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TRANSPARENCY AS IDEOLOGY

Fetishism and Why Individuals
Supposedly See Well

Sami Torssonen



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Abstract

A wide variety of organizations, ranging from churches to governments and corporations, now claim that they are transparent. They suggest, furthermore, that this transparency enables their members, citizens, customers, or workers to see well and thus act freely. This work explores the social and natural factors that give rise to and shape such “individualist transparency,” which is conceived as a type of appearance planning that empowers and controls individuals by ostensibly enabling them to see well.

The study’s main argument is that individualist transparency is produced by ideologists (professional society builders disproportionately affected by the ruling class) who plan how things seem to be, calling this “transparency.” The role of the transparency metaphor in this is to suggest direct perception. The claim of direct perception is useful in processing a contradiction between top-down ideological socialization and autonomy. This contradiction is engendered in part by the fetishistic character of commodity production and exchange.

The research arrives at three main conclusions. First, while individualist transparency is often based on misleading claims, it is not entirely illusory. Although transparency ideologists must seem misleadingly neutral with respect to the real conflicts they regulate, they must also compromise with the real experience and interests of their audiences. Second, individualist transparency is not socially necessary: it may be possible to replace it with a less misleading horizontal form that does not contribute to domination and exploitation along class and other lines. This will be difficult, however, as long as ideological socialization is needed due to deep-seated social conflicts. Third, appearance planning and social transparency would be necessary even in a society without ideology. Future research should therefore attempt to formulate a positive research program on horizontal, non-ideological social transparency.

The study builds on empirical studies concerning transparency in livestock welfare commodification and the historical development of transparency language. It combines functional explanation, a language conception that emphasizes struggle, and a historical approach that rises from the abstract to the concrete.

The dissertation’s theoretical position expands and modifies the so-called Projekt Ideologietheorie framework of ideology theory. The Projekt framework combines a theory of ideological socialization (top-down invitation into positions of domination and subordination) with a materialist interpretation of how everyday life molds people’s thought. The study

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augments this framework with an interpretation of Karl Marx's conception of appearance, in which objects and subjects are not cleanly separable from each other. In this context, the work views transparency as a moment of the process of appearance that preserves the traces of objects for subjects.

Keywords: transparency, individualism, ideology, fetishism, appearance, socialization, Projekt Ideologietheorie, livestock welfare, commodification, video games

Tiivistelmä

Organisaatiot kirkoista valtioihin ja yrityksiin esittävät nyt olevansa läpinäkyviä. Ne väittävät myös, että tämä läpinäkyvyys sallii niiden jäsenten, kansalaisten, asiakkaiden tai työntekijöiden nähdä hyvin ja siksi toimia vapaasti. Käsillä oleva tutkimus tarkastelee tällaista ”yksilökeskeistä läpinäkyvyyttä” aiheuttavia yhteiskunnallisia ja luonnollisia tekijöitä. Yksilökeskeinen läpinäkyvyys ymmärretään tutkimuksessa ilmenemisen suunnitteluksi, joka voimaannuttaa ja kontrolloi yksilöitä tuottamalla heille väitetysti hyvän havaitsemiskyvyn.

Tutkimuksen keskeisin väite on, että yksilökeskeistä läpinäkyvyyttä tuottavat ideologit (ammattimaiset yhteiskunnan rakentajat, joihin hallitseva luokka vaikuttaa suhteettomissa määrin), jotka suunnittelevat ilmenemistä ja kutsuvat tätä läpinäkyvyydeksi. Läpinäkyvyyskielikuvan tehtävänä on antaa ymmärtää, että ideologit mahdollistavat suoran havainnon. Väite auttaa työstämään ristiriitaa, joka syntyy ylhäältä alas toimivan ideologisen yhteiskunnallistamisen ja itseohjautuvuuden välille. Ristiriita aiheutuu osin kauppatavaran tuotannosta ja vaihdosta kumpuavasta fetisismistä.

Tutkimus päättyy kolmeen johtopäätökseen. Ensinnäkin, vaikka yksilökeskeinen läpinäkyvyys perustuu usein harhaanjohtaville väitteille, se ei ole täysin harhaista. Läpinäkyvyysideologien on tosin vaikutettava puolueettomilta suhteesta niihin todellisiin konflikteihin, joita he säätelevät, mutta heidän on myös oltava valmiita kompromisseihin, jotka huomioivat ideologian yleisöjen todelliset kokemukset ja intressit. Toiseksi, yksilökeskeinen läpinäkyvyys ei ole yhteiskunnallisesti välttämätöntä, vaan se saattaisi olla korvattavissa vähemmän harhaanjohtavalla horisontaalisella muodolla, joka ei edistä luokkaita muihin tekijöihin perustuvaa alistusta ja riistoa. Korvaamista vaikeuttaa kuitenkin se, että ideologinen yhteiskunnallistaminen on tarpeen sikäli, kun yhteiskuntaa läpäisevät syvät jakolinjat. Kolmanneksi, ilmenemisen suunnittelu ja yhteiskunnallinen läpinäkyvyys olisivat välttämättömiä myös ideologiattomassa yhteiskunnassa. Tulevan tutkimuksen tulisi pyrkiä siksi muotoilemaan tutkimusohjelma, joka käsittelee horisontaalista, ei-ideologista yhteiskunnallista läpinäkyvyyttä.

Tutkimus perustuu empiirisille löydöksille, jotka koskevat läpinäkyvyyttä tuotantoeläinten hyvinvoinnin tuotteistamisessa sekä läpinäkyvyyskielen historiallista kehitystä. Se yhdistelee funktionaalista selittämistä, kamppailua korostavaa kielianalyysia ja historiallista menetelmää, joka nousee abstraktista konkreettiseen.

Väitöskirjan teoreettinen osa laajentaa ja muokkaa niin kutsutun Projekt Ideologietheorie-tutkimusperinteen ideologiateoriaa. Lähestymistapa yhdistää käsityksen ideologisesta yhteiskunnallistamisesta (ylhäältä alas tapahtuvasta kutsumisesta herruus- ja alistumissuhteisiin) materialistiseen tulkintaan siitä, kuinka arkielämä muokkaa ihmisten ajattelua. Tutkimus tukee ideologiateoriaa tulkitsemalla Karl Marxin ilmenemiskäsitystä, jonka mukaan objekteja ja subjekteja ei voi jännöksettömästi erottaa toisistaan. Tutkimus määrittää tässä yhteydessä läpinäkyvyyden ilmenemisprosessin osaksi, joka säilyttää objektin jäljet subjektille.

Avainsanat: läpinäkyvyys, individualism, ideologia, fetisismi, ilmeneminen, yhteiskunnallistaminen, Projekt Ideologietheorie, tuotantoeläinten hyvinvointi, tuotteistaminen, videopelit

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The mode of production of knowledge determines the producer and the product.

My labor stamps this dissertation with a face and a name, but these are mere expressions of the innumerable hidden connections, the social-natural essence that lay beyond. My reckoning of that subterranean network is limited by my consciousness, but bear with me as I expose what I can.

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List of Original Publications

This dissertation is based on the following publications:

- I Torssonen, Sami. "Sellfare: A History of Livestock Welfare Commodification as Governance." *Humanimalia* 7 (1) (2015).
- II Torssonen, Sami. "Procedures of Commodification: Case Livestock Welfare." *Simulation & Gaming* 48 (4) (August 1, 2017): 498–512.
- III Torssonen, Sami. "A History of Ideological Transparency." *Rethinking Marxism* (forthcoming)

1 Introduction: Re-Theorizing Transparency

“Transparency” is a current buzzword among governments, scholars, corporations, and non-governmental organizations—even the Pope is talking about transparency. Transparency promises to bring about trust and satisfaction, balance budgets, improve the quality of government, and reduce corruption. For some, transparency portends a democratic “infotopia” of free citizens; for others an unfree dystopia. All of these interpretations converge, however, around the notion that transparent social formations allow people to *see well*. A transparent Vatican, for instance, promises more visibility into its money flows, resulting in increased accountability.¹

Researchers have explained the emergence and prominence of transparency rhetoric and practices with factors such as neoliberalism and 1968 egalitarianism. However, the history of transparency and related notions such as publicity, freedom of information, surveillance, accountability, and openness begins with the Enlightenment and therefore stretches back hundreds of years. Why did many such forms emerge during this period, and why do they persist today in a fairly recognizable guise?²

In this dissertation, I build on three published articles to formulate a novel conception of what I call *individualist transparency*. I understand such transparency as appearance planning that empowers and controls individuals by ostensibly allowing them to see well. I am interested in why the history of capitalist society is replete with people whose job it is to modify how things seem to be while simultaneously claiming that this modification supports individuals’ autonomous action. Such individualist appearance planning arguably encompasses most of the transparency rhetoric and practices currently in circulation. I create a Marxist interpretation of transparency to explain why the pretention of seeing well is so common in societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. Towards the end of my analysis, I also consider what role transparency could play in a post-capitalist society.

The basic argument of this dissertation is as follows: Individualist transparency is a means of constructing society by planning appearances in a way that seems to preserve individual

¹ Service 2015; Cabinet Office 2016; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson 2014; Cucciniello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelhuijsen 2017; Nestlé 2014; Oxfam 2017; Welch, Hinnant, & Moon 2005; Benito & Bastida 2009; Kosack & Fung 2014: 79–84; Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes 2010; Fung 2013; Brin 1998.

² Levitt 2009: 3–5; Garsten & Montoya 2008: 3; Mehrpouya & Djelic 2014: 2; Habermas 1991: 26; Frederick 2006: 13; Bentham 1995: 29–35; Bentham 1791: 40–44; Webster 1791: 152.

autonomy.³ Such planning is needed because the capitalist mode of production generates contradictions between experiences of freedom and external regulation: free wage laborers produce exchangeable goods and services under the top-down control of capitalists and professional society builders. Transparency planning may help alleviate this contradiction between freedom and unfreedom. Transparency implies, after all, that people are able to see well and can therefore make choices autonomously. The producers of transparency are disproportionately influenced by the ruling class,⁴ however, and tend to be in Marxist terms *ideologists*. These ideologists use transparency to arrange people into relations of domination and subordination rather than simply freeing them. Transparency facilitates a misleading compromise between class rule and demands for freedom, but it rarely functions without struggle and resistance.⁵

The above argument challenges many of the assumptions of the existing transparency literature. First, it questions the tendency to study transparency in a pragmatic way that limits itself to the proximate causes, effects, and uses of the concept and its associated practices.⁶ Given that individualist transparency has recurred throughout the history of the capitalist mode of production, it must be supported by long-standing, non-proximate factors. Second, unless these long-standing causes of transparency disappear, neither an infotopia nor a totalitarian dystopia is to be expected. If the transparency metaphor goes out of fashion, something similar will replace it as long as the objective need for such a device remains. Finally, given that appearance planners direct individual behaviors, it is imprudent to simply

³ By *constructing society*, I mean fitting people's competences and behaviors with each other. See Section 2.2.2.3. By *appearance planning*, I mean consciously manipulating the way things seem to be. See Section 2.1.3.

⁴ Classes exist, in my interpretation, because people occupy antagonistic social positions of exploiter and exploitee that stem from their relationship to the means of production. The capitalist mode of production tends to somewhat simplify this class antagonism, disentangling classes from things like inheritable estates or castes. Feudal landowners are forced to turn into capitalist landowners, sustenance farmers are driven off their land to become wage laborers, and craftsmen are outcompeted by factory production, for instance. This does not mean, however, that the classes are monolithic, or that all of their members share exactly the same interests or forms of consciousness. The capitalist class, for instance, is split into fractions, the lines of which are related many historically-variable factors, such as the differences between commercial, finance, and productive capital. The same is true of the working class, which contains contradictory positions like hired managers. Class never exists in "pure form," in other words, but only as a terrain of determinations, some of which include race, gender, sexuality, and so on. Consequently, the question of class is very complicated in Marx's original texts, in the Marxist reception, and the academic literature at large. See, for instance, Ollman 1968; Andrew 1975; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 37, pp. 870–871; Gimenez 2001.

⁵ For analyses of the relationship between capitalist production, individual freedom, ideology, and the ruling class, see Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 336–338; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 100–101; Marx & Engels 2014: 176–179.

⁶ Birchall 2014: 77; Schnackenberg & Tomlinson 2014; Cucciniello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen 2017.

assume, as some scholars have done,⁷ that transparency by definition ensures that people see well. Transparency must be theorized in such a way that accounts for the possibility that transparency may in fact be utterly misleading.

The dissertation consists of two parts. Chapters 1 and 2 present an overview of transparency and an examination of a number of Marxist concepts: *appearance*, or how things seem to be; the *ideological*, or society building that alleviates social conflicts through professional coordinators and compromises; *objective thought forms*, or systematicities in people's everyday lives that are conducive to specific ways of thinking; and *commodity fetishism*, or the conduct of social relations through exchangeable things, allowing individuals to appear free to themselves and to each other.⁸ Chapter 3 introduces three previously published journal articles that conduct empirical inquiries into forms of individualist transparency using historical and video game studies approaches. Chapter 4 considers what social transparency might mean in relation to a non-capitalist society.

In the section that follows, I relate my approach to transparency to previous scholarly takes on the subject. I begin by outlining the main intuitions, approaches, and results of the social transparency literature, after which I describe the research process that led me to question this literature in fundamental ways.

1.1 The Transparency Literature and Seeing Well: A Critique

Scholars are virtually unanimous in employing social transparency metaphors to suggest that people, in some sense, *see well*. Beyond this similarity, however, scholars disagree on what social transparency means, how it works, and when it is desirable. Below, I focus on academic texts, but similar notions are also recognizable in European Commission documents,⁹ for example, and in a range of non-academic books.¹⁰ I begin with definitions of social transparency, after which I outline the causes and effects of transparency that are evident in the literature.

Two recent review articles provide an overview of what social scientists usually mean by *transparency*. According to Schnackenberg and Tomlinson, the business organizations

⁷ E.g., Kuijper 2009: 45–60.

⁸ For discussions concerning appearance, the ideological, objective thought forms, and fetishism, see Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 40; Rehmann 2013: 245–246; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 83; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 87.

⁹ European Commission 2014.

¹⁰ Brin 1998.

literature defines transparency as “the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender.”¹¹ According to Cucciniello et al., the literature on government or public sector transparency conceives of transparency as “the extent external actors are afforded access to information about the way public organizations operate.”¹² In both cases, greater social transparency means that one actor is providing another actor with more or better information about something.

As I show later, this ideal-typical way of conceptualizing transparency is in some respects misleading. Social transparency does not really imply that someone sees well. In this respect, it resembles physical transparency: while molten glass is typically largely transparent to visible light,¹³ for instance, people generally cannot see through it because it gives off so much radiation. *Transparency* does not always imply “able to be seen through.” Furthermore, *transparency* can also be a characteristic of something that is misleadingly see-through. Prisms are transparent but can also invert images, for instance. Social transparency may also have misleading and obfuscating qualities, as I show in Section 1.2.1 and Article III.

Because social scientists associate transparency with better information, they often assume that transparency allows the “recipient” to make better-informed decisions. This is nowadays particularly common among scholars who apply aspects of the preference theory of marginalist economics.¹⁴ According to Kolstad and Wiig, for instance, transparency may allow “principals” to better control the choices of their “agents,” such as when elected officials monitor bureaucrats and punish them for corruption.¹⁵ The purpose of such rationalist models is usually to discover how the distribution of visibility in social environments affects people’s or organizations’ “independent” behavior.¹⁶ Birchall attacks such transparency by questioning its “neoliberal” underpinnings. She argues that the Left should embrace narrative-interpretative forms of disclosure instead.¹⁷

Most scholars construct transparency as a fairly demanding category in comparison with related concepts such as accountability, openness, publicity, surveillance, and freedom of

¹¹ Schnackenberg & Tomlinson 2014: 5.

¹² Cucciniello, Porumbescu, & Grimmelikhuijsen 2017: 36.

¹³ Beder, Bass, & Shackelford 1971. For an experiment, see The Gentleman Physicist 2013. This means that things beyond a mass of molten glass may “appear” in the light that passes through it in the sense that they could be seen given appropriate faculties of perception.

¹⁴ Prat 2006.

¹⁵ Kolstad & Wiig 2009: 522–523.

¹⁶ E.g., Faust & Svensson 2002: 522.

¹⁷ Birchall 2014; Birchall 2011b.

information. For Birkinshaw, transparency means not only that citizens have a right to access information held by authorities, as in freedom of information,¹⁸ or that they can access government processes more broadly, as in openness,¹⁹ but that access is made as effortless as possible.²⁰ Larsson likewise argues that transparency goes further than openness, requiring that information is presented simply enough that its audiences can understand it.²¹

Koivisto's intuitions concerning transparency, which she has sketched out in an outline of a future research project, are in several respects similar to mine. She argues, for instance, that social transparency metaphors draw on everyday sensory experiences of physical phenomena. She also believes that the scope of transparency can be manipulated and argues that the negative implications of transparency remain undertheorized. She has not yet carried out such theorization, however, having only indicated its broad outlines. This may be why she still associates the limits of transparency exclusively with *scope*, such as with excluding certain things from the field of vision. As I show later, however, social transparency may also mislead *qualitatively* by, say, inverting objects (see Section 1.3).²²

Heald offers a nuanced deconstruction of transparency on two axes. When rulers observe the ruled, this is “transparency upwards”; when the ruled observe the ruler, transparency is “downwards.” When an employee can see beyond her own organization, this is “transparency outwards,” whereas visibility within the organization is directed “inwards.” Relations on both axes can be either asymmetrical, such as with surveillance or accountability, or symmetrical, such as when people see each other.²³

Although I do not associate transparency with seeing well, my approach is similar to Heald's in that I do not seek to define transparency as typologically different from accountability, openness, publicity, surveillance, and freedom of information, which in my vocabulary are usually forms of *individualist transparency*, or appearance planning that simultaneously empowers and controls individual autonomy. The various forms of social transparency need not all have such an element of externally planned individual self-coordination.

¹⁸ Birkinshaw 2006a: 188–189.

¹⁹ Birkinshaw 2006a: 190–191.

²⁰ Birkinshaw 2006b: 189–191.

²¹ Larsson 1998: 40–42.

²² Koivisto 2016.

²³ Heald 2006: 27–31. Heald also emphasizes the differences between event versus procedure, retrospective versus real time, and nominal versus effective transparency. The odd contradiction concerning the directionality of perception between the axes (rulers see downwards because of “transparency upwards,” yet employees see outwards because of “transparency outwards”) is in the original.

The individualist form of social transparency has only become widespread during the past three hundred years. To see how individualist transparency differs from other forms, compare it with the dictum that government should operate by rote,²⁴—that is, by mechanical repetition following non-discretionary rules that eliminate all individual agency. Such thinking was common under certain circumstances in ancient China and Greece.²⁵ Under the rote system, the law should be transparent only in the sense that the sovereign’s will moves through the chain of command unchanged, akin to a row of toppling dominoes. The absolutist philosopher Thomas Hobbes, for instance, contends that sovereignty should not be transferred to administrators “without express and perspicuous words to that purpose. And this kind of public ministers resembleth the nerves, and tendons that move the several limbs of a body natural.”²⁶ This is a highly *non-individualist* form of transparency that emphasizes people’s organic interconnection over their fundamental autonomy and individuality.

As I show in Article III, individualist transparency has risen to great societal prominence since the eighteenth century. During this period, transparency and its sibling concepts have increasingly come to imply that an observing or observed citizen, consumer, bureaucrat, contractor, prisoner, organization, or other individual is empowered or incentivized to choose appropriately. This immediately gives rise to the question of *why* this form of transparency has spread. In the section that follows, I review the sparse literature that has attempted to answer this question.

1.1.1 The Causes of Transparency

There have not been many attempts at explaining the emergence of individualist transparency rhetoric and practices. Most of the literature simply assumes that transparency is important and pays little heed to why this is so. Hood’s 2006 work is still the most comprehensive attempt at explanation.²⁷ Below, I review Hood’s argument and show that it does not quite cover the wide historical scope of individualist transparency.

Hood’s account of the roots of individualist transparency can be condensed to four factors: 1) the open covenants doctrine of international diplomacy, which was already present in the eighteenth century but was further strengthened by the transnationalization of governance; 2)

²⁴ Hood 2006b: sec. 2.

²⁵ Hood 2006b: sec. 2.

²⁶ Hobbes 1998: 160.

²⁷ Cf. Levitt 2009: 3–5; Garsten & Montoya 2008: 3; Mehrpouya & Djelic 2014: 2; Cajvaneanu 2011.

demands that private actors should know what the government is doing, which increased after absolutism began its decline in the seventeenth century; 3) corporate disclosure, which was required by creditors and owners especially with the spread of joint stock companies in the seventeenth century; and 4) the development of modern social science, which began in earnest in the eighteenth century and promised to render society knowable and controllable.²⁸

Hood also considers three explanations of the rise of transparency proposed by other scholars: the emergence of professional intermediaries that both states and corporations are forced to inform; the “egalitarian culture” that has supposedly led the public to demand more transparency since 1968; and in recent decades, technological developments such as the internet.²⁹ He provides a criticism of these explanations: some transparencies are not associated with well-defined outsiders; egalitarian demands for transparency often stem from the same sources as demands for what Hood calls “individualist” privacies; and the technological explanation he deems too “functionalist.”³⁰

In Article III, I give examples of several eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts in which transparency metaphors and practices appear in contexts that are in no discernible way related to any of the aforementioned factors, yet are already individualist in a manner strongly reminiscent of today’s transparency. I interpret this as an indication that Hood’s proposed explanations are too specific. Hood overlooks the effects of the consolidation and spread of capitalist commodity production that took place during this period and affected peoples’ lives much more profoundly than any of the developments he does list.

To appreciate the wide scope of early individualist transparency, consider the highly popular early eighteenth century interpretations of Aesop’s fables by the liberal Whig archdeacon Samuel Croxall. Croxall encourages the ugly person to cultivate “beauties of good temper,” because this will lead others to “value him, like an oriental jewel, not by a glittering outside, which is common to baser stones,” but by “the transparent sincerity of his honest heart.”³¹ In other words, the ideologist Croxall encouraged the ugly person to self-improve his value on the marriage market by letting an inner truth shine through. This is hardly an effect of stock companies or the decline of absolutism. The commodity metaphor, by contrast, is right on the surface of the text: Croxall assumed that his audience would be able to conceptualize love in

²⁸ Hood 2006b: secs. 2–3.

²⁹ Hood 2006a: sec. 2.

³⁰ Hood 2006a: sec. 2.

³¹ Aesop & Croxall 1792: 132–133.

terms of exchange. He was probably right, given that his book has been republished numerous times.³²

Beyond the question of its emergence, there is also the question of why individualist transparency persists in fairly recognizable forms today. Ideologists still use exactly the same kind of argument as Croxall when they encourage corporations to increase their transparency, asserting that transparency will assuage investors and raise stock prices.³³ The corporation must, as it were, reveal the “sincerity of its honest heart” in order to be valued as an “oriental jewel.” Either some of the factors that gave rise to individualist transparency must still support it, or new mechanisms must exist that result in recognizably similar outcomes.

One possible functional explanation would be to say that individualist transparency *works*—it gets the ideological job done, or gets people to do what they should. Although the evidence is mixed and limited, on the whole it seems that individualist transparency might indeed contribute, all other things being equal, to people and organizations behaving appropriately with respect to goals such as “quality of government.”³⁴ Scholars associate transparency with increased³⁵ or reduced³⁶ trust and satisfaction, balanced budgets,³⁷ and reduced corruption.³⁸ Lindstedt and Naurin’s multivariate analysis indicates that transparency as access to information reduces corruption, although only under very specific conditions.³⁹ This evidence is broadly persuasive.

The rise of individualist transparency is not, however, satisfactorily explained by pointing to its efficacy in achieving desired social objectives. This explanation by itself does not clarify why the aforementioned issues should be addressed in precisely this form. What gives rise to the notion that people should, but cannot, see through governments and corporations well enough to live in an independent manner? Why are there people whose job it is to purportedly fix this problem by deploying transparency in particular? In the section that follows, I give a summary of my argument concerning this question.

³² worldcat.org 2018.

³³ McClure 2003.

³⁴ Kosack & Fung 2014: 79–84.

³⁵ Welch, Hinnant, & Moon 2005.

³⁶ O’Neill 2006.

³⁷ Benito & Bastida 2009.

³⁸ Bertot, Jaeger, & Grimes 2010.

³⁹ Lindstedt & Naurin 2010: 302.

1.2 Individualist Transparency as Fetishistic Ideology: The Broad Outlines

As already noted, the overall theoretical argument of this dissertation is that individualist transparency is a fetishistic and ideological objective thought form that contributes to society building by way of ostensibly see-through planned appearances. There are five main Marxist theoretical elements here: 1) appearance, 2) ideology, 3) fetishism, 4) society building, and 5) objective thought forms. I elaborate on these theoretical elements in greater length in Chapter 2. Here, I briefly outline how I understand each of these categories, how I interpret the connections between them, and how they help to explain the emergence and persistence of individualist transparency. The basic idea here is that commodity fetishism explains the individualist aspect of recently dominant forms of ideological transparency.

When Marx uses the word *appearance (Erscheinung)*, he usually means that although things seem to be a particular way, there is more to them than meets the eye.⁴⁰ Appearances are emergent results of combinations of “subject-side,” “object-side,” and contextual elements. The constellation of these elements gives rise to an appearance that is potentially misleading or overly constrained. The appearance is not, however, completely opaque or illusionary. While it may not always quite get at the essence (*Wesen*) of the object, or the relations that sustain the object, the appearance still stands in some specifiable relation to the object’s essence. This theoretical point of departure is central to understanding ideological transparency, which revolves around planning the process through which things are made to appear.

In the present society, the burden of planning processes of appearance tends to fall upon ideologists: mental laborers over whom the ruling class (which controls the means of production) has disproportionate influence. Such laborers contribute to society building, which is to say socialization,⁴¹ by working to piece together peoples’ social relations, characters, and behaviors despite latent interest conflicts. Individualist transparency emerges as a consequence of such ideological socialization, not directly from people’s horizontal interactions. People do not usually think of their knowledge of the price of healthcare as “transparency,” for instance, although they may indeed wish to have this knowledge. Consultants seeking to “empower consumers to shop effectively” on the healthcare market do

⁴⁰ E.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 36, p. 38.

⁴¹ Rehmann 2013: 248.

think like this, however, and consequently design smartphone apps to “transparently” distribute price information.⁴² Transparency ideologists conduct ideological socialization by planning appearances, and they often conceptualize their work with the word *transparency*. The ideological construction of society is not exhausted by such appearance planning, however. It is possible to affect people, for instance, by designing how they move through physical spaces or by imposing secrecy, which is basically the opposite of transparency.

Of course, the audiences of transparency ideologists may or may not prove responsive. They may or may not learn to see, think, and behave according to plan. The degree to which they do so is a question of historical conjuncture. In some cases, audiences may actively adopt individualist transparency, such as when they identify themselves as ethical consumers and actively seek out “transparent” commodities. Insofar as they do so, they relate to the ideological like a layperson at prayer, in active submission to ideological socialization. But audiences may also criticize the pretenses of such commodities, forcing ideologists to compromise. Furthermore, professional mental laborers may decline to function as ideologists, refusing to socialize people into relations of submission and domination.⁴³

As conceptualized above, neither the theory of appearance nor that of ideology explains why modern ideological transparency has taken such an *individualist* form. The world’s first freedom of information legislation in the eighteenth century explicitly aimed to enforce the King’s will.⁴⁴ Today, the European Commission regularly evokes transparency to suggest that Europeans freely consent to its policy because they are aware of what it is doing.⁴⁵ It would amount to political suicide for the Commission to instead take up a transparency initiative with the explicit purpose of making European subjects do exactly what Commission ideologists want. The question is, then, why is the blatant flouting of individual freedom no longer possible?

I argue that *fetishism*, and especially *commodity fetishism*, explains why transparency today usually assumes an individualist character. Marx’s theory of commodity fetishism shows why commodity production, which the capitalist mode of production spreads, makes relations

⁴² Ginsburg 2016.

⁴³ This interpretation of the terms *ideologist*, *ideology*, and *the ideological* owes much to the work of the Projekt Ideologietheorie, which has produced one of the many Marxist interpretations of these issues (see Section 2.2.2.3).

⁴⁴ Frederick 2006: 8.

⁴⁵ European Commission 2014.

among humans appear in the guise of relations between the commodities they produce and exchange. This happens because commodities have labor values that are expressed in prices, and it is as viable for people to accept these seemingly intrinsic properties in their daily life as it is to take for granted, say, commodities' weights. In other words, labor value appears fetishistically as an attribute of commodities, while the social character of commodities is discernible only through the use of an elaborate scientific apparatus (see Section 2.3).⁴⁶

Commodity fetishism tends to give rise to experiences of autonomous individuality. This is because fetishism conceals people's relations behind commodities and thus makes it hard to notice how people are affected by and affect others.⁴⁷ Wage laborers under the capitalist mode of production, for instance, sell their labor power as a commodity, choose their employers from among willing buyers, and seem to be fully compensated by wages. They likewise buy their subsistence in the market. This confers upon laborers a semblance of independence from the other laborers who produce their subsistence, as well as from their capitalist exploiters.

