that it provides [...] the only basis for the systematic grasp of these more pressing problems"[56]

Here the specter of ideology critique resurfaces, for it is not clear that we *must* begin political philosophy/theory by working out all the details to methodological questions. Indeed, in emphasizing

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[55] For a nice overview of this narrative of the debate, see Jacob T. Levy, "There Is No Such Thing As Ideal Theory." For the "stages" of theorizing in Rawls, see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 9; Rawls, *Law of Peoples*, 90.

[56] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, 8.

methodological questions we may *displace* the importance of first-order questions by endlessly deferring them.[57] And in some part, this seems to be the *function* of the ideal/non-ideal theory debate. The function of the debate is to convince professional philosophers that their conceptual labour is essential for figuring out what the correct methodological commitments are, which, in turn, is necessary for figuring out how to make any progress on real-world pressing problems. This is a flattering picture of the role of the philosopher in creating social change.[58] On this picture, the philosopher occupies an Archimedean perspective that allows them to see beyond the muddled, situated perspectives of the dominated and the oppressed; the philosopher, through their careful distinction-making, gains insight into how much we should or shouldn't idealize when we are thinking about justice; and crucially, on this picture, the philosopher's labour is not only essential, but is lexically prior to any social change: first comes the question of whether ideal or non-ideal theory is correct, then comes the working out the details of one's first-order theorizing, then comes social change.[59] But the picture is backwards. It is often through radical political upheavals (e.g., the civil rights movement) that philosophers come to modify the details of their first-order theorizing (i.e., what fixed-points *seem* fixed upon reflection), and only thereafter do they reconceptualize what they take themselves to be *doing* in theorizing about justice.

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[57] Cf. Moyn, *Not Enough*. Jiewuh Song reads Moyn as arguing for a "displacement thesis, on which the human rights practice has crowded out political space for more ambitious projects, with deleterious consequences." (Song, "Human Rights and Inequality," 350.) Though note that Moyn seems to have made some concessions to the "displacement thesis" in recent work, e.g., in Moyn, "Sufficiency, Equality, and Human Rights."

[58] Taking up a skeptical attitude towards such a picture, Amia Srinivasan writes: "I fear that the thought that what we need, politically speaking, is analytic philosophy [...] is one more legitimation myth of which we should be suspicious. After all, it would be convenient for us as professional philosophers not only if our somewhat peculiar skills turned out to be essential for the pursuit of justice but also if it turned out that the use of those skills could render political revolution, specially violent revolution, unnecessary." (Srinivasan, "Philosophy and Ideology," 379.)

[59] The picture is essentially an inversion of some of the central claims of feminist standpoint epistemology. See, e.g., Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint"; Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*. As cited in Srinivasan, "Radical Externalism," 411, n.27.

It is no surprise, then, that philosophers and theorists tell this flattering tale about themselves, for being the judge in their own case, it is only natural that they regard their skills and theorizing as lexically prior to social change. But this is nothing new. This flattering tale—about the priority of the ideal/non-ideal theory debate—is simply a particular instance of a more general phenomenon that has been with us at least since Marx's critique of the *ideologists*; that is, the artists, priests, lawyers, and so on.[60] Marx said that they were superstructural workers who mistakenly believed that their ideal products (their ideas) were the driving force of history and social change.[61] Thus, for Marx, the judge who applies the law regards their legislation as the real, active driving force of history; the artist who makes the work of art regards their art as having a sort of capacity for social change; and so on. But they are all equally mistaken—at least by Marx's lights—for neither the law nor art nor any other ideal product *really* changes the world: the material forces do. Artists, lawyers, philosophers, and all the rest merely tag along for the ride, and when a given social movement takes flight they (flatteringly) attribute causal powers to their ideal products.[62] Here is precisely where the ideology critique of the ideal/non-

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[60] Here I am heavily indebted to Mills, "'Ideology' in Marx and Engels." Cf. Roberts, "Ideology and Self-Emancipation," §7.