As the capitalist mode of production spreads, both ideologists and non-ideologists have more experiences of autonomous individuality. The figure of the autonomous individual thus becomes increasingly intuitive to ideologists and their audiences.⁴⁸ Marx uses the expression "objective thought form" to designate such forms of consciousness that arise from experience within social forms.⁴⁹ Commodity production and exchange, for example, are objective forms of behavior that mold individuals' thoughts. Furthermore, ideological forms such as law⁵⁰ tend to adapt to the intuitive and practical requirements of commodities. This adaptation results in individualized ideological forms,⁵¹ such as freedom of movement, that reinforce experiences of autonomy. In a consolidated capitalist society, many ideological and non-ideological social forms impart experiences of autonomous individuality.

If each person were really nothing but a free-wheeling, self-contained individual, society would instantly collapse. In reality, as commodities spread, they are accompanied by various forms of society building. The corollary of wage laborers freely choosing their capitalist

⁴⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 82–83.

⁴⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 100–101.

⁴⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 101.

⁴⁹ Haug 1995.

⁵⁰ Pashukanis 2002: 109–133.

⁵¹ Poulantzas 2000: 65–66.

employers, for instance, is that the employers enforce a workplace discipline that correlates the laborers' products with market demand rather than with the laborers' own needs.⁵² In choosing what to purchase with their wages, laborers rely on the advice of friends, consumer legislation, advertising, the enforcement of property relations, and so on. Such forms of socialization are only ideological to the degree that they pass through specialist ideologists. All forms of society building, however, contradict autonomous individuality, whether explicitly or implicitly: either one steers oneself from within or one is steered from without.

This dissertation argues that individualist transparency is a lucrative way to process the contradiction between autonomy and socialization. By attempting to alter what their audiences perceive, ideologists may exert influence without forcibly overriding individual autonomy. Furthermore, by promising that ideological appearances allow people to see well, individualist transparency suggests that it is compatible with free agency, since audience members ultimately decide how to behave. Transparency is a particularly apt metaphor for this purpose, since it makes use of pre-existing physical intuitions. After all, most people nowadays have plenty of experience with physical transparency as a property of glass that more or less passively allows them to see well, such as windows.⁵³ Resistance to individualist transparency is to be expected, however, insofar as it enforces a lopsided compromise between seeming freedom and actual domination. Such compromises often run against their own claims of direct perception, as well as audience expectations.

To repeat, individualist transparency denotes a fetishistic, ideological objective thought form that builds society by means of planned appearances that can ostensibly be "seen through." The theory of fetishism explains the individualist aspect of recent forms of social transparency, while ideology theory explains transparency's society building aspect. Appearance planning is the quintessential individualist form of ideological socialization, since it reaches people through their phenomenal environs and thereby seemingly preserves their autonomy. The claim of seeing well, finally, emphasizes that the individual knows what he or she is doing—that the individual makes choices independently and with a sufficient amount of knowledge.

⁵² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 336–337.

⁵³ For the historical interconnections between clear glass and capitalist production, see MacLeod 1987.

1.2.1 Interlude: Transparent Livestock Welfare

The cut-and-dry academic definitions of transparency and fetishistic ideology given above are not very helpful in understanding how individualist transparency concretely functions in society. To put some flesh around the conceptual bones, it is useful to consider a concrete case before moving on. In this section, I briefly outline the case of the Welfare Quality livestock welfare measurement system, which I also discuss in Articles I and II and which represents an important source of inspiration for my interpretation of individualist transparency.

In 2004, the European Commission awarded a substantial 14-million-euro research contract to a multidisciplinary project on livestock welfare. The project was titled “Integration of animal welfare in the food quality chain: from public concern to improved welfare and transparent quality.” Its aim was to develop a livestock welfare measurement system that could be applied in cattle, poultry, and pig production. Consumers were to be transparently informed as to how their food had been produced. Researchers from forty-four institutes and universities from sixteen countries conducted the research over five years. Innumerable other organizations and lay people participated as stakeholders or research objects.⁵⁴

The project’s outcome was a welfare measurement and certification system for livestock production. When this so-called Welfare Quality measurement system was tested in practice, however, it turned out that half of all European livestock production units would have been graded “unacceptable” using the welfare thresholds proposed by citizen jurors and welfare scientists. As a consequence, the project published a less strict set of criteria that accommodated the reality of the European livestock system at the expense of citizen and scientific views.⁵⁵

The researchers promised to tighten the rules after “sufficient progress” had occurred in European livestock production.⁵⁶ In 2013, however, other welfare scientists tested the system and noted that “severe welfare problems did not result in herds being classified as unacceptable” and suggested that “[t]he role of expert opinion in the WQ-ME [multi-criteria

⁵⁴ Welfare Quality Consortium 2008.

⁵⁵ Miele et al. 2011: 115.

⁵⁶ Miele et al. 2011: 115.

evaluation] model requires further investigation.”⁵⁷ As of April 2017, the protocols available at the Welfare Quality Network’s website have not been tightened.⁵⁸

The Welfare Quality protocols have been freely available on the internet since 2012 and have been implemented and further developed by several different actors. One of the more significant adaptations is the WelFur research project funded by the European Fur Breeders’ Association. The project used the Welfare Quality protocols as a foundation for constructing welfare measures for mink and foxes, but freely adapted the system’s particulars. Their approach includes, for instance, novel welfare gas chambers and welfare anal electrocution rods for the mass slaughter of mink and foxes.⁵⁹ WelFur began to be implemented in production in 2015, and the industry now uses it for public relations work and welfare product labeling.⁶⁰ Industry lobbyists have deployed it to counter animal protectionists in meetings with EU parliamentarians, for instance.⁶¹ Animal protectionists, in turn, have argued that the system conceals cruelty, forcing industry representatives to respond.⁶²

The Welfare Quality project epitomizes individualist transparency. The project’s researchers were tasked with empowering consumers and producers to choose between welfare and non-welfare variants of capitalist livestock production. When it turned out that the “welfare” people wanted was not implementable within extant production conditions, however, the criteria for welfare were loosened, resulting in a compromise. Consumers can now buy products that are welfare-labeled, but the welfare production conditions differ systematically from consumer expectations as established by research.

Because of the Welfare Quality project’s research setting, we know that what consumers think of when they hear “welfare” is not what they get in the factory. However, the misleading character of Welfare Quality can only be discovered through sustained scholarly inquiry. Consequently, Welfare Quality works as intended: consumers seem to choose freely, producers and retailers earn a welfare premium, and EU bureaucrats and researchers seem to have earned their salaries and grants.

⁵⁷ de Vries et al. 2013: 6272.

⁵⁸ Welfare Quality 2009: 18–19.

⁵⁹ Mononen et al. 2012: 368.

⁶⁰ Fur Europe 2015; Fur Europe 2017.

⁶¹ Ingman & Nielsen 2015.

⁶² Bale 2016.

I give many other examples of individualist transparency in Article III, as well. The basic logic is not contingent on the particulars, however: individualist transparency is produced by ideologists who claim that their subjects freely do what they should, and the role of the transparency metaphor is to suggest that the subjects know what they are doing. After all, the very definition of social transparency suggests that its subjects have access to good-quality information to back up their choices (see Section 1.1). Irrespective of whether the transparency is in fact misleading, however, the claim that a person can see well has powerful consequences in itself. It erases the contradiction between freedom (or a consumer choosing what she buys) and unfreedom (or ideological socialization).

Welfare Quality is a form of individualist ideological transparency. There are, however, other forms of social transparency as well. In the section that follows, I outline the relationships between individualist, ideological, social, and physical transparency. The bottom line here is that ideologists tend to base social transparency metaphors on people's misleading everyday experience of physical transparency. It is possible, however, to conceptualize social transparency in a way that neither builds on fetishistic individuality nor avoids the ideologically inconvenient aspects of physical transparency. Such a conceptualization is a necessary element of any non-ideological social transparency planning that relies on horizontal socialization rather than on ideologists who are disproportionately affected by ruling-class interests.

1.3 Physical, Social, Ideological, and Individualist Transparency

I define *social transparency* as a configuration of human and non-human relations that preserves traces of objects across space and time such that objects are able to appear to subjects. Social transparency can thus be characterized as a series of events. In an assessment of livestock welfare, for instance, a hen may flee from a human assessor who is attempting to measure its welfare (the object). The assessor then uses the fleeing behavior as evidence of welfare problems when entering scores into a computer system that is used for product certification (transparency preserving a trace). When labeled chicken fillets end up on store shelves, livestock welfare appears to consumers who have been trained to recognize welfare (subjects).

The same process can be characterized abstractly as follows: First, the object (welfare) has some kind of impact on its environment (the assessor). Second, this impact changes the environment in a way that leaves some manifestation of the fact that this object has existed

(the assessor's computer). Third, these traces are preserved over space and time for subjects who are capable of interpreting them (consumers). Social transparencies of this kind are present everywhere from language to airport metal detectors.

Optical transparency also preserves traces of objects, in radiation that travels across space and time.⁶³ Social transparencies often contain optical aspects, as well, such as the literally transparent dome of the Reichstag building where the German federal parliament convenes. I do not mean to suggest, however, that social and optical processes are exact equivalents. I only use optical transparency as traction for thinking about the social kind. Below, I outline the key concept of *trace* and discuss the relationships between different forms of transparency using schematic diagrams that support the verbal presentation with everyday visual intuitions.⁶⁴

In macroscopic optical transparency, certain wavelengths of light pass through a medium without being scattered or absorbed.⁶⁵ Transparency thus transmits radiation while preserving its consistency. *Translucency*, by contrast, transmits radiation *without* this requirement of consistency. Bathroom windows, for instance, are often translucent but *not* transparent to visible light. Light does pass through translucent bathroom windows, but their structure is purposefully imbued with irregularities that scatter and randomize light (see Figure 1).

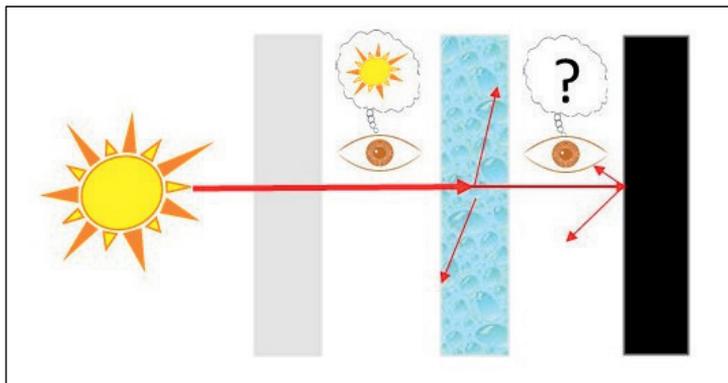


Figure 1. Light (red arrow) passes through a transparent material (gray), is randomly scattered by a non-transparent translucent material (blue), and is absorbed and randomly scattered by an opaque material (black). Human eyes can only see an object through the transparent material, which does not randomize light.

⁶³ Choudhury 2014: 109.

⁶⁴ The art in the diagrams has been created by the author using resources from openclipart.com and Wikimedia Commons. Both sources allow sharing and remixing.

⁶⁵ Fox 2010: 2–7.

This means that the light that passes through a transparent material can in principle be used to see objects on the other side, although the objects may still seem inverted or distorted to seeing humans. Non-transparent translucency, by contrast, effaces the traces of objects such that it is no longer possible to reconstruct any object whatsoever on the other side (see Figure 2).

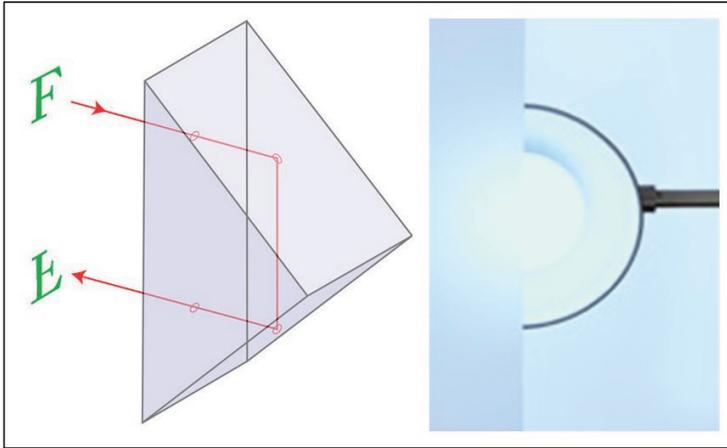


Figure 2. A transparent Porro prism (left) preserves the traces (red) of an object (green), but inverts the object. By contrast, a non-transparent translucent film (right) effaces the traces of the lamp behind it, rendering the part behind the film completely invisible while still letting the light shine through.

As I show in Article III, metaphorical social transparency language has throughout history emphasized the possibility of seeing well in a given context. This probably corresponds with people's primary intuition of physical transparency. However, most people are also familiar with misleading forms of physical transparency, such as the way a straw seems broken in a glass of water. Modern scholars have often uncritically adopted the former intuition into their conception of social transparency, giving rise to a widespread ideal-typical understanding of social transparency as equivalent to high-quality information.⁶⁶ Figure 3 depicts this ideal-typical conception, according to which social transparency replicates the object and allows the subject to see it unimpeded (see Figure 3; for literature reviews, see Article III and Section 1.1).

⁶⁶ Schnackenberg & Tomlinson 2014: 5–6.

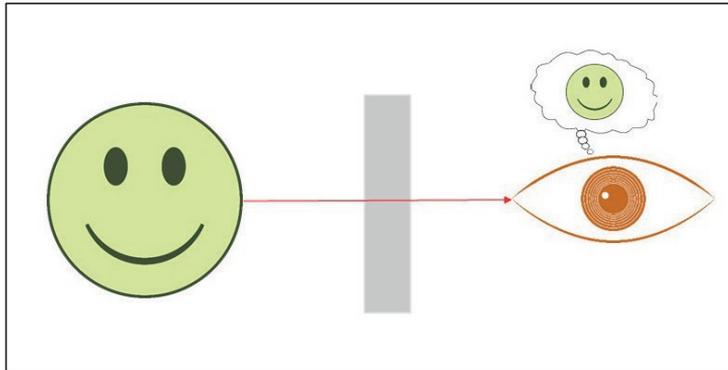


Figure 3. Ideal-typical social transparency (gray) preserves traces of the object (green), allowing observers (orange) to see it well, or even perfectly.

It is fair, in my view, to use the word *transparency* metaphorically to characterize social phenomena. Everyone is intuitively familiar with optical transparency or the lack thereof, which is why it can be employed as a useful source of shared experiential material for thought.⁶⁷ It is also correct to contrast social transparency with secrecy as a kind of metaphorical “opacity,”⁶⁸ since social transparency makes the appearance of objects possible, as opposed to blocking them altogether. Secrecy typically involves erasing the traces of an object, such as destroying the evidence of a crime, whereas transparency suggests that traces of the object are transmitted.

Contrary to common sense, however, social transparency should not be associated with “seeing well.” This association is a misconception that ideologists use to hijack intuitions, in a manner of speaking. In reality, social transparency may be just as unreliable as the optical variety, giving rise to misleading appearances and unsavory social consequences. Social transparency preserves traces of objects, but this does not mean that all subjects can always adequately interpret the objects via these traces. One physical example of this is the inversive Porro prism (see Figure 2), whereas a social example is the Welfare Quality system, as discussed above in Section 1.2.1.

The concepts *transparency* and *trace*, as I use them, only make sense in the context of a process that includes a subject side and an object side. To say that a piece of glass is not transparent, for instance, implies that a specific kind of observer cannot reconstruct objects

⁶⁷ For similar Marxist interpretations on the use of metaphors, see Harvey 1998; Bartels 1999.

⁶⁸ E.g., Birchall 2011a.

from the light that passes through it. From the perspective of another kind of observer, however, the same glass may be transparent. For instance, a device that has been calibrated to compensate for the specific irregularities of the glass might be able to “see through” that glass, since the light would not be random relative to the device. For such a device, the translucent glass would instead be transparent. The concepts of transparency and trace are thus bound up with specific material constellations that extend “beyond” them.

The concept of social transparency is quite general and therefore does not account for the details of any concrete form of social transparency. This is why I have coined the notion of ideological transparency to designate specifically those social transparencies in which ideologists are involved in planning the processes that preserve traces of an object (see Figure 4). There are many social transparencies that are not ideological, which is to say cases where traces are preserved without the work of appearance planners.

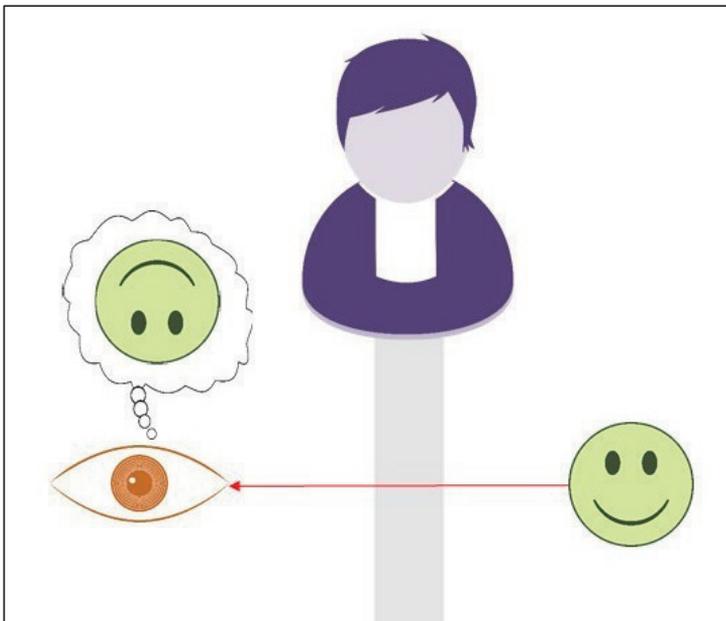


Figure 4. A transparency ideologist (purple) produces ideological transparency (gray) that refracts the traces (red) of an object (green) such that it appears inverted to an observer (orange).

Individualist transparency is a form of ideological appearance planning that empowers and controls individuals by ostensibly allowing them to see well. The ideologist works to make an object appear in a way that encourages certain modes of behavior over others, but the recipient supposedly chooses how to act (see Figure 5). This compromise helps alleviate the

contradiction of self-coordination and socialization that capitalist commodity production tends to engender, but may also give rise to resistance (see Section 2.3.3).

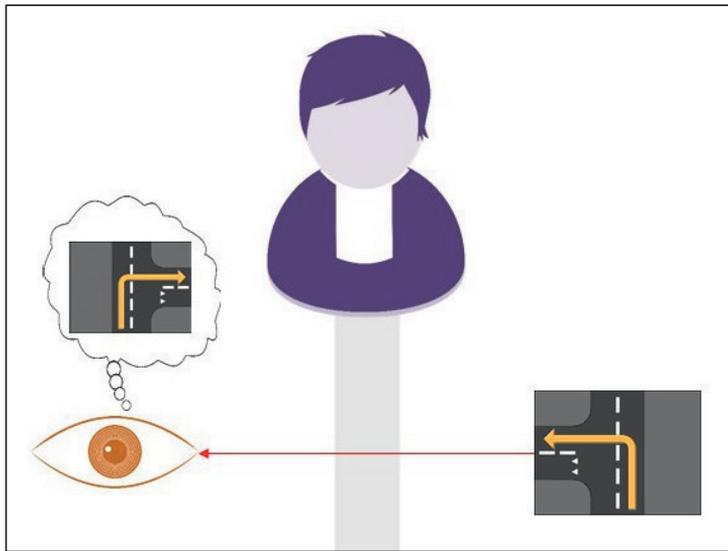


Figure 5. A transparency ideologist (purple) labors to control an observer (orange) by using transparency (gray) to invert traces (red) of a leftward turn. Such a turn consequently seems impossible and undesirable, whereas a rightward one appears favorably. The observer seems to choose freely, however.

Any situation in which people should undertake a given, socially determined action is a potential site for individualist transparency. “Energy transparency,” for instance, may induce laborers to avoid wasting energy, since a visible energy meter continuously displays the amount of energy expended.⁶⁹ “Transparency” about educational achievements may encourage students to strive for success (as defined by educators).⁷⁰ “Market transparency,” such as forcing corporations to publish price lists, may speed up the process of price formation and increase the efficiency of markets.⁷¹ Individualist transparency is thus useful not only for socializing people within organizations, but can also be used to socialize organizations with respect to other organizations. Organizations of transparency ideologists could conceivably even socialize each other.

To sum up, physical transparency has inspired my conception of social transparency, and social transparencies often have aspects of physical transparency. Ideological transparency, in

⁶⁹ Hopf & Müller 2013: 1667, 1670.

⁷⁰ Shulman 2007: 25.

⁷¹ European Communities Information Service 1962: 14.

turn, is a form of social transparency that operates through mental laborers who are disproportionately affected by the ruling class. Individualist transparency is a form of ideological transparency that empowers and controls individuals by ostensibly allowing them to see well. These conceptual relationships are presented in Figure 6, below.

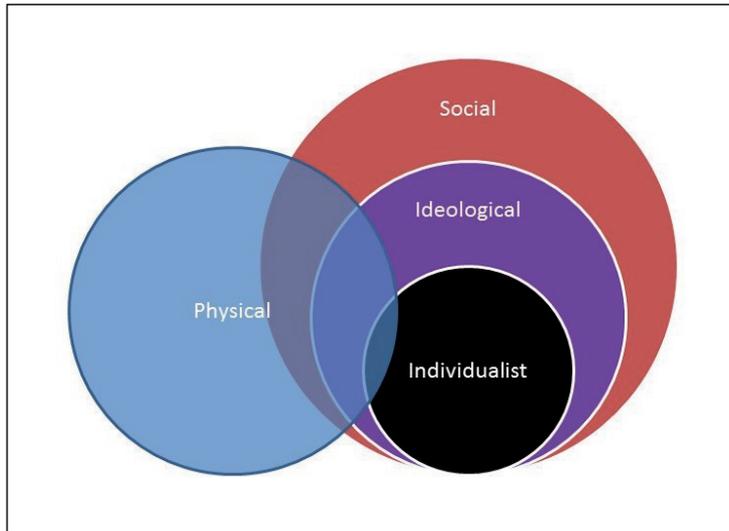


Figure 6. Physical transparency has inspired my conception of social transparency, and all forms of social transparency may have aspects of physical transparency. Individualist transparency is a form of ideological transparency, which in turn is a form of social transparency.

Even solitary animals leave chemical traces related to territory and mating,⁷² which indicates that there may not exist any species without such forms—evolution gives rise to tracing in pursuit of survival. Social transparency is also probably fundamental to any conceivable society, because it is difficult to imagine how a cohesive society could be established in the absence of any traces. Ideological transparency, by contrast, is only necessary in certain kinds of societies. We have plenty of evidence of classless societies,⁷³ as well as of societies without a division of labor between coordinators and the coordinated⁷⁴ (see Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.1). Individualist transparency, finally, is an even more specific form of ideological transparency that is especially characteristic of societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production but may occur in other societies to some degree as well.

⁷² Shorey 1976: 1.

⁷³ Hayden 2001: 231.

⁷⁴ Shipman 2010: 6.

Later in the dissertation, I argue that consciously intervening in appearances by targeting objects, transparencies, and subjects is necessary in any developed society, but that in certain forms of society such appearance planning need not be misleading or conducted by professional ideologists (see Section 2.1.3 and Chapter 4).

Above, I have briefly outlined the overall conception of transparency presented in this dissertation. In the section that follows, I discuss my reasons for producing this conception. The discussion includes not only the research questions that motivated the work, but also the research process that gave rise to the questions themselves.

1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

My Marxist interpretation of transparency differs significantly from earlier scholarship. The difference is mainly explained by the objectives I have pursued. In this section, I consider how these objectives contributed to the theorization outlined above and present several research questions that characterize my approach to transparency.

My conception of transparency is causal, theory-laden, and socio-naturally embedded. Previous approaches have tended to proffer less theoretically integrated conceptual frameworks,⁷⁵ less causally oriented descriptive historical genealogies,⁷⁶ and less socio-naturally embedded formal models.⁷⁷ The main reason for these differences between my approach and those of others is related to the social struggles that conceptions of transparency inevitably participate in. I make a conscious effort to side with the exploited and oppressed against exploiters and oppressors, the most important of which are the owners of the means of production. This is not the case with most transparency research, which necessarily affects the ways the research is conducted.

Consider, for example, formal models of transparency that draw on neoclassical economics. These models usually have objectives such as “underpinning policy” and “informing the design of transparency reform,”⁷⁸ dovetailing Jeremy Bentham’s famous transparency conception.⁷⁹ They adopt, in C. W. Mills’s words, the “perspective of the bureaucrat.”⁸⁰ From

⁷⁵ Birchall 2014.

⁷⁶ Hood 2006b; Cajvaneanu 2011.

⁷⁷ Kolstad & Wiig 2009: 522–523.

⁷⁸ Kolstad & Wiig 2009: 521.

⁷⁹ Bentham thought that transparency forces public officials and prisoners to act as they should. Bentham 1791: 40; Bentham 1830: 352. He also argued that “publicity,” by which he means roughly the same as with

this perspective, the history of transparency and the social reasons for its existence are irrelevant: it suffices that transparency prompts people to behave as intended under the given circumstances. In reality, however, transparency only functions as expected as long as the causal logic of the situation does not change in ways that invalidate the ideologist's model. If one sets out to change this causal logic, a historical and social understanding of transparency becomes necessary.

I am not interested in helping bureaucrats. My normative objective is to understand how specific forms of ideological transparency are determined by and contribute to exploitation⁸¹ and oppression,⁸² and how social transparency might instead help prevent these. The theory presented here is therefore necessarily more elaborate than a formal model that postulates correlations, since it also identifies the causal structures that explain the correlations.

For me, the point of studying society is to make it better. The main emancipatory dimension of my dissertation is to consider what role transparency might have in the transition to a society without the capitalist mode of production, as well as how appearance planning might function in a society without exploitation and oppression. It is important to get this right. As I argue in Chapter 4, the way in which appearances and their planning is organized constrains and enables the organization of society more broadly.

The research questions outlined above are not the ones I initially set out to answer. In the section that follows, I show how I reached this outcome after redirecting my research away from livestock welfare questions towards theorizing transparency in a new way.

1.4.1 Research Process

The various parts of this dissertation approach the transparency question in different ways. While the previously published journal articles are empirical inquiries, Chapters 1 and 2 re-theorize transparency based on the findings of the articles. Below, I first describe how the

“transparency,” ensures the confidence and consent of the governed as well as the expression of correct electoral preferences. See Baume & Papadopoulos 2018.

⁸⁰ Mills & Gitlin 2000: 114.

⁸¹ I define exploitation as people appropriating, for their exclusive disposal, the outcomes of other people's labor. Exploitation is most importantly expressed as profit under the capitalist mode of production. This is my interpretation of Marx's conception. See, e.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 227, 279.

⁸² I understand oppression simply as a catch-all category for different forms of domination and subordination, such as the everyday subordination of women to men. This seems to also be how Marx uses the word. See, e.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 9.

research I conducted for the articles led me to question transparency. I then discuss why I came to re-theorize the empirical results in the context of Marxist theory in particular.

When I started working on Article I in the early 2010s, my plan was to study livestock welfare policy. More specifically, I wanted to understand how livestock welfare had become commodified—sold on store shelves in the form of certified animal products. This seemed like a self-evidently suitable topic for a political scientist interested in the economy, since states were, and still are, the main drivers of welfare commodification.

I started by reading everything I could find on this topic: policy documents, NGO brochures, grant decisions, welfare research and its history, animal history, certification protocols, advertisements, and so on. I also did a few background interviews with researchers and met with animal welfare professionals at the European Commission and Parliament. Everyone I met and most of what I read claimed that commodification empowers consumers by giving them more information to back up their free choices. The word *transparency* was omnipresent.

I soon realized that the official version of the story was half-true at best. Examples like the Welfare Quality and WelFur systems (see Section 1.2.1) convinced me that the commodification process was in fact selective and distortive in its portrayal of livestock production. It also seemed to me that this distortive character was difficult to get rid of. For instance, if half of European livestock production units were “unacceptable” in terms of citizen jurors’ and welfare scientists’ views of welfare,⁸³ surely livestock producers and retailers would throw their substantial weight against any attempts to honestly communicate this fact.

There was, in other words, a major obstacle standing in the way of the much-touted welfare transparency. This did nothing to obstruct the implementation of welfare transparency, however, which simply accommodated the livestock factories by watering down the definition of welfare that had been established by research. In Article II, I discovered a similar pattern by closely analyzing educational EU-funded video games targeted at welfare producers and consumers. I concluded that these games, too, had been designed to accommodate the grisly reality of livestock production (see Section 3.2). However, the games and the welfare measures were not fantasy without any basis in reality. They were a biased

⁸³ Miele et al. 2011: 115.

compromise that mediated underlying conflicts, and therefore also carried misleading traces of the experiences of livestock in factories.

As I was writing Articles I and II, it slowly dawned on me that similar processes had been going on for a long time, and were also currently going on all around me. Since the days of liberalism's slave-owning, colonialist, genocidal founding fathers, the ideal of individual freedom has been based in practice on exploitation and oppression.⁸⁴ I had documented the emergence and specifics of one form of the contradiction between individual freedom and unfreedom, but had not really explained why this contradiction exists in the first place, or why it is so prevalent.

I felt that I needed a level of abstraction beyond the question of livestock welfare to properly broach the broader contradiction at stake. This is why I started focusing on transparency. For Article III, I produced a brief history of ideological transparency. This confirmed my suspicion that transparency works in a similar manner in many contexts and was not limited to livestock welfare. I had discovered a concept that allowed me to extend and go beyond my previous work.

Working on Article III, I also discovered that much of the existing literature on social transparency was nearly useless for my purposes. It was obvious to me, both from the history of transparency and from the livestock welfare case, that transparency ought not to be theorized in terms of seeing well. This was, however, what virtually everyone else seemed to be doing. In reading physics, I also realized that the social-scientific portrayal of transparency was completely at odds with the phenomenon of physical transparency. This begged the question of why our physical intuition has been mobilized in such a misleading way. I increasingly viewed the academic social transparency literature as an ideological form that needed to be criticized and explained.

This is when I started delving deeper into Marx and Marxism. Marx's conception of appearance was obviously relevant to the question of how transparency can simultaneously enable vision and mislead the viewer. It also seemed to me that theorizing transparency required the clarification of the relationship between commodities and states, which was at the center of Marx's conceptions of fetishism and ideology. I had not managed, however, to

⁸⁴ Losurdo 2011: 32–38.

properly link these conceptions with each other while drafting the empirical articles, because such articles are of necessity theoretically shallow.

The result of my re-theorization has been presented briefly above and will be discussed in more detail below. The chapter that follows is the most substantial part of the dissertation. In it, I reinterpret Marx and Marxists and apply their thinking to the transparency question.

2 A Marxist Interpretation of Transparency

Marx's thought is highly suitable for an analysis of transparency. The reason for this is that he provides a causally powerful account of how objects appear in societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. In other words, Marx accounts for several widespread and efficacious mechanisms that affect the way things seem to be. He also explains how these appearances contribute to the way society works.

Leaning so heavily on Marx and Marxism may seem odd to many contemporary scholars who reached their intellectual maturity around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union. For a long time, even left-leaning academics thought that Marxism was a thing of the past. The situation is now rapidly changing, and yearly Web of Science mentions of "Karl Marx" are at an all-time high.⁸⁵ It seems prudent, however, to revisit some of the arguments that have been used to justify abandoning Marx.

Perhaps the most common counter-argument to using Marx's theory is the Soviet abomination.⁸⁶ This counter-argument is mistaken. Marx's theory remains politically and scientifically salient precisely *because* the Soviet experiment failed miserably—that is, because the capitalist mode of production prevailed and remains dominant and unchanged in its central aspects. To abandon Marx because of the Soviet Union would amount to discarding a powerful scientific theory because of its bad consequences. Few would similarly favor abandoning physics because of the atom bomb or biology because of eugenics. Marx's theory is practically and epistemically strong with respect to present society, and this strength calls for its application, though with one eye on past failures.

Of course, many scholars also challenge the explanatory power of Marx's theory. The main argument on this front nowadays is that Marx's thinking was bound to nineteenth-century England.⁸⁷ His theories are thus supposedly not applicable to our era of robots,⁸⁸ environmental catastrophe,⁸⁹ and the home office⁹⁰. The problem with such claims is that they typically do not show how exactly these developments upend Marx. A robot, for instance, replaces present labor with machines (i.e. past labor) in exactly the manner that

⁸⁵ Clarivate Analytics 2018.

⁸⁶ von Mises 2007: 133; Hudelson 1993: 189–190.

⁸⁷ Sperber 2014: 7–12.

⁸⁸ Social Democracy for the 21st Century 2015.

⁸⁹ Cole 1993: 37.

⁹⁰ Fumagalli & Mezzadra 2010: 238.

Marx argued capital is inclined to do.⁹¹ Marx also knew that a lack of social production planning coupled with the competitive pursuit of profit leads to environmental destruction.⁹² And just as competition tends to associate the prices of factory products with necessary labor time, so too does this tendency affect the products of the home office.⁹³ This is not to say, of course, that nothing has changed. It is just that the dynamics that Marx attempted to analyze and intervene in remain largely unscathed by time. This is unfortunate for Marx's politics, but fortunate for his explanatory power.

Many scholars would also claim that they have methodologically eclipsed Marx. Today's academic folk wisdom says Marx's work is essentialist and teleological,⁹⁴ reductionist,⁹⁵ anthropocentric,⁹⁶ deterministic,⁹⁷ and *a priori*,⁹⁸ among other criticisms. Usually such proclamations stem from outright ignorance of Marx's thought and his way of conducting research.⁹⁹ I suspect that the main reason for this ignorance is academic competition.¹⁰⁰ As is well known, academia rewards scholars who publish incessantly and destroys anyone who spends years studying dusty tomes.¹⁰¹ Under such conditions, the winning career strategy is to dismiss exacting grand theories on the grounds of methodological dogma and to apply quick and commonsensical conceptual frameworks instead.

The proliferation of ignorant critiques presents the unrepentant Marxist with a conundrum: On the one hand, sweeping accusations like "essentialism" and "reductionism" also have an impact on my work, and hence it would behoove me to rebut such claims. On the other hand, taking the time and space to respond to all such charges hinders the positive development of Marxist theory.

My primary response to this challenge is to quote Marx generously, which in itself disproves most of the half-baked methodological arguments against him. Second, I present empirical

⁹¹ Roberts 2018a.

⁹² Saito 2016.

⁹³ Shaikh 2016: 20.

⁹⁴ Choat 2010: 2–3.

⁹⁵ Barrett 1992: 139.

⁹⁶ Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 41.

⁹⁷ Heilbroner 1967: 342.

⁹⁸ Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 41.

⁹⁹ For discussions on Marx's essentialism and teleology, see Meikle 1985. On reductionism, see Sheehan 2017. On determinism, see Resnick & Wolff 1982.

¹⁰⁰ Other possible reasons might be the difficulty of Marx's texts, the memory of the Soviet Union, and class struggle. Properly accounting for this phenomenon would require a historical comparative study of the institutional arrangements of professional scholarship.

¹⁰¹ Edwards & Roy 2016: 2; Fang & Casadevall 2015.

and theoretical evidence for Marx's conceptions as I go along. Third, I explicitly discuss some methodological issues that are particularly pivotal to this dissertation and show how they have been treated in the history of Marxism (see Sections 2.1.2, 2.2.2, 2.3.2, and Chapter 3). I only tackle the methodological charges that are most important to my own work, however, and leave the rest for others.

Overall, I consider Marx's theory widely applicable today. This is because it grasps dynamics that are central to societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. As an added perk, Marx and Engels also give some clues for the study of non-capitalist societies. This does not mean, however, that everything can be derived from Marx's theory. The reason why I use expressions like "societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production" over "capitalism" is precisely to signal that society extends *beyond* the currently dominant mode of production. Although that which is "beyond" will always stand in some relation to production, Marx did not theorize everything about all societies.

I am not attempting to theorize everything, either. I focus on only a few aspects of social transparency, but I contend that these aspects are particularly relevant to explaining social transparency and changing society. Such a focused and causal approach may seem overly simplistic or reductionist to a reader schooled in today's humanities, which tend to emphasize explanatory complexity and theoretical eclecticism over simple, integrated explanations.¹⁰² However, I do not mean to argue that individualist transparency is completely and forever accounted for by my conception. I offer the theories of appearance, fetishism, and ideology as partial but important explanations for the different forms that individualist transparencies take in different historical and social circumstances.¹⁰³ The articles temper the simplicity of this approach by presenting more historically-nuanced and concrete investigations.

In this dissertation, I lay the groundwork for a Marxist conception of transparency. Neither Marx nor Marxists have anything resembling a theory of transparency. Marx commonly uses the word *durchsichtig* in a colloquial way to imply that something can be seen well, metaphorically speaking, and a similar practice is widespread among Marxists.¹⁰⁴ This commonsensical interpretation of transparency, although supported by our everyday

¹⁰² E.g., Sil & Katzenstein 2010; Kroos 2012; Brković 2018.

¹⁰³ In this, I largely concur with Kurki's critical realist interpretation of causation and explanation. See Kurki 2008: 168–174.

¹⁰⁴ E.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 90; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 78; Adorno 1970–1986: vol. 8, p. 467.

experience, is misleading both physically and socially. I argue that Marx's conception of appearance, which does not necessarily imply seeing well, should also be applied to theorizing transparency.

In interpreting Marx, I mainly read the English *Collected Works* together with the *Marx-Engels Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA) which Marxologists consider the best source for the German originals. If there seems to be a discrepancy that is relevant to my argument, I note it. For direct quotations, I give page numbers to both editions.¹⁰⁵

My theory builds on the three major concepts *appearance*, *ideology*, and *fetishism*, as well as two minor concepts, *society building* and *objective thought form*. Each of the sections in this chapter focuses on one major concept; the minor concepts are outlined only alongside the major ones. I introduce the major concepts in order of decreasing abstraction: I begin with appearance, which is an extremely abstract concept operating at the level of evolutionary history; I then move on to ideology, which operates at the level of the history of class society; and I conclude with fetishism, which is most relevant to societies in which production for exchange is widespread, especially societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production.

All three sections have a similar structure: First, I introduce the most common connotations ascribed to the concept in everyday parlance and in the academic literature. I then interpret Marx's work on the subject, after which I situate my own interpretation within Marxism. Finally, I lay out the contribution my interpretation makes to the theory of transparency.

2.1 What is Appearance?

According to OxfordDictionaries.com, *appearance* means “the way that someone or something looks, an impression given by someone or something, an act of arriving or becoming visible.”¹⁰⁶ These everyday connotations of the word have certain theoretical

¹⁰⁵ A substantially improved English translation is available for parts of the so-called *German Ideology* manuscripts, which I used instead of the *Collected Works* edition. Although newer translations also exist of some of Marx's and Engels's other texts, I do not think that the improvements in these newer editions override the benefit of consistency that comes with using the *Collected Works*. This is not to understate the effects of poor translations on the English-speaking world's reception of Marx; see Haug 2017. Since I checked my interpretations against the German originals, however, the problem is not urgent here. In cases where the *Gesamtausgabe* edition has not yet published the originals, I used the *Werke* edition and made note of it in the footnotes.

¹⁰⁶ oxforddictionaries.com 2018.

advantages.¹⁰⁷ First, appearances are always distinct from the objects and observers themselves. If someone says that something merely “appears” to be such-and-such, for instance, the implication is that you had better watch out for the real thing. Appearances may deceive.¹⁰⁸ Second, an appearance is not baseless. It is never entirely disconnected from its object, like an illusion, hallucination, or fantasy might be: there is always *something* that appears in an appearance. Third, it would be incoherent to discuss something’s appearance without assuming that there is an observer or something else to which it appears. Appearances imply observers.

The argument in this section is that Marx’s conception of appearance is largely consistent with the three aspects of the dictionary’s everyday, intuitive definition, although Marx also expands upon and departs from everyday intuition substantially. My own contribution is to add transparency—which occurs between the observer and the object—as an aspect of the process of appearance. Transparency preserves traces that objects have left on their environment in such a way that subjects can observe them. Transparency does not guarantee that a subject is able to access the essence of an object, however.

No systematic Marxist theory of appearance exists. There is a vast literature on related topics, however, such as the history of the concept of appearance within Marx and Marxism,¹⁰⁹ the role of appearance in specific social forms such as fetishism¹¹⁰ and ideology,¹¹¹ the Marxist philosophy of science and knowledge,¹¹² and the relationship of practice and appearance.¹¹³ I interpret these as aspects of a more abstract theme of appearance.

I begin by showing what Marx wrote about appearance, especially in his early work. After, I discuss Marx’s conception of trace, or *Spur*, and show how this relates to transparency and appearance. Having discussed Marx, I move on to the treatment of similar issues by Engels,

¹⁰⁷ Other words that are used to discuss the way things seem to be include *illusion*, for instance, which suggests that things are very different or even detached from what they seem to be. Hacker 1987: 15–16. *Construction* indicates that interpreters are the active party in appearances, perhaps building objects in their thoughts, communication, or other social relations. Berger & Luckmann 1966: 13–16. Appearance is more conducive to a realist interpretation that nonetheless includes the process of objectification.

¹⁰⁸ The thirteenth-century Old French *aparance* already has connotations like “pomp.” Online Etymology Dictionary 2018.

¹⁰⁹ Haug 1997; Goldway 1967.

¹¹⁰ Geras 1971: 77–81.

¹¹¹ Amlinger 2014: 17–52; Torrance 1995: 46.

¹¹² Marsh & Tant 1999: 109.

¹¹³ Oittinen 2015: 30–32.

Marcuse, and Althusser. Their respective works have inspired three highly influential ways of conceiving appearance within Marxism.

2.1.1 Marx on Appearance

The word *appearance*, or *Erscheinung*, recurs throughout Marx's work. He probably adopted it from Kant or Hegel, both of whom use it to discuss comparable issues.¹¹⁴ Marx first makes extensive use of the concept in his 1841 doctoral dissertation on natural philosophy, and he continued to expand upon his treatment of the topic throughout his life.

Marx's approach is peculiar in that he stresses the necessity of getting beyond appearances to the essences of objects while simultaneously claiming that objects *include* their subject side process of objectification. In other words, subjects and objects are inseparable. Marx also emphasizes the sensuousness of appearances, but claims that sense data requires interpretation. Marx's conception of appearance thus grapples with some of the oldest issues in the history of philosophy.¹¹⁵

I focus here on the way Marx theorizes appearance in his earliest works, which he produced during the first half of the 1840s. I pay particular attention to his dissertation, which is the longest sustained discourse on appearance in Marx's entire oeuvre. The dissertation's focus on natural philosophy, especially what we now call physics, is interesting from my perspective, since my interpretation of social transparency has been inspired by optical transparency. The physics focus also distinguishes the dissertation from Marx's later discussions on appearance, which are primarily related to social topics like ideology and

¹¹⁴ Haug 1997: 812.

¹¹⁵ In order to survive, organisms must act using their senses (locate sustenance, evade predators, and so on). This element of reproduction is, in my view, the fundamental reason why the relationship between sensing, interpreting, and action—the question of appearance—is a perennial issue. Objects and subjects become inseparable, furthermore, because sensing affects its objects. For instance, plants and animals evolve distinctive coloration, camouflage, or social signaling that corresponds with a subject's sensory faculties. In its most abstract aspect, the appearance question thus operates at the level of evolutionary history, since inanimate things do not have signaling and self-sustenance processes (they need not survive) and thus cannot appear to each other. The appearance question was raised to a philosophical level already by ancient Indian and Greek thinkers. See Surendranath Dasgupta 1933: IX; O'Grady 2018: sec. 6. One prominent way of categorizing philosophies that deal with appearance has been based on, roughly, to what degree things are understood to be as they seem to humans. The conventional category of "realism" refers to philosophies that emphasize that although things are what they are ("mind-independent"), they may seem different. See, for example, Brock & Mares 2007: 4. "Anti-realisms" and "idealisms," by contrast, emphasize the role that humans, their creations, or extra-natural forces play in shaping appearances and focus less on the things that appear. See, for example, Putnam 1981: 49–74. Another conventional way of categorizing the history of philosophy is along the axis of "empiricism" and "rationalism." Here, the key question is the degree to which philosophers believe that humans know about things by sensing (empiricists) or by thinking (rationalists). See Markie 2015. The popularities of these positions have varied by location, time, and social sphere, and sometimes questions of appearance have even been forcibly suppressed. See Goldway 1967: 428–430.

fetishism. I largely disregard these mature works in this section, because I discuss them extensively later in connection with the concepts of ideology and fetishism. I argue, however, that Marx's intuition concerning appearance remains recognizably similar throughout his works, although his later treatments are more concrete than the early ones. This is a rather unusual position within the history of Marxism, which has tended to dismiss Marx's dissertation as a deeply idealist allegory on social issues in the guise of natural philosophy, and hence unrepresentative of his later thought.¹¹⁶

Marx's 1841 dissertation reads like a prolonged comparison of two interpretations of appearance. It contrasts ancient Greek philosophers Democritus (c. 460—c. 370 BC) and Epicurus (341–271 BC), who Marx claims are “diametrically opposed” on the issue of appearance.¹¹⁷ Marx considers Epicurus's views on appearance superior, primarily because Democritus disconnects sensuous qualities from objects. In my vocabulary, Democritus's process of appearance does not preserve traces of the object for the subject:

*Democritus turns the sensuous world into subjective semblance [Schein], Epicurus turns it into objective appearance [objektiven Erscheinung]. And here [Epicurus] differs quite consciously, since he claims that he shares the same principles but that he does not reduce the sensuous qualities to things of mere opinion.*¹¹⁸

Democritus's subjectivism stems from his theory of the atom. The Democritean atomic substrate consists of lonely blobs of essence that are not discernible to the senses, whereas apparent things have manifold relations and qualities.¹¹⁹ Therefore, atoms-in-themselves must be self-contained entities that have no qualities contingent on anything beyond

¹¹⁶ Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 21, p. 46; Lifshitz 1973: 28–29; Oizerman 1977: 50. One reason for the Marxist interpretation of Marx' dissertation might be that the surviving parts of the dissertation were first published in 1902, when Marxism was already well underway, and Lenin soon flagged the text as idealist. See Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 21, p. 46. I find Lenin's interpretation dubious, however. Marx's dissertation focuses almost exclusively on the behaviors of things like atoms and planets, with nary a word on Hegelian spirits or similar apparitions. Marx does theorize atoms and atom theories in interconnection. This is not idealism, however, but a necessary feature of any rigorous scientific endeavor. In my view, Marx's dissertation should be read as a natural-philosophical work with a repressed social undertone. By “repressed,” I mean that Marx purposefully and explicitly limits his inquiry to philosophy proper, although he does mention that Greek society and thought developed in tandem. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, pp. 35, 66. Academic requirements probably motivated this restriction. As Marx himself regretfully notes, the work might have been more “scientific” and less “pedantic” “if its primary purpose had not been that of a doctor's dissertation” in philosophy. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 29; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. 1, p. 13. Despite its one-sided philosophical focus, however, one would have to adopt a peculiar definition of idealism or anti-realism to subsume this work under those terms without consternation.

¹¹⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 38; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 25.

¹¹⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 40; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 26. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 39.

themselves.¹²⁰ Atomic essences must be cleanly split from the appearances accessible to human senses.¹²¹ Democritus breaks the connection between subject and object that transparency requires.

By contrast, Marx interprets Epicurus as arguing that atomic essences and their appearances are distinct yet inseparable. Epicurus's concept of the atom thus includes both disconnected-hidden and related-apparent aspects.¹²² In the related-apparent aspect, atoms emanate *eidola*, or images, which "penetrate into the senses and in precisely this way allow the objects to appear."¹²³ Humans cannot directly see individual atoms in their *eidola*, however, because our senses only apprehend atoms in their related state as larger objects. This gives atoms a disconnected-hidden aspect, an essence. Thus, to unwitting observers, atoms appear in a one-sided way, and their hidden individuality must be teased out by reason:

[In Epicurus's work,] the nature of appearance is justly posited as objective [objektiv], sensation is justly made the real criterion of concrete nature, although the atom, its foundation, is only perceived through reason.¹²⁴

Although Marx largely approves of Epicurus's take on appearance, he expresses great discontent with his insufficient empirics, epistemic relativism, and atomistic essentialism. Marx ridicules Epicurus as an armchair philosopher who disregards evidence and favors explanations that do not disturb the thinker,¹²⁵ he lambasts Epicurus for placing all conceivable explanations on equal footing and being indifferent to real causes,¹²⁶ and he criticizes Epicurus for an "atomistic consciousness"¹²⁷ that projects individuality as the fundamental essence of reality, the result being that "all true and real science is done away with inasmuch as individuality does not rule within the nature of things themselves."¹²⁸ In other words, while Marx attacks Democritus as a shallow empiricist, he is not satisfied with

¹²⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 61.

¹²¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 55.

¹²² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 60.

¹²³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 65; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 50. Marx only mentions this concept in passing, which is unfortunate given that it is crucial to the question of transparency. As I show later, however, Marx uses the word *trace*, especially in his mature works, to discuss something that occupies a similar position as *eidola* between objects and observers within appearance.

¹²⁴ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 64; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 49.

¹²⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 41.

¹²⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 45.

¹²⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 61; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 46.

¹²⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 72; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 57.

Epicurus's unscientific and atomistic dogma, either.¹²⁹ Epicurus wishes to objectify objectification, but does not actually do this in a sufficiently scientific way.

It is difficult to situate Marx's dissertation within conventional philosophical typologies such as realism and idealism. He definitely thinks that there is more to objects than human categories or perceptual faculties. Marx does not, however, suggest that there is a predetermined world of objects "out there" waiting to be discovered by humans, as realists often argue.¹³⁰ Epicurus earns Marx's praise for including both the essence and the appearance as moments of the atom itself, for instance, whereas Democritus "only objectifies the one moment."¹³¹ This relational conception is crucial to my theory of transparency, as I show in Section 2.1.3.

The main contours of Marx's intuition about *Erscheinung* are visible in his dissertation. One way of expressing Marx's basic idea would be to say that objects and observers give rise to appearances together. Object, appearance, and observer are moments or aspects of the same, indissociable process or continuum that takes place when an object appears to someone or something. This does not mean, however, that object, appearance, and observer are the same thing. The essence of an object may not be evident from its appearance to a given kind of subject, for instance, and appearances may therefore deceive. Objects are not exhausted by their appearances, and only in this sense can they be considered "mind-independent."¹³²

A strikingly similar set of issues is still present in quantum physics today. We now know that measurement appears to collapse un-objectified wave functions into objects with classical characteristics, such as electrons with determinate positions. Physicists even use the word *appearance* here with a decidedly Marxian slant: "Why does the world appear classical to us, in spite of its supposed underlying quantum nature?"¹³³ Many different theoretical answers to this question have been proposed, but several of them assume that the observer, appearance,

¹²⁹ Certain aspects of Marx's readings of Democritus and Epicurus have been questioned. I disregard the question of the veracity of Marx's reading here, since I am only interested in Marx's own views. See Bailey 1928; Heiskanen 2010: 174–202.

¹³⁰ Brock & Mares 2007: 34–35.

¹³¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 62; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 48.

¹³² For other examples of Marx's intuition on this topic, see Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 3, pp. 336–338; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 29. In a 1844 manuscript on private property and communism, by way of illustration, Marx argues that in a communist society, people would more easily notice that they participate actively and socially in objectification, and it would be obvious that "[t]o the *eye* an object [Gegenstand] comes to be other than it is to the *ear*, and the object of the eye is another object than the object of the *ear*." Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 3, p. 301; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.2, p. 393.

¹³³ Schlosshauer 2005: 1268–1269.

and observed must be thought of as aspects of a whole rather than as independently existing, ontologically separable things.¹³⁴

For a more everyday example, consider perception. We now know that color perception—that is, which colors people see and how—is affected not only by evolutionary history and physics, but also by learned color words.¹³⁵ Another example of the relationality of perception is provided by experimental evidence that shows that when bilingual people are primed in English, they tend to see video footage in terms of the present (e.g., they see a person walking). When they are primed in German, they more often see the same video in terms of future outcomes (a person walking towards a building).¹³⁶

This kind of evidence indicates the importance of maintaining a close connection between the subject and the object in the theory of appearance.¹³⁷ Appearance is neither about teasing out the truth about a pre-existing object nor about the subject constructing objects. It would make little sense, for instance, to say that it is wave functions, rather than particles, that “truly exist,” or that apples are “in themselves” or “independently” red rather than carmine. It would be equally foolish, however, to conceive of color in abstraction from the objective process of appearance, or to disregard the essential relations that sustain an object’s coloration.

Marx later expands his focus from abstract philosophical subjects and objects to the broader social-natural frameworks within which appearances occur. This shift of focus is evident, for instance, in the so-called Feuerbach theses from 1845, in which Marx asserts that “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.”¹³⁸ Or, as the tenth thesis puts it, “the standpoint of the new [materialism] is human society, or social humanity.”¹³⁹ To understand appearances, one must

¹³⁴ E.g., Giacosa 2014; Barad 2007. For a Marxist critique of Barad, see Haug 2016.

¹³⁵ Regier & Kay 2009.

¹³⁶ Athanasopoulos et al. 2015: 5. The researchers argue that the result could be explained by the differences between the two languages used in priming subjects: English distinguishes ongoing action with the “-ing” form, whereas German does not have this feature: “*ein Mensch geht*” literally translates as “a person walks,” and it is not possible to emphasize that the person is *geht*-ing right now. This interpretation could perhaps be strengthened by a social-psychological component.

¹³⁷ Maintaining a close connection between the subject and the object was quite common in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German philosophy, although these conceptions were usually more idealistic than Marx’s. See Haug 1997: 812.

¹³⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 4; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. IV.3, pp. 20–21. Marx’s social analysis of appearance distinguishes his approach from pragmatist philosophies, which may be reminiscent of Marx’s in some other respects. I delve further into the relationship of Marxism and pragmatism in Section 3.3. See also Novack 1975; Koivisto & Pietilä 1996.

¹³⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 5; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. IV.3, p. 21.

expand the analytical framework to study the social circumstances that bring about forms of objectification. To extend the example above, it is not enough to show that languages affect perception—the point is to show how social differences give rise to linguistic differences. The sections on ideology and fetishism show how Marx accomplishes this concretization of his analysis of appearance.

In his dissertation, Marx uses the word *Erscheinung* to describe processes that link the object with the subject.¹⁴⁰ In my conception, this linkage between subject and object is established by *traces* left by objects that are preserved for the subject. In the section that follows, I outline the textual basis of this conception of trace in Marx's writings.

2.1.1.1 Marx on Traces

Marx often uses the word *trace* (*Spur*) to refer to marks that can be interpreted in terms of objects. He likewise uses the verb *spüren* in reference to searching for and interpreting said marks, or “tracing.” Marx's “trace” thus refers to what happens between the observer and the object in the process of appearance, where ancient Greeks placed the *eidola*. In my view, transparency resides precisely in this space. It preserves traces of an object such that the object may appear to an observer.

Marx's first extensive use of *trace* in theoretical texts on economic appearance¹⁴¹ is in his manuscripts of 1857–58, now known as the *Grundrisse*. Marx notes that “in monetary relationships simply conceived, all immanent contradictions in bourgeois society appear to be extinguished.”¹⁴² The reason for this, we learn, is that “[a]s subjects of exchange, [people's] relation is therefore that of *equality*. It is impossible to find any trace of a difference, let alone of a conflict between them, not even a distinction.”¹⁴³ Traces of social contradictions are erased by exchange, in other words, which is why they cannot appear. Money is opaque, in this sense, to the subjects of exchange.

¹⁴⁰ Marx seems to often (but not always) use *Schein* without a specified object, as in “illusion,” whereas *Erscheinung* is often (but not always) accompanied by a specification of that-which-appears (misleading though the appearance may be). See, for example, Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10 pp. 269, 484. For a different interpretation, see Hanzel 2010: 514.

¹⁴¹ This is not the first time Marx uses *trace* to discuss appearance. For instance, in a newspaper article from 1842, he notes that living organisms function as integrated wholes in the sense that they make “all trace” of the separateness of their elements disappear, which Marx argues is an example of nature “appearing” as a “living unity.” However, remarks in which the relationship between trace and appearance is so explicit are rare in Marx's early works. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, p. 295; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.1, p. 275.

¹⁴² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 172; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.1.1, p. 162. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁴³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 173; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.1.1 p. 165. Emphasis in the original.

Marx makes numerous similar remarks in his mature works.¹⁴⁴ In *Capital*, volume 1, Marx argues, for instance, that “the wage form thus extinguishes every trace of the division of the working day into necessary labour and surplus labour, into paid and unpaid labour. All labour appears as paid labour.”¹⁴⁵ The wage is like an opaque film that is itself readily visible but blocks traces of exploitation. This distribution of opacity (between observer and exploitation) and transparency (between observer and wage) gives rise to the misleading appearance of equal exchange between capitalists and laborers.

Marx’s conception of trace suggests a comparison with physical transparency: When light passes through a physically transparent material, the light’s composition preserves traces of things on the other side. The light does not get absorbed, scattered, or otherwise randomized.¹⁴⁶ This quality is necessary for things to “appear” in Marx’s sense: all labor could not appear as paid labor, for instance, if the traces of wages were destroyed alongside the traces of exploitation. Radiation that is blocked or randomized cannot give rise to any appearances, even inverted ones.