[61] See Marx, *The German Ideology*. Note well that Marx's critique of the *ideologists* is not synonymous with so-called ideology critique, in the sense that I and others use the term. While the way I have opted to use "ideology critique" in this essay may be extensionally adequate, it is perhaps a bit historically anachronistic, a manner of speaking handed down to analytic philosophers from Raymond Geuss, amongst others. Cf. Srinivasan, "Genealogy, Epistemology and Worldmaking," §5. See also Mills, "'Ideology' in Marx and Engels." Srinivasan notes that we ought to distinguish "critical genealogy" from "ideology critique." While the latter reveals a deficient epistemic status, the former merely lays bare the *function* of our ideologies. For better or for worse, "ideology critique" (of the sort done by the late Mills, Shelby, Haslanger, etc.) has come to mean something different from "critical genealogy," but it is important to keep in mind that I—and other participants to this debate—are using the term in a circumscribed *pejorative* sense, and so there is a danger of making historical connections where they are not warranted; or worse, anachronistically interpreting, say, Marx as a proponent of "ideology critique." By my lights (and the early Mills), Marx is *not* doing straightforward "ideology critique," though misinterpreting him in such a way may have led to the development of "ideology critique". Mutatis Mutandis, cf. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*.

[62] See Mills, "'Ideology' in Marx and Engels," 12. Cf. Mills and Goldstick, "A New Old Meaning of 'Ideology,'" 423.

ideal theory debate rears its head: academic philosophers think that working out the right answers to methodological questions will change the world. They think that a change in people's *ideas* will enact social change. But they are fundamentally mistaken. To think as they do is to suppose, with the Young Hegelians, that the driving force of history is what is inside people's heads, namely, ideas. But concepts do not change the world. People do. Of course, people operate with a given set of concepts, and it is important for them to pause and reflect on how their concepts frame their projects and guide their actions. But it is equally important to recognize that these sorts of methodological endeavors are not prior to social change. So the charge against the contemporary proponent of the ideal/non-ideal theory debate is that they are caught up in bad ideology insofar as they see their product—i.e., their papers, books, talks, and so on—as being necessary for social change.[63]

§6 A Plea for Pluralism

So if the very debate between ideal and non-ideal theorists is itself a form of ideology, then what should we do? I think both parties to the debate should recognize that ideal theory and non-ideal theory, understood as models for helping us grasp what justice is, are on a similar plane. And though it is difficult to occupy both perspectives at once, we can strive to oscillate between the two, without ever quite knowing whether we are occupying the right vantage point.[64] From the standpoint of the ideal theorist, it may seem like the point of a theory of justice is to tell us what to think, not what to do. The point is to get at the facts about what justice requires, come what may (à la the UTOPIAN

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[63] As flattering as this picture is, it is not obviously true that we need a clear picture of *how* to start theorizing about social change before we can *begin* theorizing about social change. What is more, it is not plainly true that what we need is more theory. We should be alive to the Althusserian worry that often "those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology: one of the effects of ideology is the practical *denegation* of the ideological character of ideology by ideology: ideology never says, 'I am ideological'." (Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 175.)

[64] Cf. Hall, *Cultural Studies 1983*, 84.

REQUIREMENT). Yet from the point of view of the non-ideal theorist the opposite seems true: the point of a theory of justice is to tell us what to do, not merely what to think (à la the REALISTIC REQUIREMENT). The point is to change the world, not to merely theorize about it. Both of these standpoints are inescapable, and they routinely conflict. Thus, upon finding ourselves caught between realism and utopia, it is only natural that we strive for a synthesis at the second-order level. Perhaps such a synthesis is forthcoming. In any case, we do not need to resolve the debate between ideal/non-ideal theorists to address the pressing problems head-on. We can be pluralists and oscillate back and forth between these two modes of theorizing without a decision procedure to tell us when we should take up one perspective or the other.[65] We can look closely at the pressing problems right in front of us and ask ourselves what the point of our theorizing is in each case, and then further ask whether we should take up an ideal or non-ideal theory perspective. We can do this while recognizing that in theorizing we must take up a point of view, however flawed that point of view might be.[66] Once we accept this fact—that methodology will not save us—we can finally leave the ideal/non-ideal theory debate behind and thereafter begin to ask more productive and fruitful questions.