Importantly, Marx does not consider traces and appearances simply false; instead, it is possible to discern objects from them. In *Capital*, volume 1, Marx notes that that he analyzes exchange value “in order to get at [auf die Spur zu kommen] the value that lies hidden behind it.”¹⁴⁷ The reason such traces are to be found in commodities, furthermore, is that “value can only manifest itself [Erscheinen] in the social relation of commodity to commodity.”¹⁴⁸ Here, Marx’s focus is not on the misleading character of the appearance, but on the fact that the value of commodities can be discovered by comparing them in the process of exchange.

When considered from the point of view of traces, Marx’s critique of the work of political economists appears mainly as a description of the distribution of transparencies and opacities that is characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. It is beyond the scope of my dissertation to fully reconstruct this distribution, but the conceptual interconnections should be clear by now: objects appear to observers in traces.

¹⁴⁴ E.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 179, 191; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, pp. 154, 165.

¹⁴⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 539; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 438.

¹⁴⁶ Keating 2001: 13–22; Nair et al. 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 57; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 49.

¹⁴⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 57; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 49.

I use *trace* as a theoretical concept.¹⁴⁹ In my conception, appearance is only possible if transparency preserves traces of objects; consequently, transparency is necessary to appearance. It is not a guarantee of adequate perception, however, since transparencies may invert objects or otherwise impede perception, and because not all observers can interpret a given object from the traces available to them.

2.1.2 Marxists: Are Objects Mind-Independent?

One of the main issues that self-described Marxists have disagreed on with respect to appearance is the degree to which objects exist independently of observers. Marxists have tended to be realists in the sense that they have assumed that there is more to the world than human perception and cognition. They have vacillated, however, concerning the specifics. Some have defended conventional realist interpretations, while others have proffered more subject-heavy models that resemble my own.¹⁵⁰ Given the simultaneously subjective and objective character of Marx's conception of appearance (see Section 2.1.1), it is hardly surprising that such disagreements have been quite common within the Marxist reception.¹⁵¹

In the section that follows, I situate my interpretation of Marx's conception of appearance against three key moments in the history of the Marxist reception of Marx. This reception history begins with Friedrich Engels, whose emphasis on independent objects greatly affected Second International and Soviet conceptions. Next, I review Herbert Marcuse's

¹⁴⁹ Marx's use of *trace* has been ignored in later Marxism. Many prominent figures of Western intellectual history have, however, used the word *trace* in ways comparable to Marx. See, e.g., Freud 2001: 334–335; Derrida 1973: 156; Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 12.

¹⁵⁰ Ruben, for instance, defends a very conventional realist position: he writes about “mind-independent objects” that can be grasped by evidence-informed thought. He consequently argues that concepts may “transparently” reference reality in the sense that they directly correspond with their objects. Ruben 1979: 19, 150, 160. There is some mild textual support in Marx for such a realist Marxism, such as the 1873 afterword to a German edition of *Capital*, which reads: “the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought [im Menschenkopf umgesetzte und übersetzte Materielle].” Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 19; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 17. Marx does not seem to think, however, that the human head is completely passive in all of this. After all, his metaphor for appearance is “translation.” Subject-heavy Marxisms like Ollman's seize on this aspect, claiming that reality has “no clear or fixed boundaries,” with the result that the labor of “abstracting out” objects from this “loosely structured whole” is extremely important. Ollman 2003: 157. This kind of subject-heavy Marxism finds explicit support in, for instance, the first of Marx's 1845 Feuerbach theses. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 3; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. IV.3, p. 19.

¹⁵¹ Colletti 1973; Roberts 1999; Harding 1992; Resnick & Wolff 1982; Araujo 2017. Marx's conception of appearance is scattered across his works, and many of these works have been translated inconsistently, leaving plenty of room for interpretation. Translators have often failed to systematically distinguish between Marx's words *Erscheinung* and *Schein* (gleam, appearance, sham, pretense), for example. See, e.g., Marx & Engels 1969: 13. Words directly related to appearance, such as *Objekt*, *Gegenstand* (object, item, thing, topic), *Wesen* (essence, being, substance) and *Spur* (track, trace, trail, sign) have also been translated inconsistently. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 3; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. IV.3, p. 19; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 57; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 49; Fromm 2013: 76.

phenomenological conception, which rose to great popularity among Western Marxists. I conclude by considering Louis Althusser's interpretation, which contributed to critical realism and poststructuralism and is therefore highly influential in today's social sciences and humanities.

2.1.2.1 Engels: Independent Objects

Engels's conception of appearance strongly resembles Marx's, but differs from it in one crucial respect: Engels is a fairly straightforward scientific realist who emphasizes the independence of objects from subjects. This realism fed a scientific attitude in Second International Marxism¹⁵² and influenced Soviet Marxism¹⁵³ through Lenin¹⁵⁴. Understanding Engels's conception of appearance is thus key to understanding influential strains of twentieth-century Marxist thought on appearance. Engels's conception is also significant for my theory of transparency. An Engelsian interpretation of transparency would over-emphasize truthfulness, but the strength of such an interpretation lies in its rejection of social reductionism.

Engels uses the word *Erscheinung* to objectivize social processes of appearance in a manner reminiscent of Marx: he notes, for instance, that wealth inequality "appears" morally unjust only when it is exacerbated to the extreme, but argues that this supposed injustice is actually always present to some degree under the capitalist mode of production.¹⁵⁵ He also argues that although human history "appears" to be governed by chance, it is possible to discover patterns that belie this appearance.¹⁵⁶

Engels's use of *trace* is likewise recognizable. He uses this word, for example, to characterize the way that long-dead forms of family life remain imprinted in the categorization of family

¹⁵² Oittinen 2015: 30–33.

¹⁵³ See Stalin 1975. Thinkers like Nikolai Bukharin and Georgi Plekhanov also incorporated the praxis criterion of truth in a fairly recognizable Engelsian form. For an explanation of why Lenin's antagonist Plekhanov ended up influencing later Soviet thought, see Oittinen & Rauhala 2014: 13.

¹⁵⁴ In his *Materialism and Empirio-criticism* of 1908, Lenin claims that Engels did not "in principle fence off the 'appearance' from that which appears, the perception from that which is perceived, the thing-for-us from the 'thing-in-itself.'" He argues, however, that Engels correctly believed that "[t]hings exist independently of our consciousness, independently of our sensations, outside of us . . ." Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 14, p. 103. The riddle of appearance can thus be solved by human practice: "For the materialist the 'success' of human practice proves the correspondence between our ideas and the objective nature of the things we perceive." Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 14, p. 140. It seems that Lenin later developed a more "subject-heavy" interpretation of appearance after reading Hegel. Kouvelakis 2007: 181–183; Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 38, p. 212; Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 32, p. 94. Lenin's subjectivist change of heart was largely disregarded by Soviet philosophy, however.

¹⁵⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 25, p. 138; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.27, p. 344.

¹⁵⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 387; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.30, p. 151.

members.¹⁵⁷ Cousins may continue being called “brothers” long after the disappearance of actual families in which cousins lived as brothers.¹⁵⁸ Today’s category of *brother* could thus be a trace in which the object—an extinct form of family—might appear. Insofar as familial categories are not scrambled by the imposition of another language by conquerors, it remains possible that extinct family forms (the object) appear in familial categories (the trace) to anthropologists (the observers).¹⁵⁹

The main difference between Marx’s and Engels’s conceptions of appearance concerns the roles of science, knowledge, and truth. Engels’s position approximates what would now be called scientific realism¹⁶⁰—that is, the notion that although objects are independent of observers, rigorous study produces ever-improving, ever-truer representations of them. He further complements this with the view that knowledge is produced in practice.¹⁶¹ The most famous of Engels’s formulations on this topic is found in *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* from 1886. In it, Engels agrees with Feuerbach that “[n]ature exists independently of all philosophy.”¹⁶² He also argues that nature can be directly grasped with the knowledge that emerges from what he calls “practice” and “experimentation and industry”:¹⁶³

If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural phenomenon by bringing it about ourselves, producing it out of its conditions and making it serve our own purposes into the bargain, then the ungraspable Kantian “thing-in-itself” is finished.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 142; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.29, p. 152.

¹⁵⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, pp. 147–148. Engels argued that families took different forms in different societies. His conception has been controversial throughout the history of anthropology, but recent evidence lends it support. See Knight 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Engels also uses *trace* to describe many other similar processes. He lauds Bachofen for digging up “traces” of old forms of marriage from historical and religious texts. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 142; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.29, p. 152. He evaluates “traces” of communal ownership among early Christians. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 25, p. 96; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.27, p. 302. He notes that horrible living conditions leave “traces” on the children of English workers, but argues that it is difficult to interpret these traces as evidence of capitalist exploitation. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 4, p. 400; Marx & Engels 1956–68: vol. 4, p. 331. And so on.

¹⁶⁰ See, e.g., Psillos 2005: xvii.

¹⁶¹ Oittinen argues that Marx probably did not conceive of practice as the general criterion of truth, and that this criterion is Engels’s invention. Oittinen instead ascribes to Marx a “socio-philosophical” concept of practice, which is not as closely associated with questions of knowledge but is “against both Feuerbach’s ahistorical anthropologism and the subjectivism of Young Hegelians.” I concur with this assessment.

¹⁶² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 364; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.30, p. 131.

¹⁶³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 367; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.30, p. 134.

¹⁶⁴ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 367; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.30, p. 134.

Engels's conception of appearance is roughly that although appearances may be misleading, practical investigation and experimentation can get at the pre-existing objects that are "out there." If extrapolated into a theory of transparency, transparency would come to mean what it currently does in the common academic sense (see Section 1.1), albeit complemented with practice: people *actively* see well. Under the Engelsian conception, transparency as a component of appearance planning could thus only concern the degree to which people are enabled to see independently-existing objects through practice. Increasing transparency would mean overcoming the knowledge barriers set by the likes of commodity fetishism and ideology, arriving at the one truth that corresponds with the object.

Engels can be lauded for emphasizing veracity and the importance of practice. He is, however, incorrect in one important respect: his claim that truthfulness means the correspondence of conception with the independently-existing essence of an object. This is incorrect because a truthful conception presumes a real appearance relation, and abstracting objects out of this relation and taking them as "independent" is tantamount to viewing them one-sidedly. Appearance relations may or may not be essential to objects, for instance.¹⁶⁵ I believe that such attention to the details of a concrete process of appearance—rather than a focus on the object—is what Marx means by his demand to conceive of truth "practically," as opposed to "abstractly."¹⁶⁶

Consider, for instance, a livestock welfare certification system (transparency) and consumers who have been trained to interpret (subjects) welfare labels (traces) or recognize production

¹⁶⁵ Marx discusses an essential appearance relation in the context of a plant and the sun: "The sun is the *object* [Gegenstand] of the plant [which is] an *expression* of the life-awakening power of the sun, of the sun's *objective* [gegenständlich] essential power." Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 3, pp. 336–337; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.2, pp. 408–409. Many plants have evolved to sense the sun's direction and turn towards it because sunlight sustains them. The sun is an essential object of the plant, and a plant that senses the sun's direction incorrectly risks perishing. Suns are not sustained by plants, however, and the relation to the plant is therefore not one of the sun's essential relations.

¹⁶⁶ This demand is found in the second Feuerbach thesis. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, pp. 3–4; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. IV.3, pp. 20–21. However, Marx also discusses the relationship of truth and objectification in *Capital*, noting that after the bourgeoisie had conquered political power, it no longer mattered "whether this theorem or that was true," since only the political expediency of theories was relevant Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 15; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, pp. 12–13. Marx's practice theory of objectification is therefore somewhat separate from the question of truthfulness: A truthful practice of objectification might systematically account for traces, rigorously theorize them, and get at the essence of the object, whereas other practices of objectification might not. Prokopczyk is right in arguing that "[t]he entities [between which the relation of truth is supposed to hold] enter the notion of truth as much as does the relation between them." Prokopczyk 1980: 66. Other Marxists have been split between positions that roughly approximate traditional correspondence (positivist), coherence (structuralist), and pragmatist (interventionist) theories of truth. See Binns 1973. The scope of this dissertation unfortunately does not allow me to delve deeper into the question of truth.

that can output welfare (an object) (see Section 1.2.1). No matter how true or practically efficacious the welfare conceptions embedded in this system are, none of them refers to a subjective experience of well-being that pre-exists in the livestock. Welfare as an object is only conceivable within the process of appearance, which also includes things like state-funded scientists that study welfare (see Article I). Furthermore, the appearance relation between the consumer and welfare is essential to the welfare object, which is to say that the appearance sustains the welfare. If no one recognizes and buys welfare, welfare will not be produced or measured and it will cease to exist. Finally, scientifically grasping the essence of welfare requires investigating not only the experiences of livestock, but also the social-natural relations that give rise to and sustain livestock suffering and its regulation, such as the competition that drives capitalists to torment sentient livestock for profit.

Alongside Engels's conception, there have long existed Marxist interpretations of appearance that are less optimistic about the knowledge effects of practice. In the section that follows, I briefly review some of the key aspects of such conceptions through the example of Herbert Marcuse and phenomenological Marxism.

2.1.2.2 Marcuse: Social Objects

Herbert Marcuse's conception of appearance was inspired by Marx's early works¹⁶⁷ and in turn greatly influenced the Western reception of Marx. Marcuse's early treatment of appearance can be seen as "vulgar historicist" in the sense that it focuses on short-term social issues. All of his work is also "phenomenological" in the sense that he is interested in how things appear from specific social vantage points. The phenomenological aspect is important to my conception of transparency, whereas the vulgar historicist early aspect is incompatible with it.

Between 1928 and 1932, Marcuse undertook doctoral studies under Martin Heidegger in Freiburg and developed what he called "phenomenological" Marxism. Marcuse was opposed to the way in which Engels applied his conception of appearance to everything from nature to society. He therefore limited the applicability of his own phenomenology to the realm of human history. He thought, for instance, that "mathematical physics" may treat its object as

¹⁶⁷ Marx's unfinished manuscripts known as the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and *German Ideology* (with Engels) were first published during the 1920s and 1930s. These contained many formulations that seemed to run against the grain of Marxism–Leninism and found an enthusiastic audience among Western Marxists.

abstracted from all historicity, because “the *being* of nature is simply not historical.”¹⁶⁸ According to Marcuse, the scope of phenomenology should be restricted to the short-term conjunctures of humans and non-humans, or the “nature in its active relationship to a particular Dasein.”¹⁶⁹ This allowed Marcuse to outline a historicist conception of objects that focused on the activity and social situations of the people who objectify:

*In being grasped, however, the objects always already stand in historicity. This sphere of historicity already begins, as a concrete historical situation, in the development of the question as it seeks the object; it includes the unique individuality of the questioner, the direction of his question and the way in which the object first appears.*¹⁷⁰

Marcuse argues, for instance, that a factory is not “really the same for the workers employed in it, for its owners, for the idle traveler who happens upon it, and for the architect who built it,” because “such objects [as factories] *are* only in an abundance of different meanings.”¹⁷¹ Marcuse claims not only that social objects are perceived and cognized subjectively, however, but that they are also entirely social on the side of their non-subjective constitution:

The factory expands or closes down or is paralyzed by a strike; it is bought out and remodeled, a technical or chemical discovery revolutionizes its operation, interest groups struggle over and within it . . . all this happens in and to the factory itself and is actually what constitutes its total being, its entire reality.¹⁷²

Marcuse thus gets rid of Engels’s independent object and replaces it with a dualistic view of society and nature that reduces factories to society.¹⁷³

Marcuse revised his position somewhat starting in 1932, attempting to overcome the aforementioned dualism by incorporating Marx’s views on the “unity between man and

¹⁶⁸ Marcuse 2005a: 21.

¹⁶⁹ Marcuse 2005a: 21.

¹⁷⁰ Marcuse 2005a: 19.

¹⁷¹ Marcuse 2005c: 61–62.

¹⁷² Marcuse 2005c: 62.

¹⁷³ Recently, varieties of “new materialism” have attacked Marxism for what they identify as dualism and social reductionism. See, e.g., Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2012: 100. Such attacks, which ironically often build upon the self-described Marxist philosopher Gilles Deleuze, tend to correctly emphasize the continuity of reality and correctly conceive of active non-human objects, although some of them also adopt the Engelsian notion of “mind-independent objects.” See, e.g., DeLanda, Protevi, & Thanem 2013: 2. They also tend towards an early-Marcusian vulgar historicism that overemphasizes short-lived conjunctures over longer-term ones. Such thinking is always in danger of turning into conservatism. William Connolly, for instance, acknowledges that his “politics of the event” tends to be “linked to a cautious politics of modest change” because things are so complexly intertwined that it is hard to predict the consequences of changing something. Connolly 2013: 403.

nature¹⁷⁴ into his thinking. The human component tended to remain dominant, however, such as in Marcuse's longing for the "transformation of nature into an environment (medium) for the human being."¹⁷⁵ Interestingly for my project, however, he also undertook the quest for "a reality formed by the aesthetic sensibility of man."¹⁷⁶ This aesthetic component, although overly human-centric, resonates with my presentation of non-capitalist transparency in Chapter 4.

Marcuse's conception of appearance became quite influential when he ascended to the status of the "Guru of the New Left"¹⁷⁷. As Piccone puts it, "the 'phenomenological' qualification appended to Marxism" became a marker of "the political confrontation between New and Old Left."¹⁷⁸ Arguably, however, Marx's conception of appearance would have already accounted for many of the central questions of the phenomenological tradition.¹⁷⁹

With respect to social transparency, the strength of Marcuse's phenomenology lies in his emphasis of the necessary limits of appearance. Transparencies cannot hope to erase the specificities of the observer–observed relation, contra Engels. Young Marcuse was incorrect, however, in detaching subjects, objects, and transparencies from their physical, chemical, and biological aspects. Later, his conception continued to revolve around humans, but he developed an interesting politics of reconfiguring processes of appearance in both their objective and subjective components.

Mature Marcuse brought his work under the banner of "Marxist humanism," to which many Western Marxists rallied.¹⁸⁰ This humanism, in turn, gave rise to an "anti-humanist" reaction, the most famous proponent of which was the French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser. Althusser wished to abolish Marcusian humanism, but ended up introducing a cleft between real and knowledge objects.

2.1.2.3 Althusser: Independent Real Objects, Dependent Knowledge Objects

Louis Althusser was aggressively critical of the "humanistic" way in which many of his contemporaries emphasized Marx's early works.¹⁸¹ With respect to appearance, however,

¹⁷⁴ Marcuse 2005b: 97.

¹⁷⁵ Marcuse 1972: 64.

¹⁷⁶ Marcuse 1969: 31.

¹⁷⁷ Farr 2017.

¹⁷⁸ Piccone 1971: 5.

¹⁷⁹ See Araujo 2017: 102.

¹⁸⁰ See Marcuse 1965.

¹⁸¹ Althusser 2005: 221.

Althusser's conception is best read as a mediation between the Engelsian realist and the Marcusean New Left phenomenological conceptions. Althusser abandoned Marx's appearance vocabulary, however, in favor of his own reading that disallows the conception of transparency that I propose. This reading would contribute greatly to the poststructuralist and critical realist conceptions of appearance that were to become dominant during the next two decades.

Althusser most prominently discusses what I call "appearance" in the works *For Marx* and *Reading Capital*, both of which were first published in the mid-1960s.¹⁸² In a sense, Althusser's treatment is recognizably Engelsian: he argues that "the real" is independent of "knowledge,"¹⁸³ departing from young Marcuse's radical social reductionism. However, Althusser also claims that the inverse is true, or that "no relation exists" between what he calls "knowledge objects" and "real objects,"¹⁸⁴ and that mature Marx likewise "completely isolated" knowledge objects from real objects.¹⁸⁵ Althusser thus disagrees forcefully with Engels's scientific realism, or knowledge coming to correspond with its real object.

Althusser argues that knowledge objects are produced entirely in thought. He emphasizes, however, that thought is not disconnected from the rest of reality, but forms one part of a societal-natural whole ("structure"). The structure's parts are connected with each other ("articulated"), and change at different rates and affect each other to different degrees. The way in which thought is connected to the structure affects the motivation and approach to knowledge production ("problematic"). The connections also affect knowledge production's raw materials, which consist of elements like sensuous experience and previous ideological conceptions.¹⁸⁶

Althusser argues, in other words, that knowledge production and real objects develop according to different logics and temporalities because they are differently connected with the rest of reality. This is why the real object develops independently of the knowledge object. Although knowledge may appropriate the real object (like all production does), the

¹⁸² Althusser does not use the word *appearance* in this connection.

¹⁸³ Althusser 2005: 246.

¹⁸⁴ Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 4, chap. 4. In a different passage, Althusser disagrees with himself and posits that there is an "unreal" relation between knowledge and real objects, namely "a relation of adequacy or inadequacy of knowledge, not a real relation." Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 4, chap. 3. Althusser never really resolves this contradiction, but the assumption of no (real) relation dominates *Reading Capital*.

¹⁸⁵ Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 4, chap. 9.

¹⁸⁶ Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 1, sec. 11.

appropriation is such that real objects neither affect knowledge objects nor become changed in the process of knowledge.

Althusser claims, based on repeated citation of one sentence in the *Grundrisse*,¹⁸⁷ that Marx likewise distinguished between a knowledge object and an independent real object. This reading is mistaken to the point of dishonesty, since the passage in question clearly contains no such distinction.¹⁸⁸ The fact that Althusser has no other textual evidence to base his claim on indicates that the distinction probably does not exist anywhere in Marx's works. Quite the contrary: Marx repeatedly emphasizes that humans can "work only as Nature does"¹⁸⁹ as they attempt to change objects of labor; that humans are "helped by natural forces"¹⁹⁰ in the process of production; and that differences in human ways of measuring objects "has its origin partly in the by diverse nature of the objects to be measured, partly in convention."¹⁹¹ In other words, insofar as production (including knowledge production) is hands-on rather than contemplative, there can be no mutual independence between knowledge and real objects. Unfortunately, Althusser's idea of the independent real object has proven popular among critical realists.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ See, for instance, Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 1, secs. 7,10, 11.

¹⁸⁸ The passage in question, from the *Grundrisse*, is directed against Hegel, whom Marx lambasts for believing that "the real was the result of thinking synthesising itself within itself." It reads as follows: "[A] mental concretum, is **in fact** a product of thinking, of comprehension; yet it is by no means a product of the self-evolving concept whose thinking proceeds outside and above perception and conception, but of the assimilation and transformation of perceptions and images into concepts. The totality as a conceptual totality seen by the mind [wie es im Kopf als Gedankenganzes erscheint] is a product of the thinking mind [Kopf], which assimilates the world in the only way open to it, . . . The real subject [Subject] remains outside the mind [Kopf] and independent of it—that is to say, so long as the mind [Kopf] adopts a purely speculative, purely theoretical attitude." Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 38–39; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.1.1, p. 37. Althusser thus gets it exactly backwards: Marx is arguing against the view that there exists a Hegelian independent real subject (not object!)—that is, a subject of history outside people's heads, experiences, and life-situations. Marx's point, in other words, is that the way in which society gives rise to people's experiences "must always be envisaged as the premiss of conception," rather than assuming a subject of history beyond people's social lives. This has little to do with "real objects" as opposed to "knowledge objects."

¹⁸⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 53; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 45.

¹⁹⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 53; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 45.

¹⁹¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 46; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 38.

¹⁹² Bhaskar's 1975 *A Realist Theory of Science* adopted Althusser's distinction between knowledge and real objects, using Althusser's exact words without citation, in the guise of "transitive" and "intransitive" objects. Bhaskar 2008: 6; O' Boyle & McDonough 2016: 157. This distinction explains the widespread critical realist attempt to "rescue Marxism from philosophy" by insisting on "the separateness of the world and the knowledge of the world." Joseph 2002: 28. I consider this attempt mistaken, since it implies a one-sided conception of both knowledge and of real objects.

The basic problem with Althusser's conception, which changed only modestly before his death,¹⁹³ is that it overemphasizes the practices and relations of knowledge production as opposed to the way in which real objects work. For instance, Althusser attacks Engels for thinking that "the theory of political economy is affected even in its concepts by the peculiar *quality* of real history"—as if real history did not affect the concepts of political economy.¹⁹⁴

Relatedly, Althusser refuses to consider how the articulations of the real object connect with those of the knowledge object, i.e. how the "external" relations of these objects interact when the objects come together. In Marx, most of this work is done by the appearance–essence continuum, such that essence refers to the relations that (in Marx's view) sustain the object, whereas appearance describes how the object side interacts with its subject side. Appearances and essences develop organically, such as when changes in production involve changes in knowledge (and its relations) that reciprocally affect production (and its relations) (see Section 2.3.1.1). Althusser abandons this entire problematic together with Marx's conception of appearance and essence.¹⁹⁵ This abandonment later inadvertently aided poststructuralists, who vulgarized Althusser in their criticism of Marx's analysis of the essence of the capitalist mode of production.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ This conception is not entirely invariant throughout Althusser's works. In his later self-criticism, for instance, Althusser emphasized the "relative," as opposed to total, "autonomy of theory" with respect to its real objects, but he still clung on to the strong distinction between knowledge and real objects. See Althusser 1976: 170.

¹⁹⁴ Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 4, chap. 4. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹⁵ Althusser famously claimed that Marx's scientific practice underwent a profound "epistemological break" around 1845, but that he continued to use some ideological concepts from his youth in his scientific works. One example of this would be Marx's supposedly "ideological" use of the appearance–essence axis, which Althusser claims distinguishes "between the two parts of the real object, of which one (the inessential) is the outer part which conceals and envelops the other (the essence or inner part)." This, in turn, ostensibly means that Marx attempted to "reduce the phenomenon to the essence, or, as [Marx] puts it . . . the 'apparent movement to the real movement.'" Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 1, sec. 10. Althusser's claim amounts to saying that Marx wished to "reduce," for instance, prices (appearance) to value and labor time (essence), which is blatantly untrue. Because of this misunderstanding, Althusser also misconstrues Marx's theory of fetishism. He thinks that there is a contradiction in Marx's fetishism theory, which supposedly presents fetishism as "an 'appearance', an 'illusion' arising purely in 'consciousness,'" while at the same time assuring "us that this appearance is not subjective at all, but, on the contrary, objective through and through." Althusser et al. 2016: pt. 4, chap. 9. Here, Althusser is projecting his own mistaken distinction between knowledge and real objects into Marx. Marx does not believe in independent objects, however, but discusses these issues in terms such as "objective thought form," which could be characterized, in Althusserian vocabulary, as an articulation of non-independent objective and subjective sides. See Section 2.3.2.1.

¹⁹⁶ Choat, for instance, uses Althusser as a crutch in his 2010 book *Marx Through Post-Structuralism*: "For Althusser, idealism is a philosophy of Origins and Ends, relying at once on an ontology—defined here as a conception of the essential nature of the world—and a teleology—referring all events to a pre-established destiny. In seeking to subvert Marx's ontology and teleology, the post-structuralists push the critique of his idealism further than before . . ." Choat 2010: 2–3. Having thus overcome Marx's "idealism," Choat leaves us with a "Marx without ideology, with no dialectic, where the economic is not determinant, where class is not centre stage." Choat 2010: 155.

My interpretation is that grasping the object's essence means relating to the object in a way that renders some of the relations sustaining the object apparent. Within the appearance relation, however, essences cannot be assumed to be independent or pre-existing, since appearance involves new real relations into which the object enters (see Section 2.1.1). Appearance is not contemplative but productive and practical. Consequently, my concept of transparency is only conceivable within a whole that includes subjects, (real) objects, and traces in their interaction. The independence of Althusser's real object is incompatible with this conception.

This is not mere speculation without practical consequences. Livestock welfare ideologists, for example, must often simultaneously intervene in both welfare objects and welfare observers to make ideological transparency occur. This is what they do when they educate producers to produce welfare and consumers to recognize welfare labels. However, such interventions do not render apparent the essence of welfare in capitalist production: livestock producers compete for profit and are forced to treat animals reductively if doing so is profitable. State livestock welfare regulation is essentially an attempt to cope with the consequences of this reduction (see Articles I and II). It would be strange to claim, however, that welfare as a real object exists in some sense independently in the livestock, in livestock production, or in state policy. If consumers could not "see" the welfare, they would not buy it. If consumers did not buy the welfare, its production would cease. This appearance relation is essential to the welfare object, and the appearance and the welfare develop organically, although welfare remains bound to the requirement that livestock production remain profitable.

2.1.3 Appearance and Transparency

Three aspects of my theorization of transparency draw from Marx's conception of appearance, departing somewhat from the views of important Marxists. First, transparency preserves, for observers, traces of objects across space and time. It would be "one-sided," in Marx's terms, to speak of "transparency" without reference to the other aspects of appearance, such as the objects that leave the traces that transparency retains and the subjects that read the traces as traces. Social transparency, furthermore, preserves traces within human interactions in particular.

Second, social transparencies are never reducible to their social aspect alone. They are also physical, chemical, and biological. Drawing a clear boundary between society and nature

produces the illusion that it is possible to study these elements in abstraction from each other, which would be anathema to materialism. The non-human aspect of appearance is most clearly discernible in Marx's dissertation, but his later works by no means lose sight of this aspect even though they become increasingly social-scientific and concrete, as I show later.

Third, transparency does not guarantee that all observers see well, contrary to the common-sense conception of transparency (see Section 1.3). All transparencies are not transparent to all observers, such as when some consumers can interpret livestock welfare labels while others cannot, for instance. Transparencies can also make it hard to grasp the essential relations that sustain objects. All of this is in line with Marx's appearance conception, although I depart from Marx's use of the literal word "transparency."

In optical transparency, for instance, image formation is possible because traces of objects in light are not effaced by scattering or absorption.¹⁹⁷ Not all observers can read objects in all traces, however. Anyone who has had their pupils dilated by an optician has experienced this: traces pass through the air for other eyes to see, but with dilated pupils, everything seems blurred. This is because dilated pupils prevent eyes from properly interpreting visible light for traces of objects. Objects may still appear to a different observer, however, and it would therefore be fair to say that the transparency of the air preserves traces of objects for those observers. Furthermore, if one took a walk with dilated pupils, one might inadvertently run into an un-objectified light post, since light posts do not cease to exist if one person stops seeing their traces in light. If everyone stopped seeing their traces in light, however, the light posts might be removed, because the usefulness of light posts depends on their appearance effects.

On the whole, my interpretation of transparency is distinguishable not only from textbook realism but also from idealistic subjectivism and social reductionism. I do not, however, call things "objects" in abstraction from their process of objectification, which is why I also avoid making a distinction between "mind-dependent" and "mind-independent" objects. Objects are inconceivable in the absence of their process of appearance. This process often, but not always, includes human minds, and these minds often affect the objects in various ways, as well.

¹⁹⁷ Choudhury 2014: 109.

The above account of appearance and transparency remains extremely abstract. It disregards important specifics, such as the differences between humans and non-human animals, not to mention differences in forms of social organization. Theorization at this level of abstraction is by itself insufficient for practical purposes, although it is needed in order to connect concrete processes of appearance with their abstract aspects. In the section that follows, I consider the more concrete question of why there are people who are professionally tasked with producing transparency in order to affect others. Simply put, the answer to this question is that such people are ideologists who work, successfully or not, to socialize people across the contradictions of the dominating mode of production. Transparency ideologists socialize people into relations of domination and subordination through the planning of trace preservation, associating this planning with direct perception.

2.2 What is Ideology?

If in all ideology men and their relations appear [Erscheinen] 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.¹⁹⁸

Marx and Engels, the so-called *German Ideology* manuscripts

In this section, I lay out an interpretation of Marx and Engels's conception of ideology. I then relate ideology to transparency. In a nutshell, my reading is that ideology tends to emerge if people are unable to organize themselves horizontally due to mutual conflict. Ideological powers emerge above these conflicts. Ideological powers are institutions made up of professionals whose job is to socialize people into relations of subjugation and domination—that is, to preserve and augment a bedeviled society that would otherwise fall apart. Ideological transparency is a form of such socialization that operates through appearance planning. The Vatican, for instance, works to assuage fears of financial and sexual misconduct through “transparent” reporting.¹⁹⁹

Counterintuitively, however, ideology is also transparent in the sense that it preserves traces of objects, although these objects may appear inverted or otherwise be hard to see. Ideology is not wanton illusion, but rather a socialization device that produces misleading appearances. The Vatican's transparency ideology, for instance, can be read as an effect of a constant

¹⁹⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 36; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.5., p. 15.

¹⁹⁹ Tomielli 2016; Service 2015.

stream of evidence of real financial and sexual misconduct that necessitates public relations work.

Merriam-Webster defines “ideology” as “the basic beliefs or guiding principles of a person or group.”²⁰⁰ This is probably the first intuition that most people nowadays have: ideology is what a group of humans *thinks*. A similar idea-centric conception underlies much of the academic discussion on ideology. One prominent mainstream textbook on “political ideologies,” for instance, mentions ten different scholarly definitions that range from “a political belief system” to “the ideas of the ruling class.”²⁰¹ All of the definitions emphasize ideas, five mention social relations, and two imply that ideology might have bad consequences for some people.

Ideology has not always been conceptualized in such a belief- and idea-centric manner. The word was coined in 1796 by the French nobleman Destutt de Tracy, who proposed ideology as a new academic discipline. It was to be a “science of ideas” for “regulating” societies as religion lost ground as an organizer of thought.²⁰² In other words, his idea was that society needed scientific ideological regulation and guidance to replace the old religious regulation. This was to be accomplished via a system to produce conceptions, and this system of production was called “ideology.”²⁰³

There is one significant advantage to thinking about ideology as a production process, as de Tracy did, rather than in terms of shared ideas: If ideology is equated with ideas, scholars of ideology tend to become either pollsters who discover variations in what groups think, or agitators who try to convince people to accept the right ideas. The purpose of ideology research, however, should be to connect ideology theoretically with the rest of our knowledge of society, thereby facilitating social change. The production-centric conception leans in this direction: it immediately calls attention to why ideology is needed in a given society or situation, how it is produced and distributed, what raw materials are used, when production started, and so on.

²⁰⁰ Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2017.

²⁰¹ Heywood 2012: 5.

²⁰² Kennedy 1979: 354–355.

²⁰³ De Tracy’s positive regulatory connotation of the word was soon overtaken by more pejorative ones. The most notable example of this is Napoleon I, who purged republican “ideologues” for threatening his imperial ambitions. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. I., p. 244.

The main purpose of this section is to demonstrate that my conception of ideology, which is an interpretation of Marx and Engels's, is production-centric. From such a perspective, ideological transparency is a means of society building that uses appearance planning to piece together peoples' social relations, characters, and behaviors despite their interest conflicts. My conception of ideology most closely resembles the so-called Projekt Ideologietheorie approach, which conceives of the ideological in terms of socialization into relations of domination and subordination.²⁰⁴

My interpretation of Marx and Engels's conception of ideology differs markedly from the one given in most non-Marxist treatments. In such accounts, Marx and Engels are usually thought to have defined ideology as false consciousness—understood as untruthful ideas—while supposedly considering their own ideas to be scientific and non-ideological.²⁰⁵ From such a starting point, it is easy to dismiss Marx and Engels as arrogant and sideline their work with definitions that are neutral to the point of meaninglessness, painting ideologies as “pictures of a desirable society” or the “necessary parts of any society which seeks to move people to action and to stimulate discussion of the alternative ways of organising society.”²⁰⁶

The next section explains how Marx and Engels used the word *ideology*, as well as how readers gained access to their work on the subject. Marx and Engels produced only one unfinished manuscript on ideology, which was furthermore published only long after their deaths. Later interpreters were therefore swamped in inchoate treatments of ideology and developed a wide variety of contradictory conceptions concerning it. Afterwards, I compare my interpretation with other Marxist interpretations and reach the conclusion that the Projekt Ideologietheorie approach is the most useful of these. Finally, I relate my overall interpretation of ideology to the question of ideological transparency and the transparency of ideology.

2.2.1 Marx and Engels on Ideology

Marx and Engels made their first sustained effort to interrogate ideology between November 1845 and June/July 1846, in texts that are now known as *The German Ideology*. The two scholars, both under thirty years old, worked together on a number of polemical texts against

²⁰⁴ Rehmann 2013: 245–246.

²⁰⁵ Heywood 2012: 6–7; Schwarzmantel 2008: 26; Freeden 2003: 8–9.

²⁰⁶ Schwarzmantel 2008: 28.

a number of contemporary authors²⁰⁷ whom they accused either of overemphasizing ideas as movers of history or of detaching nature from society.²⁰⁸ These 1845/46 writings are not exclusively polemical, however, but also explain why ideology exists. In my interpretation, Marx and Engels make six arguments concerning ideology in the 1845/46 writings.²⁰⁹ These are related to the concreteness of thought, reproduction, private property, the division of labor, class, and misleading appearances. I begin with the concreteness of thought, and then discuss each of the aforementioned themes in turn.

The basic idea of the 1845/46 writings is that thinking must be studied as a concrete activity that takes specific social forms, and that ideology production is one of these forms. This starting point implies that ideology cannot be studied in terms of thought in general (i.e. the history of ideas), but the focus of the inquiry must be on the social lives of ideologists and their audiences. Thought must be subjected to an analysis of the “given social connection” and “current conditions of life” under which people live.²¹⁰

According to Marx and Engels, the most central factor that explains how people live is the way they reproduce themselves—that is, how they procure what they eat, clothe and house themselves with, how they procreate, and so on. Without such reproduction there is no life. Furthermore, such reproduction always takes specific historical and social forms. Forms of reproduction are therefore also the basis for the study of ideology.²¹¹

Marx and Engels mention four specific aspects of everyday life and reproduction that bring about ideology. The first of these is private property, which arises as the division of labor increases in society, causing particular and common interests to become detached from each

²⁰⁷ Marx & Engels 2014: 4–8. Joseph Weydemeyer and, probably, Moses Hess also contributed to the end result. See Carver & Blank 2014: 38.

²⁰⁸ “Ideology” was at the time commonly used in this manner to accuse people of impracticality and idealism. Kennedy 1979: 363–364.

²⁰⁹ Only one part of the 1845/46 manuscripts has been published in a deconstructive edition in English. I quote this edition, by Carver and Blank, where possible and use the *Collected Works* for the other parts of the text. I have checked Carver and Blank against the complete deconstructive *Marx-Engels-Jahrbuch 2003* edition in German and did not notice substantial discrepancies between these. Marx, Engels, & Weydemeyer 2004. The emphases and other typographical idiosyncrasies are original in all quotes reproduced here.

²¹⁰ Marx & Engels 2014: 56–59.

²¹¹ See, e.g., Marx & Engels 2014: 82–85.

other.²¹² The state then emerges as the embodiment of the common interest over and above particular interests.²¹³

The second everyday aspect that brings about ideology is the division of physical and mental labor, which gives rise to professional thought as a form of production. Mental laborers' lives come to revolve around thinking. Their consciousness becomes less constrained by physical reproduction, because their everyday experience is freed from it: now "consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world & to ascend to the formation of 'pure' theories, theology[,], philosophy[,], morals &c."²¹⁴

Of course, the consciousness of mental laborers is not really unconstrained. Its limits are simply different. Mental laborers seemingly feed and clothe themselves purely through mental labor. This is the earthly reason why they are able to fool themselves and others into believing in theories uncontaminated by mundane concerns. Marx and Engels mention, for instance, that when ideologist judges apply law, it seems to everyone involved as if the judgment resulted from a purely technical-conceptual procedure.²¹⁵ Although the mental labor of judges is in fact integral to production (such as through their perpetuation of patterns of ownership), judges do not seem to form a part of the relations they regulate.

Note that Marx and Engels by no means equate the categories of mental labor and ideology. In the margin of the passage quoted above, Marx mentions that the division of mental and physical labor "[c]oincides with the first form of ideology. **Priests.**"²¹⁶ Marx believed that, historically, mental laborers emerged simultaneously with ideologists, but considered the two distinct. Specialized mental labor is a prerequisite of ideology, but ideology is the product of a specific kind of mental labor.

²¹² Marx & Engels 2014: 85–87.

²¹³ "[O]ut of this very contradiction between particular interest & common interest, the common interest takes on an independent form as the **state**, separated from the actual individual & collective." Marx & Engels 2014: 87.

²¹⁴ Marx & Engels 2014: 78–79.

²¹⁵ Marx, Engels, & Weydemeyer 2004: 99. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 92. These fragments are not included in Carver & Blank.

²¹⁶ Marx & Engels 2014: 78. The first evidence of a "cognitive or informavore niche" in human societies emerges between 77 000 to 34 000 years ago in the form of cave paintings. Shipman 2010: 6. I interpret this as evidence of the first, pre-ideological developments that later enabled the emergence of the ideological sphere (see Section 3.3). The first specialized ritual buildings date to 12 000–10 000 years ago. Dietrich et al. 2012. The emergence of such buildings co-occurs with evidence of a ruling class, which uses devices like ritual feasts to make inequality more palatable through limited wealth redistribution. Hayden & Gargett 1990: 16; Hayden 2014: 2014.

How, then, does a concretely-situated, bodily-reproduced mental laborer turn into an ideologist? One of Marx and Engels's specifications of ideological labor is that it concerns class domination and struggle. Their argument is not, however, as simple as "he who pays the piper calls the tune." Rather, those who control the means by which society bodily reproduces itself, which is to say the ruling class, also tend to control the means of mental reproduction. Because of this, ruling class perspectives on society tend to dominate:

The class which has the means of material production at its disposal consequently also deploys the means of intellectual production, so that the ideas of those lacking the means of intellectual production are on average subordinated. . . . [O]ne part [of the ruling class] operates as the thinkers of that class, the active, conceptualising ideologists, who make the production of the illusions of that class about itself their main source of livelihood, while the others' relationship with these thoughts & illusions is more passive & receptive, because they are in actuality the active members of that class & have less time to produce illusions about that & thoughts about themselves.²¹⁷

In their emphasis on class, Marx and Engels move beyond a seemingly apolitical sociology of knowledge or intellectual history. Ideology is produced by class-bound ideologists who perpetuate domination and subordination by "producing illusions," but not every mental laborer is an ideologist. Note, however, that those lacking the means of intellectual production are subordinated only "on average." Marx and Engels are not proposing a determinism of abstract economic power. They instead invite readers to consider why some ideas overcome others. They suggest, for example, that new ruling classes displace old ones by successfully spreading their own particular lived ideas in a universal guise. Marx and Engels even argue that some aspects of ruling-class ideologies may contradict the views and interests of the non-ideologist members of the ruling class, but that such contradictions are suppressed or overlooked whenever the ruling class is under serious threat.²¹⁸

Beyond their focus on the lives of ideologists, Marx and Engels argue that ideology occurs because some appearances are misleading and thus ripe for ideological meddling. Consider the example of idealist German historiography, which Marx and Engels discuss in great detail. They argue that the idealist German philosopher-historian is a species of ideologist that casts ideas as the moving force of history. The idealist can plausibly do this, they

²¹⁷ Marx & Engels 2014: 176–179.

²¹⁸ Marx & Engels 2014: 179, 182–183.

continue, because the surfaces of historical documents often support idealist readings. After all, there are always ideational elements of past social developments and struggles that can be uncritically interpreted as the sole or main causes of events.²¹⁹ This last point means that ideologists do not generate ideology out of thin air, nor are they necessarily purposefully deceptive. The traces that ideologists interpret may themselves be misleading relative to the means of interpretation that are available to the ideologists or their audiences.²²⁰

To sum up, I interpret Marx and Engels's 1845/46 conception of ideology as follows: The division of labor and the emergence of private property give rise to oppositions, both between different private interests and between private and collective interests. This results in conflicts, which ideological formations such as states, priesthoods, and judiciaries emerge to regulate. Specialized mental laborers play an important part in such ideological formations. Mental laborers live in such a way that enables their thought to detach itself from immediate physical reproduction. This creates the impression that thought rules the world and develops independently, because mental labor often affects the world without rendering its connection to physical reproduction apparent. A connection to reproduction must always exist, however, and insofar as a ruling class controls the means of physical and mental reproduction, mental laborers will necessarily either depend on or be members of this ruling class. They will thus tend to disproportionately produce ideology that corresponds with the interests and worldview of the ruling class. The specific relationship between the ruling class, ideologists, and the audiences of ideologists depends on the historical situation, however. Struggles may take place between ideologists, and the audiences of ideology may resist subordination.

We have a fair amount of evidence from both past²²¹ and contemporary²²² societies that supports Marx and Engels's conception. The example of ritual human sacrifice condenses

²¹⁹ For instance, the German idealist conception of history takes "the illusions of the middle ages to be true and credible—namely the illusions that serve the king & pope in their struggles with one another." Marx & Engels 2014: 200–203. Marx and Engels elevate the methodologies of English and French historians over German ones, since the former highlight the political over the ideational in a way that "borders on actuality." Marx & Engels 2014: 142.

²²⁰ One important example of misleading appearances would be the ideology of pure individuality. Marx and Engels argue that ideologies of individual autonomy start finding support in everyday experience as feudal restrictions are increasingly replaced by bourgeois ones. I explore this line of thought more thoroughly later in my discussion of fetishism (Section 2.3). Marx & Engels 2014: 303–307.

²²¹ Humans existed for over 2 million years in a state of equality. The first traces of socioeconomic inequality date to roughly 50,000 years ago. More pronounced stratification occurred in a few areas around 30,000 years ago, and the explosion of dramatic and widespread inequality began about 15,000 years ago. Many different theories of social stratification are compatible with the evidence concerning the emergence of class societies, however, which is why it must be complemented with theoretical and empirical evidence from other sources. Based on fieldwork in several contemporary non-capitalist societies, the foremost anthropological expert on this

this evidence nicely, however. The practice of ritual human sacrifice was non-existent in egalitarian societies. It emerged together with socioeconomic stratification and was used as a “divinely sanctioned means of social control” to keep the poor in check.²²³ In other words, while divine reasons seemed to explain human sacrifice, social stratification was its real cause (although sacrifice also stabilized stratification once it had arisen).²²⁴ “Mental labor” is perhaps an overly benign characterization of this gory history of ideology.

As Marx and Engels toiled at the *German Ideology* manuscripts in 1845/46, it must have become increasingly obvious to them that theorizing and criticizing ideology is inefficacious by itself.²²⁵ This follows directly from their own arguments: Marx and Engels claim that changing thought requires changing life-processes, yet they had only just begun to outline an analysis of how given kinds of life-processes come to exist and function. In other words, a more thorough criticism of ideology required a more thorough analysis of reproduction. It is thus quite understandable that Marx and Engels soon ceased their attempts to get the manuscripts published and refocused their attentions away from ideology.

topic argues that although ruling classes (“accumulators” in his vocabulary) are socially harmful, they are at first tolerated insofar as they make themselves seem to be charitable “big men with big hearts.” A ruling class that entrenches itself in this manner is difficult to depose even when its disadvantages become apparent. Hayden 2001: 231–248; Hayden 2011.

²²² Today, human sacrifice has been replaced by devices such as unemployment, which states actively maintain in order to constrain wage growth and inflation. E.g., Shaikh 2016: 730–733. Social control is now mainly justified by elections, however—not metaphysics. Elections make it seem as if state policy were sanctioned by citizens. This is despite the fact that policy outcomes correspond, at least in the United States, disproportionately well with the preferences of the wealthy. Gilens & Page 2014; Branham, Soroka, & Wlezien 2017; Bashir 2015; Gilens & Page 2016. One reason for lopsided policy outcomes is probably that, as in the vast majority of countries, representatives can be bought with campaign contributions. International IDEA 2018. According to one estimate, inducing a fourteen-percent change in the likelihood of a U.S. congressperson’s voting behavior cost \$100 000. Ferguson, Jorgensen, & Chen 2017: 3. Campaign money also greatly increases the likelihood of getting elected. Ferguson, Jorgensen, & Chen 2016. This gives rise to a tendency towards bought legislatures that do the bidding of campaign funders. Furthermore, voters themselves reward governments that have redistributed wealth towards the top, probably because of “biases in the responsiveness of the news environment to the economic welfare of groups located at different points along the income distribution.” Hicks, Jacobs, & Matthews 2016: 1092. We also know that members of the capitalist class have successfully funded campaigns to manipulate public opinion in various other matters, often stifling reform entirely. Evidence shows, for instance, that capitalists funded ideologists who managed to produce a rise in climate change denialism in the U.S. Farrell 2016. Similar patterns in the histories of acid rain, smoking, and ozone are also well known, of which only ozone has been somewhat successfully addressed. Oreskes & Conway 2010; Montzka et al. 2018. Importantly, however, there are also structural reasons for lopsided ideological outcomes that are not the effects of intentional agency. Poulantzas 1969: 71. If the profits of capitalists plummet, for instance, a variety of adverse social consequences and feedback mechanisms follow. See, e.g., Shaikh 2016: 53–54. As expanding upon these structural factors would require a sizable foray into Marxist economics, I will not undertake the matter here; however, I do not wish to suggest that structural factors are less important than instrumentalist ones.

²²³ Watts et al. 2016: 231.

²²⁴ Watts et al. 2016: 229.

²²⁵ As they put it, “[t]he actual, practical dissolution of these [ideological] phrases, the removal of this conception from the consciousness of men, as has already been said, is accomplished by altering circumstances, not by making theoretical deductions.” Marx & Engels 2014: 148–149.

Marx and Engels continued to use the word *ideology* throughout their later work, and they consulted the 1845/46 texts when writing these.²²⁶ However, only small fragments of the 1845/46 formulations were published before the 1930s.²²⁷ Consequently, early Marxists did not have access to an important interpretative key to Marx's and Engels's later remarks on ideology. They had to parse the meaning of ideology from remarks scattered throughout Marx's and Engels's writings, which probably contributed to the substantial contradictions²²⁸ that emerged between various Marxist understandings of ideology already during the nineteenth century.

In the section that follows, I scrutinize the long history of Marxist thought that lies between my interpretation and Marx and Engels's original work on ideology. My basic contention is that Marxists have not made a great deal of theoretical progress on these issues, and some have even taken steps backwards. The main advancement I do acknowledge is Engels's explicit analysis of ideology in his mature anthropological works. In particular, he elaborates on the historical emergence of "ideological powers,"²²⁹ which the Projekt Ideologietheorie later conceptualizes in terms of "vertical socialization."²³⁰

2.2.2 Marxists: Is Ideology Consciousness?

Because the field of Marxist debate on ideology theory is so fragmented,²³¹ outlining its current state is an extremely difficult task. However, I must show how my interpretation departs from the major positions within the literature. To limit the discussion somewhat, I

²²⁶ Marx & Engels 2014: 23.

²²⁷ Carver & Blank 2014: 8–9. Most of Marx and Engels's 1845/46 work was first published in the 1920s and 1930s. The earliest extensive editions came out in 1932. One was edited in the Soviet Union, another in Germany. The first extensive English translation, a slightly modified version of the Soviet edition, only came out in 1964. The editors of both the Soviet and German editions heavy-handedly compiled and completed the fragments that Marx and Engels had left behind. The Soviet version emphasized the systematic exposition it provided of Marx and Engels's materialist conception of history. The German, by contrast, painted Marx and Engels as idealist philosophers who were not much concerned with mundane things such as the ownership of the means of production. These interpretations relate to societal struggles that endure to this day. Carver & Blank 2014: 25–41, 67.

²²⁸ E.g., Liguori 2015: 146–155.

²²⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 392.

²³⁰ Rehmann 2013: 301.

²³¹ As Larraín puts it, "disagreements affect almost every aspect of the concept [of ideology]: its content, its effectivity and its epistemological status which is manifest in a range of questions. Is ideology subjective and ideal (created by and existing in the minds of individuals) or objective and material (existing in material apparatuses and its practices)? Is ideology a determined and epiphenomenal superstructure or an autonomous discourse with its own effectivity capable of constituting subjects? Is ideology negative and critical (a distortion or inversion) or neutral (the articulated discourse of a class, fraction or party)? Do ideological elements possess an inherent class character or are they neutral and capable of being articulated to various classes?" Larraín 1996: 46.

focus on whether ideology is mainly a phenomenon of consciousness or whether it also has non-conscious components. Furthermore, I pay special attention to situating my own interpretation within those previous interpretations that include non-conscious components.

Existing reviews have used representations of varying complexity to lay out the differences between various Marxist theories of ideology. At the one end are contributions like Rehmann's, which does not seek to classify Marxist approaches to ideology. Instead, Rehmann builds a critical chronology that lays bare the plurality of conceptions of ideology that has reigned throughout the history of Marxism.²³² At the other end, Eagleton simply splits Marxist ideology theories into two orientations, one of which emphasizes ideology's epistemic falsity, and the other, its social function.²³³ A useful middle-ground between extreme complexity and typological simplicity is Pietilä and Koivisto's suggestion, which situates Marxist ideology theories on two axes: critical–neutral and contents-of-consciousness versus making-of-consciousness (Table 1).²³⁴

	Contents of consciousness	Making of consciousness
Neutral	Competing worldviews	Discourses, institutions, etc. are sites of struggle
Critical	False consciousness	Ideological socialization reproduces domination

Table 1. Marxist ideology conceptions, paraphrased by the author from Koivisto and Pietilä.

On the top left are conceptions akin to the now-dominant common-sense view, in which ideologies are simply worldviews—that is, different contents of consciousness. Lenin, for instance, holds that proletarian ideology competes with bourgeois ideology.²³⁵ He is thus “neutral” towards ideology in the sense that he is not trying to defeat ideology as such (which would be impossible), but only its bourgeois variety. On the bottom left is the “false consciousness” view of ideology, which is in my experience what non-Marxist social

²³² Rehmann 2013.

²³³ Eagleton 1991: 3.

²³⁴ Koivisto & Pietilä 1996: 43. The table contains my paraphrases of Koivisto and Pietilä's characterizations, which are elaborate to the point of defeating the simplifying purpose of the typology.

²³⁵ Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 1, p. 298.

scientists usually expect from Marxist ideology theory. Erich Fromm, for example, associates ideology with illusionary thought: it is a misconception in people's heads.²³⁶ The top right cell resembles social constructionism, with an extra dose of struggle. Stuart Hall, for instance, takes ideology to mean the language and representations that people use for making sense of the world, including their conflicts.²³⁷ For Hall, ideology thus includes unconscious discourses—but it is also unavoidable, since sense-making is a universal human characteristic.

My interpretation closely resembles the Projekt Ideologietheorie conception of the ideological, which occupies the table's bottom right cell. The Projekt conceives of the ideological as a vertical dimension of the process of socialization into relations of domination, not as a general description of human sense-making or consciousness.²³⁸ In this tradition, ideological socialization is taken to extend beyond both individual and collective consciousness. Consequently, ideology cannot be changed or eliminated by changing people's minds, but only by rendering it obsolete through profound social reorganization. I concur with the Projekt in considering ideology deleterious. The main reason it is deleterious is not that it is false, however, but that it stabilizes and is an element of social problems such as class divisions. I believe that this interpretation is not only most consistent with Marx's and Engels's texts, but also with evidence concerning the history of ideology (see Section 2.2.1), including that presented by my own articles.

For the purposes of my work, the Marxist debate on the extent to which ideology is a phenomenon of consciousness is central. This is because transparency clearly has a weighty non-conscious aspect consisting of things like paper trails and optical arrangements. Since I include such things in my conception of "ideological transparency" (Section 2.2.3), I must show that ideology is not exclusively a phenomenon of consciousness.

I begin by outlining the views of Friedrich Engels, who was the first Marxist to study ideology. After, I discuss some prominent consciousness-centric Marxists. I conclude by outlining some of the less consciousness-centric positions, including that of the Projekt Ideologietheorie. The Projekt is of special importance to the dissertation as a whole, because my understanding of ideological transparency is deeply influenced by the Projekt's views.

²³⁶ Fromm 2009: 9.

²³⁷ Hall 1996: 25–26.

²³⁸ Haug 1987: 91.

2.2.2.1 Engels on Ideological Powers

The first Marxist to tackle the ideology question was Engels. He co-wrote the so-called *German Ideology* manuscripts with Marx (see Section 2.2.1), and further developed a similar train of thought in his own later writings. The most important concept developed by Engels is that of *ideological power* (*ideologische Macht*), which characterizes institutions that develop to alleviate social divisions.²³⁹ Of equal importance are Engels's attempts to trace the emergence of social divisions in pre-capitalist formations.²⁴⁰ Engels's conception of ideology explains why ideological transparency so often adopts the guise of neutral, impartial vision when it is discussed within ideological powers such as universities.

In his 1884 *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Engels develops the ideas presented in the *German Ideology* manuscripts by making use of anthropological evidence and Marx's notes. The main argument of this work is that "[t]he first class antithesis which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage."²⁴¹ The result was a society in which a patriarchal class of property-owners lorded over women, slaves, and poor males.²⁴²

[A] society had come into being that by virtue of all its economic conditions of existence had to split up into freemen and slaves, into exploiting rich and exploited poor; a society that was not only incapable of reconciling these antagonisms, but had to carry them to extremes. Such a society could only exist either in a state of continuous, open struggle of these classes against one another or under the rule of a third power which, while ostensibly standing above the conflicting classes, suppressed their open conflict and permitted a class struggle at most in the economic field, in a so-called legal form.²⁴³

Later, in his 1886 *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Engels explicitly links the above analysis with the concept of ideological powers.²⁴⁴ Ideological

²³⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, pp. 392–393.

²⁴⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 268.

²⁴¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 173; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.29, p. 179. According to Engels, the process that gave rise to this social cleft went roughly as follows: People first discovered ways of accumulating wealth in means of production, especially cattle and later slaves. Men then took control of these accumulating means of production, whereas women were confined to consumptive household management. Inheritance started being traced through the male line, giving rise to hereditary patriarchy. Hereditary patriarchy coincided with the need to control women's sexuality, because female polygamy hides male parentage. Religious and legal prohibitions and competences then consolidated these social positions. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, pp. 162–173.

²⁴² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, pp. 214–215.

²⁴³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 268; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. 29, p. 262.