But before we start asking the more productive and fruitful questions, we should concern ourselves with one final worry: namely, that even if the pluralist position fares better than a strict form of ideal or non-ideal theory, it may be, tragically, yet another instance of ideology. For surely the pluralist does not occupy an Archimedean perspective that allows *them* to see beyond the problems and perils of the ideal or non-ideal theorist. Indeed, according to some critics, the problem with the pluralist is that they still *think* with the categories of "ideal theory" and "non-ideal theory." And the problem with these categories—which now occupy a reified status in contemporary political

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[65] Cf. Levy, *Rationalism, Pluralism, and Freedom*, ch 13., n.7 on synthesizing impulses in political theory, esp. Hegel and Taylor.
[66] Cf. Walters, "The Aptness of Envy," 8, n.13.

philosophy—is that they encourage us to ask political questions from a point of view that excludes from our frame of inquiry philosophers and theorists who are neither ideal nor non-ideal theorists.[67]

Marx comes to mind. For Marx is not, according to many interpretations, simply trying to get at what justice requires (à la the UTOPIAN REQUIREMENT).[68] That is, he is not constructing an ideal theory of a perfectly just society and thereafter critiquing existing societies for failing to meet that standard. Nor is he straightforwardly a non-ideal theorist who theorizes on the terms given to us by the Steadfast Reformists. He is a Radical Revolutionary of a different sort, which is why it is difficult to capture what Marx was up to using our contemporary categories of ideal/non-ideal theory.[69] Marx's critique of capitalism—and indeed, workplace domination—is rooted in a collection of comprehensive doctrines: namely, a theory of historical materialism, a theory of how capitalism functions, and perhaps even an ethical vision.[70] This all comes as a package deal for Marx. And if something of a broadly Marxist view is tenable, then it gives us not only a way to bypass the ideal/non-ideal theory debate but to render it ideological.[71]

So we are faced with a choice. On the one hand, we can be pluralists and accept the categories given to us by the ideal/non-ideal theory debate but reject the demand to decisively come down on one side or the other. On the other hand, we can take a cue from Marx and reject the categories of

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[67] As an anonymous referee points out theorists such as Hobbes, Kwame Nkrumah, Plato and Lenin do not fit neatly into these categories. Cf. W.E.B. Du Bois, "The Propaganda of History." It is also worth asking how the ideal/non-ideal theory debate fits into the wider context of political philosophy. On this, see, e.g.,. McKeon, "The Interpretation of Political Theory and Practice in Ancient Athens."

[68] This issue is highly contentious. For an overview of the debate, see Geras, "The Controversy about Marx and Justice."

[69] Perhaps this difficulty of categorization explains why the name "Marx" never appears in the canonical overview of the ideal/non-ideal theory debate, i.e., Valentini, "Ideal vs. Non-Ideal Theory."

[70] See, e.g., Wills, *Marx's Ethical Vision*.

[71] I am indebted to an anonymous referee for asking me to clarify these points in the preceding two paragraphs and for their suggestions about how Marx might fit into this dialectic. On the role of abstraction in Marx, see, e.g., Ilyenkov, *The Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Marx's Capital.* On the material context of philosophical ideas, see Wood, *Liberty and Property*.

the ideal/non-ideal theory debate and do political philosophy otherwise. Now, I raise this choice, not to provide a decisive answer, but rather to call our attention to the striking fact that despite their many disagreements, both the pluralist and the Marxist offer us ways to bypass the ideal/non-ideal theory debate. The pluralist extends an olive branch to ideal and non-ideal theorists, exhorting both to go on theorizing with their inherited categories and distinctions, all the while recognizing the ideological risks that are bound to occur along the way. The Marxist throws down their gauntlet and presses all parties to the debate to acknowledge that the categories that they have inherited from the ideal/non-ideal theory debate are not neutral ways of carving up political phenomena: they too have a history, and so it is well and wise to examine how they function so as to exclude certain questions, approaches, and phenomena from one's frame of inquiry.[72] The crucial lesson for our purposes here is that whatever side you find yourself on—pluralist or Marxist or some hybrid variant thereof—it follows that that the debate between ideal/non-ideal theory is ideological. It also follows, somewhat ironically, that perhaps even this essay is caught up in bad ideology insofar as it is yet another contribution to the ideal/non-ideal theory debate. That may be so. In any case, we ought to finally move on and address the pressing problems of political philosophy head-on.[73]

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