²⁴⁴ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, pp. 392–393; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. 30, pp. 157–158.

powers are the organizational and institutional forms within which professional ideologists operate. They are the formations, such as states and religions, that develop atop social cleavages and within which a latent civil war is constantly waged. The institutionalization of ideology makes it hard to notice that the conflicts waged within ideological powers in fact extend beyond them. However, ideological powers also have emergent dynamics that are not reducible to the conflicts underlying them:

Every ideology, . . . once it has arisen, develops in connection with the given concept-material, and develops this material further; otherwise it would not be an ideology, that is, occupation with thoughts as with independent entities, developing independently and subject only to their own laws. That the material conditions of life of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on in the last resort determine the course of this process remains of necessity unknown to these persons, for otherwise all ideology would be finished.²⁴⁵

The causes that bring about the independent appearance of ideology receive increasing weight in Engels's later texts. He probably emphasized these causes because he recognized that Second International Marxists were starting to overstress economic determination relative to the emergent qualities of ideological powers and wished to oppose this development. The most famous indication of this is in a letter Engels wrote in 1893, in which he chastises himself, Marx, and Franz Mehring for "placing the main emphasis on the *derivation* of political, legal and other ideological conceptions, as of the actions induced by those conceptions, from economic fundamentals."²⁴⁶ He argues that it is precisely the non-derivational aspects of ideology that give rise to "false consciousness." This is because the misleading tendencies of ideology are an effect of its degrees of freedom:

Ideology is a process which is, it is true, carried out consciously by what we call a thinker, but with a consciousness that is spurious [falsches Bewusstsein, false consciousness]. . . . [T]he historical ideologist, then, possesses in every sphere of science a material which has originated independently in the thought of previous generations and has undergone an independent course of development of its own in the brains of these successive generations. . . . What has above all deluded the majority of people is this semblance [Schein] of an independent history of political constitutions, legal systems and ideological conceptions in each individual sphere.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 394; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. 30, pp. 158–159.

²⁴⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 50, p. 164; Marx & Engels 1956–68: 96. I cite the *Werke* because this text has not yet been published in the *Gesamtausgabe* edition.

²⁴⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 50, pp. 164–165; Marx & Engels 1956–68: 97.

To sum up, Engels's original contribution to Marxist ideology theory is to show historically how society divided into the conflicted realms of private interest and seemingly independent ideological powers. He coins the concept of ideological powers to characterize these formations. Engels also expands upon the social analysis of why ideology is misleading: Ideological powers ostensibly stand above the conflicts that they feed on. In doing so, they develop institutional-organizational forms and ideational logics with a semblance of independent history relative to conflicts. In spite of his recognition of such emergent dynamics, Engels claims that if the underlying class antagonisms cease to exist, so will ideological powers.²⁴⁸

The concept of ideological powers suggests an interpretation of ideological transparency rhetoric and practices: Transparency as direct vision seems to neutrally bind society together, such as when subjects supposedly see their king's intentions in order to follow his orders (see Section 1.1) or when voters ostensibly see their governments. Ideological transparency is thus a way of addressing the contradiction between the ostensible universality and actual particularity of ideological socialization. Ideological transparency's pretense of direct perception is misleading, however, in that it conceals the active, potentially misleading element of ideological socialization. This does not necessarily result from conscious deception on the ideologists' part, however, but flows from the ideologists' task of standing impartially above social antagonisms.

In Engels's work, it is still clear that ideology is not first and foremost about what people think. Engels emphasizes "the material conditions of life of the persons inside whose heads this thought process goes on" as well as the "actions induced by those conceptions." Although consciousness does play a role in the emergent dynamics of ideological powers, these powers also tend to overstate the significance of consciousness. Furthermore, ideology is sustained by social conflicts that go beyond the ideological powers themselves. None of these propositions has been self-evident to later Marxists. In the section that follows, I present Marxist conceptions that overemphasize consciousness relative to Engels's view.

2.2.2.2 *Consciousness-Centric Conceptions of Ideology*

The Marxism of the Second International articulated two main strands of consciousness-centric ideology conceptions. One strand viewed ideology in an unfavorable light, as Marx

²⁴⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 26, p. 272.

and Engels had, but centered it around consciousness. In his 1893 *On Historical Materialism*, for instance, Franz Mehring views Christianity as “ideological clothing” for the “extension of state power,” such that misleading religious conceptions are defined as ideological but the state itself is not.²⁴⁹ By contrast, another strand of Marxist thought viewed ideology as a concept without connotations of domination or illusion. Lenin in 1894 sees himself as an “ideological leader of the proletariat” in that he formulates and spreads socialist theory while also leading the workers in practice.²⁵⁰ This supposedly domination-free ideological leadership role was later eagerly assumed by Soviet ideologists.²⁵¹

Both the neutral and critical variants of the consciousness-centric understanding of ideology have remained prominent throughout the history of Marxist theory. On the neutral side, in 1923, Lukács identifies the “doctrine” of Marxism as “the ideological expression of the proletariat.”²⁵² In 1980, McCarney proclaims that “the general definition implicit in Marx’s practice is that forms of consciousness are ideological if, and only if, they serve class interests” (including proletarian ones).²⁵³ On the critical side, according to Larraín in 1988, “the concept of ideology was defined by Marx in a negative, or critical, fashion and meant a distorted kind of consciousness, which conceals contradictions in the interest of the ruling class.”²⁵⁴ For Torrance in 1995, “an ideology is a prescriptive theory whose prescriptions result from illusions engendered by social barriers to knowledge.”²⁵⁵

It is not possible to square my conception of ideological transparency with any consciousness-centric interpretation of ideology. This is because I argue that ideological transparency consists of such elements as video games, measurement devices, and buildings. In the consciousness-centric conception, such things are viewed as non-ideological since they are external to consciousness.

²⁴⁹ Mehring 1975: 44.

²⁵⁰ Lenin 1960–1970: vol. 1, p. 298.

²⁵¹ Rehmann 2013: 69–75.

²⁵² Lukács 1968: 258. Lukács is sometimes seen as defending a false consciousness theory of ideology in *History and Class Consciousness*. See, e.g., Haug 1993: 234. This is incorrect, however. Lukács argues, for instance, that Rosa Luxemburg campaigned for the “ideological emancipation” of the proletariat, although he does not view Luxemburg or Marxism more generally as forms of false consciousness in these passages. Lukács 1968: 44. Lukács associates fetishism directly with ideology, however, and emphasizes the falsity of *fetishistic* ideology (see Section 2.3.2). This probably explains the aforementioned misinterpretation.

²⁵³ McCarney 1980: 8.

²⁵⁴ Larraín 1988: 52.

²⁵⁵ Torrance 1995: 191.

Given that Marx and Engels were fairly clear that ideology is not exclusively a phenomenon of consciousness, it is surprising that Marxists have so often interpreted it as such. However, there have also been variants of Marxism that come closer to my interpretation of Marx and Engels. In the section that follows, I introduce Althusser's ideology theory, which has been extremely influential. I also summarize the position of the Projekt Ideologietheorie, which critically builds on Althusser's and Engels's work and is essentially similar to my own.

2.2.2.3 Depreciated Consciousness: Althusser and Projekt Ideologietheorie

One of the most prominent Marxist proponents of a less consciousness-centric conception of ideology has been the French philosopher Louis Althusser.²⁵⁶ His most substantial contribution to ideology theory is contained in his 1969–1970 work on ideological state apparatuses.²⁵⁷ Althusser's work later served as an important target of criticism as well as a source of inspiration for post-structuralist treatments of similar topics.²⁵⁸

Althusser distinguishes between two sorts of state apparatus: ideological and repressive. The repressive state apparatus includes entities like the police and the army, which function “predominantly *by repression*,” whereas ideological apparatuses such as schools and political parties function “predominantly *by ideology*,” such as when they invite or “interpellate” people into pre-figured subject positions.²⁵⁹ Transparency ideologists might invite people into the pre-figured role of the “ethical consumer,” for example.

According to Althusser, ideology is both epistemically distorting and material.²⁶⁰ Religious apparatuses, for instance, often accurately represent the believers' subjugation through submissive prayer practices or church architecture, but rather than explaining this subjugation with reference to the relations of production, religions point to a divine cause.

²⁵⁶ Althusser was not the first to take steps in this direction. In his 1929–35 prison writings, for instance, the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci already resumed the less consciousness-centric conception of ideology. Although Gramsci's use of the word *ideology* usually suggests consciousness association, he also theorizes the “forms of cultural organisation which keep the ideological world in movement,” including schools, the Church, newspapers, the book industry, universities, doctors, the army, and law. Gramsci 1971: 341–342. In his conception, “ideologies . . . organize' human masses, they form the terrain on which men move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle, etc.” Gramsci 2000: 199. Gramsci vacillates, however, between critical and neutral conceptions of ideology, ends up subsuming the ideology question within his theory of hegemony, and disregards the relationship between fetishism and ideology. See Rehmann 2013: 144–145.

²⁵⁷ Althusser 1971: 142.

²⁵⁸ Rehmann 2013: 179–180.

²⁵⁹ Althusser 1971: 143, 145.

²⁶⁰ Althusser 1971: 164–166. Althusser later changed his mind about the misleading character of ideology, as is evident from his self-criticism. Althusser 1976: 119.

Although Althusser's basic intuition concerning ideology resembles that of Marx and Engels, he departs from them in postulating an "omni-historical . . . ideology in general," meaning that "man is an ideological animal by nature."²⁶¹ He formulates this argument as follows in *For Marx*:

[I]n every society we can posit, in forms which are sometimes very paradoxical, the existence of an economic activity as the base, a political organization and "ideological" forms (religion, ethics, philosophy, etc.). So ideology is as such an organic part of every social totality.²⁶²

Later interpreters have had difficulties squaring this notion of a "natural" ideology-in-general with the historical development of ideological apparatuses like religions.²⁶³ How can "social totalities" always contain religion, for instance, when we have evidence pinning down the historical emergence of religion? Are egalitarian societies not social totalities? One prominent interpretation considers this aspect of Althusser's thought a capitulation to Soviet or bourgeois notions.²⁶⁴ Althusser does indeed eternalize ideology in a manner that has been typical of ruling-class domination.

The Projekt Ideologietheorie also developed a less consciousness-centric conception of ideology, which I consider the most refined Marxist treatment of these issues. The Projekt formed at the Free University of Berlin in the latter half of the 1970s around the philosopher Wolfgang Fritz Haug²⁶⁵ and inspired studies ranging from general theory to inquiries into specific topics like fascism and academic philosophy.²⁶⁶ The connecting thread of these studies is a broadly Althusserian–Engelsian approach to ideology as a material, partially non-conscious axis of socialization. The Projekt abandons Althusser's omni-historical aspect, however, instead viewing ideology as a historically grounded social form. The Projekt's theoretical results are based on extensive historical and theoretical evidence,²⁶⁷ yet they have remained surprisingly marginal in English-speaking academia.

The Projekt argues that social clefs such as gender and class antagonism are difficult to reconcile in horizontal interactions but coexist with "socialization" (i.e. society building),

²⁶¹ Althusser 1971: 161, 171.

²⁶² Althusser 2005: 232.

²⁶³ In his subsequent self-criticism, Althusser himself expresses unease about this. See Althusser 1976: 141.

²⁶⁴ Resch 1992: 225–226.

²⁶⁵ Rehmann 2013: 11.

²⁶⁶ Rehmann 1986: 6–11.

²⁶⁷ Koivisto & Pietilä 1996: 41–42.

which upholds the antagonisms while cultivating cohesion across them.²⁶⁸ One form of cultivating cohesion is the layer of specialist instances, or “ideological powers”²⁶⁹—such as states, priesthoods, academies, and judiciaries—within which professional ideologists labor. These powers “rise above” the antagonistic relations that they regulate²⁷⁰ by adopting postures of representation, divinity, objectivity, neutrality, and so on. The powers are reliant on the conflicts they regulate, however, and tend to maintain and build on these conflicts rather than abolish them.²⁷¹ The powers thus solidify into a seemingly permanent axis of vertical socialization that permeates everyday life. This is what the Projekt calls “the ideological.”²⁷²

From their elevated vantage points, ideological powers work to organize people’s competences into complementary relations of labor, exploitation, domination, and subordination (i.e. to “socialize,” *vergesellschaften*),²⁷³ such as with gender roles, morals, or taste. The powers also enable individuals to actively socialize themselves over the vertical axis by adopting ideological aspects into their self-understandings and daily life—although the audiences of ideology may choose to resist instead.²⁷⁴

In order to gain traction in people’s everyday lives, ideologists must take into account their audiences’ preconceptions and practices, and work to reorganize them. Everyday life is never completely infused by ideology, however, because people’s conceptions and practices are shaped by all sorts of things, many of which are non-ideological. For instance, even in the absence of ideological socialization, people who exchange commodities would have to acknowledge each other’s freedom to dispose of property. This objective thought form

²⁶⁸ Haug 1993: 48, 81. This description of the Projekt position is presented in roughly similar form in Article III.

²⁶⁹ Haug 1993: 57, 100.

²⁷⁰ Haug 1993: 85.

²⁷¹ Haug 1993: 49.

²⁷² Haug 1993: 17. By contrast to the Projekt, I do not strictly distinguish between “ideology” and “the ideological.” I consider this distinction an unnecessary and jargon-inducing complication. Since ideology is defined as ideology by virtue of its participation in ideological socialization, drawing a line of demarcation is impossible. Should a Bible be considered “ideology,” for instance, or an aspect of “the ideological”? What about subordinating beliefs that result from reading the Bible? Rather than systematically distinguishing between ideology and the ideological, I simply use whichever word seems more appropriate from a stylistic perspective. Individual pieces of ideology are inconceivable in the absence of a broader ideological sphere.

²⁷³ Haug 1993: 130.

²⁷⁴ Haug 1993: 83.

therefore stems from a non-ideological source.²⁷⁵ The Projekt analytically distinguishes between such forms of horizontal socialization and the ideological.²⁷⁶

Ideology is thus a compromise between practices of vertical socialization and the complex non-ideological sphere of everyday experience and resistance. This also means that although all ideologists work to socialize people over vertical dimensions, the ideological powers are not a monolith. They are themselves influenced by their audiences and often split by internal struggles along class and other lines.²⁷⁷

I am aware of three main criticisms directed against the Projekt, all of which concern the notion of vertical socialization that the Projekt introduces into Marxist thought. First, consciousness-centric ideology theorists accuse the Projekt of downplaying consciousness-shaping mechanisms that operate beyond ideological powers, such as commodity fetishism.²⁷⁸ I believe this to be an incorrect portrayal of the Projekt's position, which recognizes the importance of commodity fetishism as an objective thought form that ideologists attempt to mobilize for their own purposes (see Section 2.3.2.1).²⁷⁹ The Projekt refuses to call such thought forms "ideological," however, unless they are elements of vertical socialization. I consider this correct; it is indeed important to distinguish ideology, a mechanism that produces vertical socialization, from other consciousness-shaping mechanisms.

Second, the Projekt's critical characterization of ideology supposedly disregards the progressive potential of the ideological and the disagreeable aspects of horizontal socialization.²⁸⁰ The Projekt indeed characterizes the ideological as something that needs to be abolished together with its underlying social divisions, and the Projekt indeed strives towards the strengthening of horizontal socialization. This does not mean, however, that vertical and horizontal socialization can be associated with a pure normative content—that is, that horizontal socialization is always "good" and vertical "bad." The Projekt argues, for instance, that commodity exchange is a non-ideological, horizontal form of socialization,²⁸¹ but exchange can obviously be simultaneously progressive and detrimental in its different

²⁷⁵ Haug 1993: 55.

²⁷⁶ Haug 1993: 53.

²⁷⁷ Haug 1993: 100–110.

²⁷⁸ Seppmann 2012: 85.

²⁷⁹ Haug 1993: 56; Rehmann 2013: 253.

²⁸⁰ Metscher 2012: 78.

²⁸¹ Haug 1993: 55.

aspects. Ideological powers can likewise house resistance to exploitation and domination, such as calls for intellectual autonomy.²⁸²

Third, critics argue that the Projekt downplays the epistemic dimension of ideology, which is to say its truth or falsity.²⁸³ This is because the Projekt emphasizes the functioning of ideological socialization over the false consciousness of those involved in it. I agree on this point, at least partly. The Projekt does not sufficiently outline the epistemic consequences of its conception, and the epistemic dimension is much stronger in Marx and Engels than it is in the Projekt (see Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.1). The likely reason for the Projekt's weakness here is that in their struggle against the false consciousness interpretation of ideology (see Section 2.2.2.2), they end up overstating their case. Another reason may be the Projekt's Althusserianism, which pulls them away from questions of appearance and essence. Although I agree with the Projekt's critics that ideology is inherently misleading, my main interest lies with causal rather than epistemological analysis.

I have now outlined my conception of ideology, which draws a line from Marx and Engels through Althusser to the Projekt Ideologietheorie. In the section that follows, I explicitly integrate this theoretical development with the question of transparency.

2.2.3 Ideological Transparency

Most people are familiar with the phenomenon of physical transparency, which their senses tend to misinterpret as direct perception.²⁸⁴ This non-ideological everyday experience is the basis of the transparency metaphor that is often used in connection with ideological transparency (see Article III). I define *ideological transparency* as socialization into relations of domination and subordination that operates by planning the preservation of traces and associating these traces with direct perception.

Transparency is useful for ideological purposes because ideology is a false universal. Transparency ideologists use the promise of direct vision to “neutrally” bind together society,

²⁸² Haug 1993: 110.

²⁸³ Metscher 2012: 77–78.

²⁸⁴ Unlike sound waves, light waves do not bend perceptibly around corners, and they move so fast that it is hard to notice that they move at all. With a few exceptions, such as refraction in water, vision therefore seems to provide unmediated access to objects. This everyday appearance of transparency is misleading, however, since it abstracts from the process of transparency (e.g., propagation of light), which may include inversive or otherwise obfuscating aspects. The misleading character of physical transparency with respect to human sensuousness is the non-ideological everyday anchorage of ideological transparency. Widespread misleading experiences of direct perception are excellent material for ideological socialization, probably explaining why ideologists have used transparency language to suggest direct perception since antiquity (see Article III).

addressing the contradiction between the ostensible universality and actual particularity of ideological socialization. While ideologists may not *actually* enable direct perception, they often benefit from *seeming* to. This pretense of direct perception is misleading in that it hides the social particularity of the ideologists who conduct the appearance planning. The deception is not necessarily conscious on the ideologists' part, however, but instead emerges from the ideologists' efforts to stand impartial above social antagonisms. Their job is to seem neutral, and they may well believe themselves to be such.

Judges, for instance, are particular individuals who tend to be disproportionately affected by the interests of those who control the means of production.²⁸⁵ For judges to properly perform their job, however, they must appear to be impersonal, impartial bearers of the law. Justice systems that are believed to be corrupt may find it difficult to function, and ideological transparency can help alleviate such problems by avoiding or responding to accusations of secret bias.²⁸⁶ This is not automatic, however, and ideological transparency is open to contestation by audiences or producers.

Contrary to dictionary definitions, ideology is not mainly a matter of what people think. Judges are not ideologists because they, as a group, have certain ideas about law. They are ideologists insofar as they transcend and regulate social contradictions in favor of the ruling class (and non-ideologists insofar as they do not). Ideological transparency is likewise not ideological because of anything that transparency ideologists think, but because (and insofar as) it socializes people across their antagonisms while simultaneously maintaining those antagonisms

Despite its misleading character, ideological transparency can reveal much about the society in which it operates because it bears traces of said society. For instance, in Article III, I read ideological transparency rhetoric and the associated practices historically to find out what

²⁸⁵ It is a well-known, worldwide phenomenon, for instance, that criminal justice systems tend to disproportionately convict the poor. Bagaric 2015: 1. As Reiman and Leighton put it, "the rich get richer and the poor get prison." Reiman & Leighton 2010. From a Marxist perspective, this is hardly a surprise: Acts characteristic of the ruling class tend to be decriminalized or less severely punished and members of the ruling class are better able to afford litigation. Furthermore, most capitalist states offer constitutional protection for private property. Such protections directly privilege the owners of capital over their workers, who usually have comparatively little to protect. Lawyers therefore work for the benefit of the ruling class without any conscious intent to do so, simply by enforcing seemingly equal property rights.

²⁸⁶ A recent United Nations Development Program report on judicial systems in poor countries "calls on Chief Justices to promote transparency and accountability," because this will "build public trust" in the justice system. Schütte, Reddy, & Zorzi 2016: 3. The report's point is that judicial systems in poor countries are often perceived as corrupt and opaque, which makes their job harder. Introducing transparency could help to alter this perception.

social developments they participate in. This is possible because ideological transparency, like all ideology, is constrained and enabled by the structure of society, and this connection can be objectified using the right means of observation. Ideology must work with and through the everyday life experience of ideologists and their audiences, and is therefore affected by everyday life, bearing traces of it.²⁸⁷

Ideological transparency is not necessary in all forms of society. Contrary to Althusser's claim, ideology is only necessary as long as people cannot socialize themselves without ideological powers. Even if ideological transparency disappears, however, the social problem of appearance probably will not. All societies must contend with appearances and determine which traces to produce, preserve, and perceive—and how. I return to this question in Chapter 4.

Marx and Engels continued to use the word *ideology* throughout their later works. These works increasingly concretize the abstract treatment of the 1845/46 writings by grounding ideology in the particulars of the capitalist or other modes of production. Of these concretizations, the analysis of fetishistic ideology is, in my view, the most pertinent explanation for why *individualist* ideological transparency in particular is so prominent today. In the section that follows, I broach the question of fetishism and its relationship to ideology and transparency.

2.3 What is Fetishism?

[In the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world,] the productions of the human brain appear [scheinen] as independent beings endowed with life, and entering into relation both with one another and the human race. So it is in the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities.²⁸⁸

Marx, *Capital*, volume 1

²⁸⁷ One may learn a great deal about old social forms by reading the Bible alongside other evidence, for instance. Even seemingly random art can be read in this historical manner, such as with Islamic geometry that emphasizes the unity of the universe by using mathematical discoveries to replicate common natural patterns. Dabbour 2012: 382.

²⁸⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p.83; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 72.

In this section, I outline my interpretation of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, which is Marx's most developed social-phenomenological conception. *Commodity fetishism* means, roughly, that production for exchange displaces social relations into relations between things. One of the consequences of this is that people misleadingly appear to be independent from each other. This is the main component of my explanation of the individualism that is inherent in most contemporary ideological transparency.

To see what Marx means by social relations appearing as relations between things, consider a serf who is bound to his landlord and must work the landlord's fields. It would be hard for the serf not to sense the nature of his social relation to his lord. The exploitation he endures is in plain sight, and the social differences between serf and lord are codified and manifest. In the act of exchange, by contrast, each participant is nominally free and equal, and the social relation between them seems incidental. Even if the relation is exploitative, such as exchanging labor power for less money than the laborer's output is worth, only the commodities being exchanged seem to have fixed relations, such as relative prices.

Fetishism is analytically separate from ideology. Fetishism stems from commodity production and exchange and thus includes a powerful element of horizontal socialization. Ideology, as discussed above, is a result of vertical socialization (see Section 2.2). In principle, no ideologists are necessary for people to participate in exchange or to believe themselves to be autonomous. In practice, of course, some form of a judiciary usually emerges atop exchange to deal with fraud, keep the poor in check, and so on. In other words, ideological formations are entwined with fetishism, but they have also often existed without it.

In my interpretation, *individualist transparency* combines fetishism and ideology. Individualist transparency builds on real experiences and practices that stem from the horizontal exchange of commodities. It suggests that people coordinate themselves like all-seeing, free-market agents while operating within environments that have been ideologically modified. This mode of ideological socialization is compatible with the experiences of autonomy that individuals have in exchange. It also fits with other individualist forms of ideological socialization, such as individual rights.

The concept of *fetish* emerged on the West African coast in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when Portuguese expeditions began to explore and settle the region in pursuit of trade. These colonialists used the word *Fetisso* to characterize certain practices of the locals

they encountered. The word had its roots in the Portuguese *feitiço*, meaning “folk magic,” and the Latin *facticius*, meaning “manufactured.”²⁸⁹ *Fetisso*, however, acquired an important new connotation: the word came to signify an institutionalized quasi-religious delusion that maintained the social fabric of African nations through the mediation of tangible things.²⁹⁰ This interpretation was probably based on Christian commodity traders’ lopsided interpretations of West African social practices, but it began to spread virulently in the theories of European scholars.

One of the most famous early interpretations of fetishism was by the French philosopher Charles de Brosses. Marx probably picked up the word *fetish* from de Brosses’s 1760 work *Du Culte des Dieux fétiches*. In this work, de Brosses compares evidence from several societies of people endowing animals or objects with divine or spiritual properties. He argues that fetishism is a primitive stage in the development of religion that appears at different times in various parts of the world. De Brosses considers fetishism a form of “brute stupidity”—and possibly a form of divine punishment—that could nonetheless be corrected by educating the “savages.”²⁹¹

The concept of fetishism appears in Kant, Rousseau, Smith, Destutt de Tracy, Hegel, and Comte, among others. By the early twentieth century, however, fetishism as a theoretical concept was going out of fashion. Marcel Mauss could at that point characterize it as an “immense misunderstanding” between Europeans and Africans. Today, the word is often associated either with Freud’s theory of sexual fetishism²⁹² or Bruno Latour’s crusade against “anti-fetishisms” like Marx’s.²⁹³

I begin by discussing Marx’s analysis of fetishism in *Capital*, volume 1, and combine this with the interpretation of ideology that I outlined in the previous section. The result is a conception of *fetishistic ideology*, which I finally use to theorize individualist transparency.

²⁸⁹ Pietz 1987: 24–39.

²⁹⁰ Pietz 1988: 6.

²⁹¹ Leonard 2016: 57–59.

²⁹² Leonard 2016: 75–78.

²⁹³ Latour 2010: 8. Latour includes Marx among “the Moderns” who associate fetishism with “naïve beliefs.” According to Latour, Marx fails to understand that “[i]f merchandise loses its seeming autonomy, no human regains mastery as a result, and certainly not the tireless worker.” Latour 2010: 11. This is beside Marx’s point. As I show below, Marx’s fetishism theory is not about beliefs or utopias of direct perception, but the appearance effects of exchange. For a critique of Latour’s ignorant use of Marx, see White 2013.

2.3.1 Marx on Fetishism

[I]n the act of seeing, there is at all events, an actual passage of light from one thing to another, from the external object to the eye. There is a physical relation between physical things. But it is different with commodities.

Marx, *Capital*, volume 1²⁹⁴

From early on, Marx's treatment of fetishism differs from that of many of his contemporaries: Marx analyzes fetishism in his own society. He does not project fetishism as a feature of Europe's Other. According to young Marx, wood is the Rheinlander's fetish,²⁹⁵ Germany is comparable to a fetish worshipper,²⁹⁶ and so on. Indeed, Marx often uses the concept in a comparative-pejorative manner to make sense (and fun) of his compatriots.²⁹⁷

Marx appended a preliminary treatment of commodity fetishism into the first edition of *Capital*, volume 1, in 1867, and reworked it into a full sub-chapter in the 1873 second edition. This ten-page sub-chapter is Marx's most extensive, mature, and original discussion of fetishism, and it is explicitly integrated into his critique of political economy. The sub-chapter presents an economic analysis of the way in which things appear: it features the word *Erscheinung* (appearance) nine times and *Gegenstand* (object) fourteen times in different permutations.²⁹⁸ Importantly for my interpretation, however, *Ideologie* does not appear in the fetishism chapter at all, although it does appear multiple times in *Capital*, which suggests that this analysis is not directly related to Marx's conception of ideology.

Marx's basic premise is that although production for exchange (i.e. commodity production) has existed for a long time, it is particularly central to the capitalist mode of production. This mode of production revolves around wage laborers selling their labor power to capitalists who, in turn, sell the worker's products as commodities. Only a portion of the receipts are used to pay wages and cover other costs, with the capitalists keeping the rest as profit.

Once capital establishes itself as a stable part of society, it is inclined to replace or integrate non-capitalist ways of producing things. The most important reason for such expansion is that capitalists need profit to continue being capitalists. To make a profit under competition, they

²⁹⁴ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p.83; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, pp. 71–72.

²⁹⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 1, pp. 262–263.

²⁹⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 3, p. 183.

²⁹⁷ E.g., Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 3, p. 290; Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 29, p. 77.

²⁹⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–: II.10, pp. 70–81.

must fight for markets by cutting prices and increasing productivity.²⁹⁹ In doing so, they tend to seek business opportunities extensively across the world and intensively in their own societies.³⁰⁰ As capitalist commodity production spreads, so does commodity fetishism, which is part and parcel of commodity production.³⁰¹

Fetishism is associated with commodities in particular because of the specific way in which production for exchange mediates social relations through things. Marx notes that in order to exchange products, people must first privately produce different, mutually useful goods.³⁰² People would not participate in exchange if they had no use for each other's products—if, for example, they could more easily produce the same thing themselves. They would also not exchange if they could procure the commodities from each other in some other way, such as if property was not privately owned in the first place. Thus, there is a sense in which private property and differences between production units *cause* exchange.³⁰³

In exchanging products, people equate them. In exchanging coats for linen, to use Marx's example, I render my *x* coats commensurate with your *y* yards of linen. Exchange necessarily bridges irreducible qualitative differences in this way. As a result, *things* develop social relations, or relations "between people expressed as a relation between things":³⁰⁴

[To commodity producers], the relations connecting the labour of one individual with that of the rest appear [erscheinen], not as direct social relations between individuals at work, but as *what they really are*, material relations between persons and social relations between things.³⁰⁵

When a coat equals a quantity of linen, for instance, the coat's value begins to seem like an inherent property of the coat. The coat now *has* a value relative to linen. It is as viable for people to take this property for granted in their daily life as it is the coat's weight, for instance. The appearance of value as a thing is thus correct in the sense that this is indeed how social relations work under commodity production. From a rigorous scientific perspective, however, it is nonsensical to treat value exclusively as an attribute of things,

²⁹⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 37, pp. 192–193.

³⁰⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 751–761.

³⁰¹ Since commodity production and developed markets have existed prior to the capitalist mode of production, forms of exchange and labor values as well as commodity fetishism must also predate it. Marx argues, however, that such fetishism only becomes practically important when exchange has spread far and wide. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: 84.

³⁰² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 57, 69.

³⁰³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 103.

³⁰⁴ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 85, footnote 1; Marx & Engels 1975–: II.10, 73, footnote 27.

³⁰⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 84; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 72. Emphasis added.

because nothing about coats explains why x coats are worth y linen. As Marx notes, “no chemist has ever discovered exchange value either in a pearl or a diamond.”³⁰⁶

The point of Marx’s fetishism theory is that in order to “see” the real origins of value, a scientific interpretative apparatus is required. Commodity production and exchange usually take place without such an apparatus, however. Value has its real origin in privately-conducted but socially-oriented labor,³⁰⁷ yet the practices of commodity production and exchange reveal nothing of this origin. This is why commodity production is accompanied by fetishism.

In addition to the fetishistic character of value, Marx mentions many other dimensions of commodity fetishism that are less fundamental to his analysis.³⁰⁸ The most important of these here are fetishistic forms that resemble commodity fetishism but are not reducible to it. I call these forms *revenue fetishism* because they stem from the various sources of revenue that people have access to:

The form of revenue and the sources of revenue are the *most fetishistic* expression of the relations of capitalist production. It is their form of existence as it appears [scheinen] on the surface, divorced from the hidden connections and the intermediate connecting links. Thus the *land* becomes the source of *rent*, *capital* the source of *profit*, and *labour* the source of *wages*. The distorted form in which the real inversion is expressed is naturally reproduced in the views of the agents of this mode of production. It is a kind of fiction without fantasy, a religion of the vulgar.³⁰⁹

To sum up, my interpretation of Marx’s argument concerning commodity fetishism is as follows: People privately produce different, mutually useful things and then equate them. This results in fetishism because the social relations underlying commodity production and

³⁰⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35 p. 94.

³⁰⁷ Profit rate equalization causes prices to deviate slightly from labor values, as Marx well knew. Shaikh 2016: 422. This is an important economics issue in its own right, but has no bearing on the argument of my dissertation.

³⁰⁸ For instance, commodities tend to exchange in proportion to the amount of abstract labor expended in their production (presuming developed markets). Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 37, p. 176. People who produce commodities often do not meet each other, but rather labor for each other without knowledge of each other. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 83–84. Commodity values are often expressed only in money prices and not linen and must be exchanged via this intermediary, not bartered. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 80–81. Prices fluctuate in proportion to labor values in a seemingly impersonal market process that disciplines its participants. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 85–86.

³⁰⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 32, pp. 449–450; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.3.4., pp. 1450–1453. This passage is to be found in a preparatory manuscript for *Capital* that was written before the first volume’s fetishism chapter.

exchange are not evident in these practices. Furthermore, because people's social embeddedness is not evident, they misleadingly seem to be independent of each other. In addition to commodity fetishism, the capitalist mode of production also spreads forms of revenue fetishism deriving from profit, rent, and wages.

All fetishistic forms resemble ideology in the sense that they stem from social relations that are mediated in a way that tends to produce misleading appearances. Fetishism is not ideology, however, because it is caused by commodity production, exchange, and revenue rather than ideological powers and vertical socialization. Fetishism is a religion "of the vulgar," as Marx puts it—not an actual, literal religion.

In the section that follows, I examine Marx's understanding of the relationship between ideology and fetishism by giving examples of what I interpret as discussion of *fetishistic ideology* in Marx's works. This question is of particular relevance to my dissertation, since I argue that individualist transparency is a form of fetishistic ideology.

2.3.1.1 *Fetishistic Ideology in Marx*

Though fetishism and ideology stem from different sources, they often appear together in developed capitalist societies. This is because fetishism provides ideologists with resources that can be mobilized by a wide variety of ideological forms. One such fetishistic ideological form is individualist transparency, which mobilizes fetishism by creating circumstances in which atomistic individuals freely choose between appearances that have been planned by transparency ideologists.

My conception of individualist transparency, laid out above, relies on an analytical distinction between fetishism and ideology, which are nonetheless interconnected. It seems to me that Marx himself distinguished between fetishism and ideology in a similar manner. Many Marxist interpretations, however, have instead seen fetishism as a form of ideology (see Section 2.3.2). I must therefore produce evidence for my conception in Marx's texts. I concur with Rehmann, however, that it is probably impossible to conclusively resolve this disagreement by reading Marx, simply because there is nowhere that he unequivocally states his view.³¹⁰

³¹⁰ Rehmann 2013: 49.

There are, however, passages in Marx that I think exemplify fetishistic ideology—that is, cases where fetishism and ideology come together concretely, but where their generative mechanisms are different enough that the two dimensions should be distinguished analytically. In identifying relevant passages I focus exclusively on Marx's writings after 1857, for it is only in this period that he begins to discuss the appearance effects of commodities in a way that corresponds with the interpretation of fetishism that I have given above.

In the 1857/58 writings, the question of fetishistic ideology is best discernible when Marx discusses the history of theories of money. He notes that many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century bourgeois economic thinkers defined wealth as money. The reason for this misconception, Marx argues, was that capitalist production had not yet become all-encompassing, and subsistence production was common. Subsistence producers did not participate in the commodity circuit, which used money, and thus did not contribute to wealth accumulation in the bourgeois sense. International trade, by contrast, was conducted in commodities via money. Because it was possible to extract surplus value from this money-denominated trade, money seemed to characterize wealth creation, which led theorists astray:

As to the special attention paid by the monetary and mercantile systems [i.e., theories] to international trade . . . , one has to remember that in those times national production was for the most part still carried on within the framework of feudal forms and served as the immediate source of subsistence for the producers themselves. Most products did not become commodities; they were accordingly neither converted into money nor entered at all into the general process of the social exchange of matter; hence they did not appear [erscheinen] as objectification [Vergegenständlichung] of universal abstract labour and did not indeed constitute bourgeois wealth.³¹¹

In my view, this passage is an exemplary account of fetishistic ideology. The ideological aspect consists of mental laborers idealizing commodity-based money wealth as universal, although it was still rather marginal in actual society. The fetishistic aspect is evident in the idea that wealth was inherent to the money commodity—a notion that loses sight of wealth's social character. Fetishism affected ideology, giving rise to fetishistic ideology.

³¹¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 29, p. 389; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.2, p. 218.

In his 1861–63 *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx considers the connection between wages and fetishistic ideology, noting that workers’ “labor capacity” (“labor power,” *Arbeitskraft*, in *Capital*) can be used to produce more value than what capitalists return as wages. Despite this, the fetishistic appearance of wages gives both parties to the exchange the impression that the laborer is fully compensated, in the sense that he receives the value of his labor. Marx calls out the “vulgar” political economists as the ideologists having a field day with wages’ fetishistic appearance:

It is already contained in the term *wage of labour*, in which the wage of labour=the price of labour=the value of labour. This form lacks conceptual rigour; but it is the form which lives both in the consciousness of the worker and in that of the capitalist, because it is the form which directly appears [erscheinen] in reality; it is therefore the form vulgar political economy sticks to, making the specific difference which sets the science of political economy apart from all the other sciences the fact that the latter seek to uncover the essence which lies hidden behind commonplace appearances . . .³¹²

Again, the fetishistic ideology of vulgar economists can be disaggregated into the ideological component (economists) and the fetishistic component (the experience of exchange). This distinction is important: By “the form” which “lives . . . in the consciousness of the worker,” Marx cannot possibly mean the ideology of vulgar economic theory, which most workers must have been ignorant of. Rather, Marx’s point is that a real fetishistic aspect of the life-process and experience of laborers corresponds with such ideology because of the shared generative mechanism of fetishism. It is the capitalists’ experience of the wage that vulgar economists universalize, but the workers’ experience happens to resemble this because workers and capitalists are parties to the same exchange. The “realism” of the ideology produced by vulgar economists consists precisely in its fetishism, because fetishism is a part of most people’s everyday lives. In *Capital*, volume 1, Marx expands this argument to cover all of bourgeois ideology:

[T]he money-relation conceals the unrequited labour of the wage labourer. Hence, we may understand the decisive importance of the transformation of value and price of labour power

³¹² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 34, p. 86; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.3.6, p. 2117. In *Capital*, Marx likewise mentions “the capitalist and his ideological representative, the political economist.” Despite holding Ricardo in high scientific regard, Marx then goes on to cite him as an example of such an ideological representative. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, pp. 572–573. This shows that Marx did not establish a clear boundary between science and ideology, but thought that ideology and science could exist side-by-side within one person or text.

into the form of wages, or into the value and price of labour itself. This phenomenal form [Erscheinungsform], which makes the actual relation invisible, and, indeed, shows the direct opposite of that relation, forms the basis of all the juridical notions of both labourer and capitalist, of all the mystifications of the capitalistic mode of production, of all its illusions as to liberty, of all the apologetic shifts of the vulgar economists.³¹³

Marx treats even the bourgeois notion of liberty, which has long been elevated to a lofty first principle in law and political theory,³¹⁴ as fetishistic ideology. Again, fetishism explains the “realistic” part of these ideologies: the commodity form of the worker’s labor power indeed implies that she has the juridical right to sell her labor power to different employers, move house, or shop with wages earned. Ideology often even naturalizes such rights of the sphere of exchange as people’s innate characteristics or born rights. In reality, however, the capitalist also disciplines the worker in the workplace, appropriates part of her product, and sends his judges and police after her if she attempts to appropriate it back. Oppression and exploitation are no less features of the capitalist mode of production than is market freedom. Unlike market freedom and sociopolitical liberty, however, bourgeois ideologists rarely sanctify oppression and exploitation as the universal values of capitalist society.

In other words, bourgeois fetishistic ideology is “true” and pragmatic with respect to the domain of exchange and ideological liberty, but it is also misleading in its partiality: it leaves out the oppression and exploitation that are necessary aspects of market freedom and ideological liberty. In his 1861–63 *Contribution*, Marx explains this partiality through the disproportionate sway that the ruling class holds over ideology:

In fact, the vulgar economists . . . translate the concepts, motives, etc., of the representatives of capitalist production who are held in thrall to this system of production and in whose consciousness only its superficial appearance [Schein] is reflected. They translate them into a doctrinaire language, but they do so from the standpoint of the ruling section, i.e. the capitalists, and their treatment is therefore not naïve and objective [objektiv], but apologetic.³¹⁵

To sum up, my interpretation of fetishistic ideology in Marx is as follows: Fetishism is an important resource that ideologists can mobilize in societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. This is because capitalist production tends to spread commodity-mediated

³¹³ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 540; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p.484.

³¹⁴ E.g., Locke 2003: 101.

³¹⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 32, p. 450; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.3.4, p. 1453.

social relations across people's everyday lives. Both ideologists and their audiences tend to share fetishistic horizontal experiences and practices that affect the production and reception of ideology. Since ideologists operate in a society dominated by production for exchange and attempt to alter the way in which people interpret their fetishistic experiences, ideology and fetishism entwine into an organic whole, which is why it is difficult to distinguish between them. In a sense, *Capital* is a gargantuan attempt at making precisely this analytical distinction: it asks how the widely-circulating ideological categories of bourgeois political economists relate to the non-ideological forms of thought and action that emerge within lived experience amidst the fetishized appearances that are characteristic of the capitalist mode of production. Or, as Marx puts it in *Capital*, volume 1,

[Forms of appearance, *Erscheinungsformen*,] appear directly and spontaneously as current modes of thought; [their hidden substratum] must first be discovered by science. Classical political economy nearly touches the true relation of things, without, however, consciously formulating it. This it cannot so long as it sticks in its bourgeois skin.³¹⁶

There are ways to move beyond fetishism, however, even within the capitalist mode of production. One might, for example, take stock systematically of all the traces left by capitalist commodity production and circulation, not only those that are immediately evident from within the practice itself. It is difficult to do this, however. As long as the bourgeoisie controls the means of mental reproduction, ideologists will tend to underplay oppression and exploitation, often focusing on freedom instead. This is clearly evident in individualist transparency, which is propagated by professional socializers who suggest that individuals see well and therefore make choices autonomously. However, even non-ideologists may demand ideological transparency to bolster their own apparent autonomy—or they may resist ideological transparency because they perceive its misleading character as detrimental to their autonomy.

As indicated earlier, many Marxists have considered fetishism to be a form of ideology. Although I think this view mistaken, its prominence in the history of Marxism warrants brief discussion. In the section that follows, I outline the emergence of the Marxist controversy concerning the relationship of ideology and fetishism, and the main lines of Marxist disagreement on this topic.

³¹⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 542; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 485.

2.3.2 Is Fetishism Ideology?

The Marxist controversy concerning fetishism is closely related to the controversy over ideology theory (see Section 2.3.2): If ideology is a form of consciousness, then fetishism can be a form of ideology, since fetishism undeniably involves consciousness. If, on the other hand, ideology is a process of production, then fetishism cannot be a form of ideology, since fetishism stems from commodity production and exchange rather than ideological socialization.

Fetishism was theoretically fairly marginal in Marxism before the First World War.³¹⁷ And as long as fetishism remained out of sight, the relationship between fetishism and ideology could not be interrogated, either. One culprit in fetishism's fringe position is probably Engels, who used the concept only rarely³¹⁸ and never as the basis of any of his own theoretical developments. Fetishism was likewise absent or sidelined in the writings of other major early Marxists.³¹⁹ Marxist discussion of fetishism picked up only during the early twentieth century.

As fetishism rose in prominence, the question of whether fetishism is ideology also emerged. One way of dealing with this problem was to simply ignore it. Isaak Rubin's 1924 *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value*, for instance, argues against equating Marx's ideology and fetishism conceptions.³²⁰ Rubin does not explain what the relationship of these conceptions is, however, but instead decides to entirely "leave aside . . . the laws of development of ideology."³²¹ He recognizes the problem, but leaves it unresolved.

³¹⁷ Howard & King 1989: 17; Marxhausen 1999: 348.

³¹⁸ The only instance I am aware of is in Engels's synopsis of *Capital*, volume 1, in which he mentions the concept in passing but does not quite do justice to Marx's treatment. Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 20, p. 268. The concept does not appear in any of Engels's published works. It does appear, of course, in volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital*, which Engels edited on the basis of Marx's manuscripts.

³¹⁹ This includes at least Bernstein, Plekhanov, Lenin, Hilferding, and Luxemburg. Kautsky is the first exception: He argues in 1887 that the chapter on fetishism is among "the most important" in *Capital*. Kautsky 1925: 11. He briefly outlines the concept, but does not use it in his analysis in any way. In 1894, von Tugan-Baranovsky likewise argues that the theory of fetishism is "one of Marx's greatest services," but does not do anything with it. von Tugan-Baranovsky 1901: 15. Howard and King claim that Bernstein argued against Marx's fetishism conception, but the word *fetishism* does not occur in Bernstein's *Evolutionary Socialism*, which they cite, and the discussion therein is only indirectly related to questions of fetishism. Howard & King 1989: 74; Bernstein 1911.

³²⁰ Rubin 1990: 55–56.

³²¹ Rubin 1990: 2.

Another common Marxist way of dealing with fetishism has been to view it as a form of ideology,³²² as in Karl Korsch's *Marxism and Philosophy* from 1923.³²³ The main danger in this approach is that ideology becomes a simple typological device for categorizing conceptions that stem from different sources but share certain defining characteristics. Another problem is that ideology may begin to seem omnipresent because commodity production and exchange are virtually omnipresent. György Lukács's famous 1923 book *History and Class Consciousness*, for instance, argues that fetishism unavoidably produces ruling-class ideology (understood in terms of consciousness) in everyone who partakes in capitalist production and exchange.³²⁴

By contrast, some Marxists have stressed ideology to the exclusion of fetishism. In his 1929–35 notebooks, for instance, Gramsci uses the word *fetishism* only to refer to how churches and other collective organizations create the impression that they exist independently of their members.³²⁵ Gramsci disregards entirely Marx's description of the way in which production for exchange affects ideology. Other Marxists have since followed Gramsci in disconnecting their ideology conceptions from fetishism.³²⁶

For the purposes of this dissertation, the most important Marxist conception of the relationship of fetishism and ideology is that of the Projekt Ideologietheorie. In the section that follows, I discuss recent criticism that has been levelled at the Projekt's conception in order to illustrate what it currently at stake in this debate.

³²² According to Eagleton, Marx's theory of the fetishism of commodities concerns "ideology" that consists in "false or deceptive beliefs" that arise from "the material structure of society as a whole." Eagleton 1991: 30. Larrain argues that Marx, in his later works, "is no longer merely concerned with philosophical and theoretical forms of ideology, but turns his attention to ideological forms which arise in the spontaneous consciousness of men and women as a result of their daily practice." Larrain 1983: 33. Brown, Fleetwood, and Roberts argue that commodities "invoke a social compulsion, a compulsion whose ideological form Marx terms 'commodity fetishism'." Fleetwood, Brown, & Roberts 2002: 11.

³²³ Korsch notes that Marx and Engels do not seem to count fetishism under ideology, yet he himself does include commodity fetishism within the "basic ideology of bourgeois society." Korsch 2008: 84. He defines ideology as "a false consciousness, in particular one that mistakenly attributes an autonomous character to a partial phenomena [sic] of social life." Korsch 2008: 83.

³²⁴ Lukács argues that there are "unmediated concepts that have been derived from the fetishistic forms of objectivity," and that these concepts are themselves the "ideology of [the] ruling class." In other words, ruling-class ideology tends to spontaneously emanate from fetishism. Furthermore, such fetishistic ruling-class "ideas [are] necessarily held by the agents of the capitalist system of production." Lukács 1968: 13–14.

³²⁵ Gramsci 2000: 243–245; Gramsci 1971: 95. This would be better conceived of as a consequence of the consolidation of ideological powers.

³²⁶ Laclau, for instance, discusses the relationship between economics and ideology exclusively in terms of class, and never mentions fetishism. Laclau 1977: 128–132.

2.3.2.1 *Fetishism, Ideology, and Projekt Ideologietheorie*

The clearest recent statement of the problem of fetishism and ideology is Thomas Metscher's criticism of the Projekt Ideologietheorie, which he presented in an article and exchange of letters with Jan Rehmann in the journal *Zeitschrift Marxistische Erneuerung*. Rehmann participated in the Projekt Ideologietheorie and continues to be strongly influenced by it, whereas Metscher has long worked on his own interpretation of Marxist ideology theory.³²⁷ My approach to ideology and fetishism is very similar to Rehmann's, so Metscher's criticism directly concerns my work.

Metscher's basic argument is that ideology should not be conceived of as entering people's lives "from above." This would be a form of "priestly deception theory." Rather, he postulates the existence of everyday "elementary forms of the ideological," which include the "commodity fetish," "idols of the market," and "fetishes of everyday life."³²⁸ These elementary forms of the ideological give rise to forms of ideological consciousness, meaning that ideology mainly comes into being from below. For Metscher, the Projekt Ideologietheorie's mistake therefore lies in identifying ideology with socialization through ideological powers. He claims that this move underplays the "primary socialization" that already stems from elementary forms of the ideological such as commodity fetishism.³²⁹ In a recognizably Marxist fashion, Metscher hopes to derive ideological socialization from the base rather than the superstructure.

The dangers of conflating fetishism and ideology become evident upon an expanded reading of Metscher's works. For instance, Metscher argues in his 2010 book *Logos und Wirklichkeit* that the "fetishes of everyday life," mentioned above, consist in "effort, success, acceptance, representation and prestige, sex, youth, beauty, and sport."³³⁰ These fetishes are said to be forms of "primary socialization" before any input by ideological powers. The obvious problem with this conception is that there is no causal connection between pre-ideological "acceptance" and "youth," which renders Metscher's theory a simple typology without much explanatory power.

³²⁷ Metscher 2010; Rehmann 2013: 241–270. All of Metscher's formulations here are my translations from the German original.

³²⁸ Rehmann & Metscher 2012: 103.

³²⁹ Rehmann & Metscher 2012: 103.

³³⁰ Metscher 2010: 327. "Zu den Fetischen des Alltagslebens . . . gehören Leistung, Erfolg, Akzeptanz, Repräsentanz und Geltung, Sex, Jugend, Schönheit und Sport."

Metscher also conceives of ideology (as opposed to its “elementary forms”) as a form of consciousness and therefore believes that it can be overcome by mere “critical reflection,”³³¹ rather than requiring the removal of the reasons for its existence. This is, in fact, a logical result of Metscher’s theory of elementary forms of the ideological: it would be foolish to attempt to undo the causes of “acceptance,” “youth,” or “sport” (prior to intervention by the ideological powers, remember), but it is surely possible to reflect on these “fetishes” critically in order to avoid their ideological effects. Metscher’s Marxism thus devolves into a project of criticizing fetishisms rather than abolishing their causes.

In the Projekt Ideologietheorie conception, by contrast, fetishism is one of many objective thought forms in people’s everyday lives, and no attempt is made to equate or explain all of these forms.³³² Fetishism only becomes an element of ideological socialization when it is articulated vertically. Such articulation can be performed by professional ideologists or by non-ideologists, as long as the socialization passes through an ideological power. The Projekt therefore greatly limits the scope of both ideology and fetishism relative to Metscher, but in doing so, gains the possibility of a rigorous analysis that actually explains ideology and fetishism rather than simply categorizing them.

Metscher is also mistaken in associating socialization through ideological powers with the Enlightenment-era conception of priestly deception.³³³ Vertical socialization does not imply that ideologists knowingly deceive people. This is particularly evident in the Projekt’s conception, which focuses on socialization rather than truthfulness. While my own conception emphasizes the epistemic aspect of ideology more, I nonetheless argue that ideological socialization results in misleading appearances irrespective of whether ideologists engage in conscious deception. This is because ideological powers have emergent dynamics, and because their posture of neutrality makes them seem to be independent from the rest of society (see Section 2.2.3).

In sum, I argue that Marxists must distinguish fetishism from ideology. The Projekt Ideologietheorie approach is the most developed attempt at tackling the question of fetishism and ideology in the entire corpus of Marxism, which is why I have chosen it as a source of

³³¹ Metscher 2012: 67–69.

³³² Haug 1993: 55–56. The Projekt prefers to call fetishism “the objective thought forms of commodity-money-relations” (*die objektiven Gedankenformen der Ware-Geld-Beziehungen*). The idea is the same as my own, but I have chosen to stick with Marx’s simpler vocabulary.

³³³ See Sloterdijk & Huyssen 1987: 29–30.

inspiration for my work. In the section that follows, I consider the implications of the theories of appearance, fetishism, and ideology that have been outlined above for the theory of social transparency.

2.3.3 Fetishism and the Individualism of Ideological Transparency

It is difficult for commodity producers and exchangers to interpret prices as traces of social relations. Commodities are, in this respect, typically socially opaque. The exploitative capital–labor relation, for instance, does not appear in wages. Instead, wages give rise to certain degrees of freedom in occupation and consumption. Individualist ideological transparency builds on and reinforces such fetishistic experiences of autonomy: its promise of direct perception makes ideological socialization through appearance planning seem compatible with individual autonomy. In other words, fetishism is the reason why ideological transparency so often takes an individualist form in present society.

Commodities are opaque to exchangers because seeing the social in commodities is far from simple, and human eyes are certainly not up to the task. Prices are simply *there*, and if you ask what causes them, you are likely to get ideological answers (e.g., “supply and demand,” the mainstream economist’s parable³³⁴) rather than accounts of non-ideological everyday experience. Commodities are also opaque with respect to the division of value into profit, wages, rent, interest, and taxes, as well as the social distribution of wealth. Freedom of consumption and occupation, by contrast, are inscribed clearly on the surfaces of commodities. Exchange thus emphasizes autonomy and makes it difficult to notice the social relations underlying it, which is why the figure of the autonomous individual tends to become increasingly articulable for ideologists and increasingly understandable to their audiences as commodity production and exchange spreads.

Beyond their appearance effects, commodities also create the practical possibility—and indeed need—for autonomy-emphasizing ideological socialization. Exchange implies, for instance, that the exclusivity of the respective properties of the exchangers will somehow be maintained, such as with legal and police protection of private property. Private property implies that owners get to decide what they will do with their property. Such ideological forms maintain and reinforce the experiences of autonomy that stem directly from exchange.

³³⁴ Varian 2005: 289–291.

Commodity production and exchange not only require certain ideological forms directly, but also affect ideological forms that are not directly related to exchange. Ideology is, after all, fundamentally incompatible with autonomy due to its top-down character. One way for ideologists to circumvent this conundrum is to work with fetishistic individuality—by orchestrating ideological socialization in such a way that it is seemingly grounded in subordinates' inner selves, preferences, or desires, for example.³³⁵ This latter kind of individualist ideological socialization suffers from an inherent contradiction, however: in actuality, ideologists are an influence that stands outside the individual, but in principle, the individual's inner self is used to justify ideological socialization.

Individualist transparency is one attempt to cope with the contradiction of bourgeois ideological socialization while retaining its causes.³³⁶ People ostensibly see things directly and make choices autonomously, but the appearance planning functions through ideologists. Individualist ideological transparency socializes vertically, but not with the authority of an omnipotent patriarch. It does not require that believers kneel in prayer, nor does it strike down or scare evildoers. It does not take the form of displays of power, but of self-coordination through ostensibly direct perception.

³³⁵ It must be noted, however, that ideological socialization does not *always* take misleadingly individualist forms in societies dominated by commodity production. On the one hand, ideologists may ignore fetishism and instead base ideological socialization on experiences that are compatible with explicit hierarchy. Indian castes, for instance, are still often justified using metaphors of purity and contamination that draw on normatively structured everyday experiences to construct caste distinctions based on inherent personal characteristics rather than individual choice. Harrison & Channa 2005: 54. On the other hand, national socialist authoritarianism articulated fetishistic experiences in an anti-individualist way in claiming to oppose the dissolution of social bonds by individualism—although it did little to abolish the economic causes of that dissolution in practice. Gasman 1971: 47–48. Society is never a totality of fetishism, instead containing many contradictory elements. Fetishist experiences are also articulable in many ways, although the individualist articulation is the most straightforward. Individualism is a lucrative tenet for ideologists in capitalist societies, but it is also possible to win over audiences by articulating fetishist experiences in a non-individualist way or by appealing to other systemic or widespread aspects of everyday experience, such as the tortures of the workplace, intimate familial relations, or experiences of camaraderie and solidarity.

³³⁶ Individualist transparency is far from being the only form of individualist ideology, of course. Fetishism has contributed to ideological socialization revolving around autonomous individuality throughout the history of commodity production. For instance, cultural historians recognize a decidedly modern discourse on individual authenticity, genteel self-control, sincerity, honesty, and autonomy in the face of external social pressure, oppression, and alienation. Berman 1971: xiv–xvii; Haltunen 1986: 93, 121. One prominent example of this is Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who in the eighteenth century argued that interpersonal relations tend to become less honest and authentic in societies in which competition and inequality are rampant. Rousseau et al. 2002: 123. Today, political scientists and economists often model society as a collection of decision-making agents. The optimizing behavior of these autonomous agents amidst external structures supposedly underlies (or should underlie) everything from the invisible hand of the market to the global anarchy of the state system. Varian 2005: 1–19; Waltz 1988: 619. Perhaps the clearest contemporary example of fetishistic ideology is organization studies, which comes up with a new individualist terminology for justifying corporate hierarchy every decade or so. Starbuck 2006: 124–125.

For a concrete example, consider educational psychologist Lee Shulman's argument during a debate on education reform in the United States in the first decade of the 2000s. Shulman argued that

the progress students are making needs to be as accessible to them as it is to teachers or policymakers. Such transparency can empower students to take greater control of their own destinies. It is, after all, ultimately the student who must own her or his understanding and progress. Systems of assessment that are opaque, secretive, and slow-responding cripple students' sense of responsibility.³³⁷

In my interpretation, Shulman, who was then a university professor and President of the private Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, promoted the idea of getting students to independently pursue extrinsic goals by suggesting an ideological system of appearance. However, he inverted the causal structure of the situation by claiming that students would choose freely in pursuing skills that assessors deem beneficial—including “fundamental concepts of science and technology that are needed in the 21st century economy.”³³⁸

Importantly, fetishism's individualism-enabling effect only prevails within the exchange relationship itself. Prices appear differently, for instance, to Marxist economists such as Anwar Shaikh, who uses statistical tools to translate price data into indirect measures of labor values.³³⁹ Prices therefore appear proportional to wage costs and, by assumption, unmeasured labor time.³⁴⁰ It follows that cars are more expensive than hairpins because making them is more laborious, not because of supply and demand, preferences, or individual choices. Marxist economists can also disaggregate prices into their wage and profit components.

For Marxist economists, then, prices are not necessarily opaque, but may instead be socially transparent with respect to traces of things like labor and exploitation. However, this requires complex theoretico-empirical maneuvers that confound novices and are (and must be) open to criticism.³⁴¹ It is therefore difficult to popularize this form of social transparency into everyday life under the present circumstances.

³³⁷ Shulman 2007: 25.

³³⁸ Shulman 2007: 22.

³³⁹ Shaikh 2016: 395–422.

³⁴⁰ Shaikh 2016: 212–256.

³⁴¹ Roberts 2016b.

I have now outlined my interpretation of Marx's concepts of appearance, ideology, and fetishism. I have also discussed how these are helpful for understanding and explaining individualist transparency. The chapter that follows presents the previously published articles that inspired my re-theorization of transparency, focusing on the articles' most important methodological questions and the implications of these questions for my conception of transparency.

3 Publications and Their Methodologies

As the methodological components of the three previously published journal articles are somewhat different from each other, I will not construct a single methodological conception for all of the articles in this chapter. Instead, I will expand upon the methodological considerations that are most significant for each of the articles individually.

The first article is a materialistic history of livestock welfare commodification. The most pertinent methodological issue here concerns the ascension from the abstract to the concrete. Article II, by contrast, is a video game analysis of two EU-funded games that are intended to educate livestock welfare consumers and producers. Here, the main question concerns the functional mode of explanation that I employ to understand the differences between the games. The third article is a conceptual history of transparency, which calls for a clarification of the Marxist analysis of language.

In the context of this dissertation, the first two articles provide empirical illustrations of how forms of ideological transparency have emerged, functioned, and developed in the domain of livestock welfare. The third, by contrast, compares different domains of ideological transparency to facilitate broader theorization.

Overall, I have identified five main analytical ways to approach social transparency. Each of the articles, as well as the earlier chapters of this dissertation, emphasizes some of these ways more than others. Any concrete process of appearance planning must, however, take into account all of these perspectives in order to succeed at producing the intended appearances.

1. Transparency can be objectified “from the side,” such that it is viewed as an aspect of a broader process of appearance that also includes a subject-side that interprets traces and an object-side side that imprints the traces. The earlier chapters of this dissertation comprise one of the few attempts I am aware of at a treatment of transparency from the side and, I hope, the most elaborate.³⁴²
2. A “bottom-up” approach describes how the retention of traces comes about—that is, what mechanisms preserve traces and why these mechanisms exist. In a bottom-up approach, transparency conceptions and regulation attempts are appear to be affected

³⁴² Heald’s work comes closest to a sideways account, although he does not really consider objects at all. Heald 2006: 27–31.

by factors that are causally prior to them. This approach dominates Article I, in which I study how livestock welfare certification emerged. The bottom-up approach is easily bogged down by details, however, insofar as it focuses on a single causal complex at one level of abstraction.

3. A “top-down” investigation focuses on people’s conscious attempts at introducing trace retention and their beliefs concerning this process. Any study that focuses exclusively on transparency ideologists or ideology, such as Article II, must follow some variant of this approach. The inherent voluntarism of this approach makes it insufficient by itself, however. No appearance planner simply decides to impose transparency out of thin air, since appearance planning is also an effect and component of a broader reality.
4. A “temporal” reading emphasizes the development or fluctuation of transparency over time. This is a necessary component of any Marxist approach and is omnipresent in all three of my articles. However, it is often useful to “stop time” for purposes of abstraction, as I have done in Article II and in many sections of this dissertation.
5. A “comparative” approach differentiates between various types of transparencies and sets them side by side. This is necessary for purposes of abstraction and was the motivation behind Article III. The problem with the comparative approach, however, is that different causal mechanisms may explain different transparencies, which is why a comparative analysis risks remaining typological rather than deeply causal.

In the three sections that follow, I discuss the articles in greater depth in the order of their publication. My theoretical and methodological outlook has evolved during the dissertation process, with the result that the first article is most dissimilar to the conception laid out above, whereas the third one closely aligns with the positions taken here. Each of the three treatments has a roughly similar structure: I begin by outlining the article’s main contents and findings, after which I discuss the methodological issue at hand.

3.1 Article I: From Abstract to Concrete

The premise of Article I is that the commodification of livestock welfare, which is often conceptualized as “transparency,” has risen rapidly on the agendas of state, private, academic, and third sector actors since the turn of the century. The article outlines the historical

emergence of such commodification, which I call *selffare*, by reading secondary research alongside policy and other documents.

The article investigates several aspects of *selffare* that originated in the past but remain effective today. It begins by outlining the evolutionary connection between humans and non-human domesticates, which partially explains the emotional reactions people sometimes still have with respect to the suffering of certain non-human species. The article then outlines the emergence of purposeful state- and civil-societal manipulation of (and struggle around) the appearance of animal suffering and thriving, aspects of which are already recognizable in the eighteenth century. The early twentieth century bears witness to the emergence of livestock factories, which hide livestock from consumers and later develop into sites of welfare production. Scientific welfare policy develops after the Second World War, but the conception of welfare as a scientifically-measurable quality of livestock products only becomes consolidated during the 1990s.

As I was working on the article, I noticed that many of the people working on “animal welfare” seemed to think that people have always been concerned about it. Much of the scholarship I read, for instance, projected animal welfare concerns backwards into nineteenth century Britain³⁴³ or even onto the entirety of human history from medieval to ancient times.³⁴⁴ I quickly realized that this was incorrect: the present concern with animal welfare refers to a different object than previous formulations.

The term *animal welfare* is now commonly understood as meaning “the quality of an animal’s life as it is experienced by an individual animal.”³⁴⁵ This conception has really only become dominant during the second half of the twentieth century, although it already emerged in the nineteenth.³⁴⁶ Comparable issues were previously approached with concepts like *cruelty*³⁴⁷ or the German *Artgerechtigkeit* (species-appropriateness),³⁴⁸ which have implied different objects. *Artgerechtigkeit*, for instance, was concerned with species traits rather than individual animal experience, and it has only recently been replaced by more individualist notions such as *Tiergerechtigkeit*, (animal-appropriateness).³⁴⁹ Nineteenth-

³⁴³ Kean 1998: 21.

³⁴⁴ Preece 2002: 38, 62. Marx, too, supposedly commented on “animal welfare.” Gunderson 2011.

³⁴⁵ Blokhuis et al. 2013: 91.

³⁴⁶ Woods 2012: 15–16.

³⁴⁷ Kete 2011: 4–7.

³⁴⁸ von Gall 2015.

³⁴⁹ von Gall 2015: 50.

century anti-cruelty regulation was often concerned primarily with controlling the working class rather than the well-being of non-human animals for their own sake. One purpose of cruelty regulation was to prevent workers from being desensitized to violence, lest their brutality turn against the ruling class.³⁵⁰ I do not believe this to be the case any longer. Welfare regulation is now drafted to soothe public outrage, which has flared up around livestock factories regularly for as long as they have existed.³⁵¹

Having realized the historical specificity of welfare, it also occurred to me that the case for historical specificity should not be overstated to the point of vulgar historicism. Something comparable to a concern for animal welfare has indeed existed in many societies beyond our own. Cicero, for instance, explains how spectators were emotionally thrilled and appalled by the suffering of animals in the circus,³⁵² and Pythagoras condemns beating animals and eating meat because souls migrate between humans and non-human animals.³⁵³ Such descriptions are nothing like the factory-bound utility calculi of modern animal welfare science,³⁵⁴ but these phenomena are surely related in some way.

In struggling with the question of historical specificity, I turned to Marx. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx notes that political economists tend to project the modern atomistic individual backwards in time, expecting to find self-sufficient and selfish men of commerce everywhere and throughout history. According to Marx, these economists consequently misunderstand the social ontology of the human species and see history as the product of the action of atomistic individuals, although in actuality, individuality takes on atomistic aspects only under specific historical circumstances.³⁵⁵ We now know that Marx was right: comparative studies of different societies show great variance in social behaviors and notions of social embeddedness, and the selfishness of the “economic man” is actually quite rare.³⁵⁶

However, historical specificity should not be confused for vulgar historicism, by which I mean the refusal to abstract from a single temporal or scalar level of conjuncture. It is possible to discover broad patterns in history by abstracting away specificities, and moving

³⁵⁰ Kete 2011: 4–7.

³⁵¹ E.g., Torssonen 2015: 35. There is good evidence that desensitized slaughterhouse workers are indeed more prone to violent crime. Fitzgerald, Kalof, & Dietz 2009. Animal handlers are nowadays too few to instill much fear in the ruling class, however.

³⁵² Preece 2002: 49.

³⁵³ Preece 2002: 38.

³⁵⁴ Blokhuys et al. 2013: 96–100.

³⁵⁵ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 17–18.

³⁵⁶ Henrich et al. 2004: 23.

between levels of abstraction is helpful to understanding and changing the world. Exchange has existed much longer than capitalist production, for instance, but with different forms of production, exchange has taken different forms.³⁵⁷ This abstract “exchange-as-such” must be nearly devoid of substantial content, however, because its concrete details have varied from society to society. This suggests that the most abstract and trivial theoretical concepts often have the broadest historical purchase, but this purchase should emphatically not be confused with the intellectual or practical worth of trivial concepts.³⁵⁸

The above methodological considerations led me to conceptualize three different levels of abstraction for use in Article I.³⁵⁹ With the concept *fare*, I attempted to capture a maximally abstract notion of human anxiety about the well-being of non-humans. I also gave a social and biological evolutionary explanation³⁶⁰ for why this anxiety has tended to occur in societies with domesticated non-human animals. With *welfare*, by contrast, I indicated the scientific regulation of the well-being of industrially-produced non-human subjects within a state-civil society dynamic. This phenomenon rose to prevalence during the twentieth century. And with *selffare*, I meant commodification as an instrument of livestock welfare regulation, which been prevalent since the 1990s.

To express it differently, rather than accepting the ideological over-generalization of welfare that I detected in my source material, I attempted to show how welfare could be disaggregated into historical layers, some of which were of broader scope than others. This is an important part of the methodological dictum that Marx describes as movement from the abstract to the concrete.³⁶¹ In this movement, abstract and simple categories, like *welfare*, are laboriously “concretized” as elements of the complex societal developments within which they operate.

³⁵⁷ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 38–40. Marxists disagree as to what degree Marx intended his conception of value to be specific to societies dominated by the capitalist mode of production. See Wayne 2005; Milios & Dimoulis 2004; Bryceson 1983; Turner 2008; Cockshott 2018. On Marx’s own views on this topic, see Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 411.

³⁵⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, pp. 39, 23. For a discussion of high-level abstractions, see Hall 2003: 118.

³⁵⁹ In this respect, my approach also resembles Gramsci’s conception of the non-contemporaneity of the present, as well as Koselleck’s conception of the layers of history. See Thomas 2009: 282–284; Koselleck & Gadamer 2000: 19–24. Due to space constraints, I do not attempt to discuss the differences and similarities of these conceptions here.

³⁶⁰ I argued that domestication presupposes and produces both brutal violence and empathy, giving rise to a variety of anxieties and regulation attempts. See the section “The Animal Connection and Domestication” in Article I. The real historical perseverance of this aspect of the domestication relation allows ideologists to find modern welfare in situations that are only remotely related to it.

³⁶¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 38.

I have since followed a similar path of “ascension” with several concepts that are central to this dissertation. Most importantly, I ascend from transparency to social transparency, then to ideological transparency, and finally individualist transparency. I also concretize the abstract category of appearance into the more concrete categories of ideology and fetishism, which need to be taken into consideration in any effort to understand social appearance in today’s society.

The meanings of the words *abstract* and *concrete* that I employ here are obviously quite different from colloquial language. In everyday use, *concrete* connotes something like “tangible” or “material,” whereas “abstract” is close to “intangible.” Marx, by contrast, writes about the “mental concrete” and says that “abstraction” also happens non-consciously. For Marx, *abstract* is closer to “simple,” whereas *concrete* means something like “complex.” In the *Grundrisse*, for instance, he states that exchange value emerges as an abstract or “one-sided” aspect of a complex concrete:

the method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete is simply the way in which thinking assimilates the concrete and reproduces it as a mental concrete. This is, however, by no means the process by which the concrete itself originates. For example, the simplest economic category, e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, population which produces under definite conditions, as well as a distinct type of family, or community, or State, etc. Exchange value cannot exist except as an abstract, one-sided relation of an already existing concrete living whole.³⁶²

Concretization does not simply add nuance to abstract concepts, such as exchange value. Concretized abstractions lose their original meaning (e.g., “an axis of commensurability”) and become different entities (e.g., “an effect of private production”).³⁶³ The purpose of ascending from the abstract to the concrete is therefore not to project finished abstractions into the concrete, but to constantly re-theorize abstractions through concretization. In this

³⁶² Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 28, p. 38; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. I.I, pp. 36–37. Ilyenkov characterizes Marx’s view as follows: “This conception of unity in diversity (or concreteness) . . . approaches that of the concept of integrity or wholeness.” “The ‘abstract’ . . . assumes the meaning of the ‘simple’, undeveloped, one-sided, fragmentary, ‘pure’ (i.e., uncomplicated by any deforming influences).” Ilyenkov 1982: 20–21.

³⁶³ Marxists have disagreed on whether Marx later changed his mind about methodology. For instance, Haug argues that Marx came to see the *Grundrisse* as a “failed text” because it starts from finished abstractions, whereas the correct procedure is to proceed “in the direction of the process.” Haug 2006: 582. My position is akin to that of Ilyenkov and Rosdolsky, who do not find evidence of such a profound break in Marx’s work. Rosdolsky 1977: 27; Ilyenkov 1982: 20–21. There is an important sense in which Marx’s mature work *Capital* is still an attempt to “concretize” the work of bourgeois political economists, or to explicitly connect such work with the social relations within which it operates.

dissertation, I attempt to reconfigure social transparency alongside Marxist theory in a similar way.

3.2 Article II: Functional Explanation

In Article II, I took a more detailed look at the present situation of livestock welfare commodification by comparing two EU-funded educational video games about livestock. One of the games is intended for children,³⁶⁴ who are treated as consumers for whom livestock welfare should appear to be transparent, while the other teaches livestock producers how to manufacture welfare. The article's main result is that although both games concern "welfare," they are in fact referring to two different entities corresponding to particular moments of the commodity circuit. The children's game rewards players for supporting "welfare," i.e. making animals happy via consumption, whereas the producer game rewards a "welfare" that maximizes profit via efficiency gains. My theoretical interpretation of the causal complex underlying this finding is as follows:

[T]he social roles of end consumers and capitalist producers are dissimilar. If a game persuaded capitalist producers to inefficiently cuddle livestock, for instance, it would ruin them. No similar pressure exists for consumers, who do not compete for profit. Yet if a consumer game was honest about mass welfare slaughter, it would probably hinder welfare sales and hence function as a procedure of decommodification overall. The designers of commodification games must take such things into account if they wish to remain employed.³⁶⁵

Certain aspects of the two games can thus be explained by the characteristics of the capitalist mode of production. Two central assumptions are at work here: first, that livestock welfare producers compete for profit in the dog-eat-dog world of cost-cutting that capital tends to create for itself³⁶⁶ while consumers purchase their products for personal consumption, and second, that the games that welfare ideologists produce tend to correspond with the aforementioned positions in the commodity circuit.³⁶⁷ The games' function in the commodity circuit explains their features, in other words.

³⁶⁴ I establish intent by showing that both games were funded during a period when the European Commission had an explicitly articulated strategic goal of creating a European livestock welfare market. Torssonen 2017: 7.

³⁶⁵ Torssonen 2017: 11.

³⁶⁶ See Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 29, pp. 38–39.

³⁶⁷ A similar logic underlies my explanation of individualist ideological transparency as a whole: one important reason why individualist transparency recurs in capitalist societies is that it contributes to ideological socialization in a way that corresponds with commodity fetishism (see Section 2.3.3).

Functional explanation has been important in many disciplines,³⁶⁸ but it has been particularly prominent within sociology under a broader approach known as “functionalism.” One of the discipline’s most important textbooks defines functionalism as the view that “social events can best be explained in terms of the functions they perform—that is, the contributions they make to the continuity of a society.”³⁶⁹ This kind of sociological functionalism is often criticized for downplaying conflict, instability, and creativity while attributing needs and purposes to societies as if they were individual people.³⁷⁰

The textbook definition of functionalism is indeed questionable. While the function of the heart may be said to be circulating blood for the survivability of the organism, hearts also contribute to strokes, arrhythmia, and a multitude of other complications—just like workers can also turn their collective efforts against capital. It is necessary to theorize both aspects, not just the integrative one. I consider myself a proponent of “functional explanation,” but not a “functionalist” in the above sense.

This raises an important, general methodological question: When may I interpret the contributions things make to each other as evidence of a wholeness existing amidst them? When should I instead see their relationship as evidence of tendencies of disintegration? What about reconfigurative, disintegrative integration, which replacing the capitalist mode of production would arguably entail?

In the video game analyses of Article II, I approached this problem by differentiating between integrative and disintegrative game elements. I called the former *procedures of commodification* and the latter *procedures of decommodification*.³⁷¹ By procedures of commodification, I meant game features that lead players towards in-game behaviors that

³⁶⁸ E.g., Levin 2017.

³⁶⁹ Giddens 2009: 1119.

³⁷⁰ Giddens 2009: 24. Sociology textbooks usually present Marx as the binary opposite of a functionalist. The reason is that Marx’s “conflict theory” focuses on antagonisms that disintegrate and change societies, whereas “functionalism” presents society’s parts as fitting together under normal circumstances. O’Leary 2007: 44–45, 94–95; Giddens 2009: 24–25. This textbook interpretation is a half-truth. Although Marx emphasizes social antagonism, he simultaneously emphasizes the order that emerges from and sustains the selfsame antagonism (see Section 2.2.1). He also repeatedly explains things by their contribution to other things, most commonly using the word correspond, *entsprechen*, to characterize such relations. For instance, Marx discusses “the capitalist mode of production, and the conditions of production and exchange corresponding to that mode.” Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 35, p. 8; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. II.10, p. 8. Marx is obviously a proponent of functional explanation in the sense that he explains things in terms of their contributions to other things. I cannot think of any examples, however, in which Marx would argue that said contributions are exclusively towards “the continuity of a society.”

³⁷¹ Torssonen 2015: 11.

correspond with the intended audiences' moment in the commodity circuit according to Marx. The consumer game awarded points for purchasing welfare products, for instance. By procedures of decommodification, I referred to features that inhibited players from behaving according to their role as consumer or producer. This mode of analysis arguably answers the charge that functionalist inquiry disregards instability and treats everything in terms of its positive contribution to socialization (although I still defined the negative in terms of the positive, as *de*-commodification).

My conclusion was that the video games corresponded quite well with the respective economic functions of consumers and producers. Commodification was everywhere; decommodification was rare. But this only gives rise to another question: Why is this so? Why did the ideologists make games that correspond with the categories of economic theory? EU ideologists could have instead churned out games with features that contravene the Commission's welfare strategy and discourage commodification, or the strategy could have been formulated without commodification goals.

The question of causal mechanisms has tended to recur with respect to functional explanation in many fields of scholarship, and various answers have been proposed.³⁷² Among Marxists, however, one prominent response has been to assert that functional explanations are valid even without knowledge of the underlying causal mechanisms. As analytical Marxist Gerald Cohen famously puts it in his 1978 *Karl Marx's Theory of History*, "we may have good reason for thinking that a functional explanation is true even when we are at a loss to conjecture by what means or mechanism the functional fact achieves an explanatory role."³⁷³

Cohen's example, borrowed from Charles Darwin, is that giraffes evolved long necks because they provided access to high-up leaves and therefore contributed to survival. Cohen argues that Darwin was justified in using giraffes as an example of natural selection even though he was not yet capable of articulating the genetic mechanism underlying the inheritance of traits.³⁷⁴ In fact, we are still today fairly ignorant as to how exactly genes and the expression of traits are related to adaptation, or the process by which populations of animals change with their environment.³⁷⁵ Despite this, the concept of adaptation is considered basic biology, and it is indeed reasonable, as Cohen argues, to explain giraffes'

³⁷² E.g., Levin 2017: sec. 5.2.

³⁷³ Cohen 2000: 266.

³⁷⁴ Cohen 2000: 269.

³⁷⁵ Orr 2005: 119; Waldron 2015.

necks by their functional contribution to adaptive advantage even in the absence of precise knowledge about the underlying mechanisms.

The problem with Cohen's example, however, is that scientists have since observed that giraffes do not graze high very often, which suggests that long necks might not be explained by feeding after all.³⁷⁶ This has led to a proliferation of revisionist theories on the subject, ranging from male combat advantage to temperature regulation.³⁷⁷ Perhaps all of these explanations describe parts of a causal complex, or perhaps some factors have been more salient in certain conjunctures during the evolutionary history of the giraffe.

In my view, the giraffe example indicates that there is good reason to remain suspicious of functional explanations in the absence of evidence concerning the causal mechanisms that underlie them.³⁷⁸ This does not mean, however, that functional explanations should not be attempted, or that they should be summarily disbelieved. In the giraffe example, for instance, many of the new revisionist explanations are variants of the adaptive advantage explanation, which is in itself functional. It is just that new evidence has given rise to the question of what contributions long necks might make to the survival of giraffes beyond feeding. Therefore, scholars who present functional explanations should put forward evidence concerning underlying causal mechanisms if possible.

In Article II, the main evidence I provide regarding underlying mechanisms is that the Commission's strategy explicitly mentioned consumers and producers as separate targets that needed to be influenced in order to create livestock welfare markets. I also pointed out that Commission ideologists studied how best to influence the games' intended audiences through focus group research. Both of these factors suggest that the Commission understood how the social positions of welfare producers and consumers differed and designed the games accordingly. This does not yet explain, however, why the Commission simply acquiesced to the pre-existing demands of the commodity circuit rather than attacking it.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Simmons & Scheepers 1996.

³⁷⁷ Mitchell et al. 2017.

³⁷⁸ Here, my interpretation approaches that of critical realism, though I am more optimistic about functional explanation. See Agar 2003: 300.

³⁷⁹ Torssonen 2017: 7. Interestingly, however, the plan ran into some obstacles: members of the European Parliament argued that the scantily-clad female main character of the consumer game was sexist. The Commission was then forced to add clothing to the character after the game had already been released. The Commission's attempt to integrate children into the welfare commodity circuit simultaneously gave rise to disintegrative resistance, as often happens.

A more thorough accounting of the mechanisms underlying the video games I analyzed would require a more in-depth study of Commission ideologists and the factors affecting them. Evidence from such a study might well refute or recalibrate my conclusions about the mechanisms by which the games came to correspond with the economics.

3.3 Article III: Marxism and Language

While working on Articles I and II, I came to wonder why everyone from researchers³⁸⁰ to state bureaucrats³⁸¹ and industry lobbyists³⁸² constantly used the word *transparency* when talking about livestock welfare. I had also noticed that this word was being used everywhere else in a recognizably similar manner. I decided that this similarity would be a good way to abstract my findings beyond the case of livestock welfare. I set to work on Article III, in which I wanted to discover how and why the social connotations of the word *transparency* have varied across time.

The basic argument of Article III is that transparency has been used as a metaphor for direct social perception since antiquity. However, I show that what I call individualist ideological transparency language only became prominent with the spread of commodity production in the eighteenth century. Up until the twentieth century, this ideological individualization was mostly associated with people's personal characteristics, such as when priests exhorted traders to strive for "transparently sincere" personality. It was only in the mid-twentieth century that transparency adopted connotations of assuring accountability. Through this development, planned individualization became associated with masking, legitimizing, and facilitating bureaucratic control. The European Commission, for instance, has started transparency initiatives to defend trade treaty negotiations against citizen opposition.³⁸³

By the time I started working on Article III, my previous research had convinced me of the necessity of studying language as an element of non-conscious and non-human processes. My reading of paleoanthropologist Pat Shipman's work on the coevolution of animal domestication and human symbolic behavior,³⁸⁴ in particular, had rendered me sensitive to

³⁸⁰ Blokhuis et al. 2003.

³⁸¹ European Commission 2012: 7.

³⁸² The Milk Producers' Organisation 2017.

³⁸³ Due to space constraints, I have not fully theorized this individualist-bureaucratic turn of transparency here, and have focused instead on the more abstract form of individualist ideological transparency. The basic outlines of my theory of the bureaucratization of transparency are already discernible in Article III, however.

³⁸⁴ Torssonen 2015: 27–30.

the long-standing non-symbolic dimensions of symbolic behavior. I therefore could not resort to the academic commonplace of studying texts as if they existed in an autonomous domain of language and human consciousness.³⁸⁵ Instead, I had to try to triangulate the causes and effects of the texts by interpreting language corpus data through a theoretical apparatus that showed how developments in the texts related to non-textual developments.

Again, I found Marx's treatment of these issues very illuminating. His basic conception of language is roughly as follows: As humans (and perhaps other animals) act together in reproducing themselves as parts of the world, they simultaneously tend to produce conceptions both in mental and externalized forms, such as human speech and writing. In other words, language is a fundamental aspect of social-natural production, and it also bears the stamp of such production. Language must therefore be studied in terms of theories of social-natural production—that is, of fetishism, ideology, and so on—rather than as a closed system.³⁸⁶

The aforementioned view of language makes its first clear appearance in the *German Ideology* manuscripts (see Section 2.2.1), in which Marx and Engels discuss language as “practical consciousness,”³⁸⁷ berate philosophers for making “language into an independent realm,”³⁸⁸ and show the degree to which “language itself is a product of the bourgeoisie.”³⁸⁹ Marx's language conception is perhaps most clearly expressed, however, in his marginalia on Adolph Wagner's *Lehrbuch der politischer Ökonomie*. He wrote these notes towards the end of his life between 1879 and 1880:

[M]en, like animals, also learn “theoretically” to distinguish the outer things which serve to satisfy their needs from all other. . . . [T]hey will linguistically christen entire classes of these things which they distinguished by experience from the rest of the outside world. This is bound to occur, as in the production process—i.e. the process of appropriating these things—they are continually engaged in active contact amongst themselves and with these things, and will soon also have to struggle against others for these things.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁵ E.g., Sawyer 2002: 434–435.

³⁸⁶ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 24, p. 539; Marx & Engels 1956–68: vol. 19, pp. 362–363.

³⁸⁷ Marx & Engels 2014: 75.

³⁸⁸ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 446.

³⁸⁹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 5, p. 231.

³⁹⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 24, p. 539; Marx & Engels 1956–68: vol. 19, pp. 362–363.

Whereas in Article I, I applied Pat Shipman's conception of language, in Article III, I added components from Marx's. In what follows, I compare these two ways of thinking about language to consider their implications for conducting research. At the same time, the comparison illustrates my own intellectual trajectory from a more pragmatist orientation towards a Marxist one.

Both Shipman and Marx agree that language is inextricably social in the sense that it cannot be understood in terms of an individual language-user grappling conceptually with her environment. Furthermore, language stems from both production and experience. Shipman argues, for instance, that communicating hunting experiences was probably the main way that symbolic behavior, such as cave painting and language, initially contributed to human reproduction.³⁹¹ Both Shipman and Marx also emphasize the *processual* nature of language, rather than treating it as a stable system.

From a Marxist perspective, however, the main deficiency in Shipman's account is the absence of struggle, especially over wealth. According to Engels, this struggle was exacerbated by the emergence of non-human animals as private property (see footnote 241), which suggests that class struggle should also be part of Shipman's account. As a consequence of disregarding this struggle, Shipman's discussion elides the class character of symbolic specialists.³⁹² She explicitly notes that symbolic specialists must somehow extract their upkeep from others, but never elaborates on how this can be done.³⁹³

From a Marxist perspective, Shipman also overemphasizes the communicative and instrumental benefits of symbolic behavior. She argues that symbolic behavior emerged as a tool for transferring information about how to best appropriate non-human animals.³⁹⁴ As her critics have noted, however, evidence indicates that some of the adaptive benefits of symbolic behavior are instead related to *rituals*, which are not exclusively or even mainly communicative.³⁹⁵

A Marxist Projekt Ideologietheorie interpretation of the paleoanthropological evidence would emphasize socialization over communication. In this interpretation, one adaptive benefit of symbolic behavior is that it helps contain struggle by socializing people into relations of

³⁹¹ Shipman 2010: 6.

³⁹² Shipman 2010: 6.

³⁹³ Shipman 2010: 6.

³⁹⁴ Shipman 2010: 7.

³⁹⁵ Shipman 2010: 10. The critiques by multiple scholars have been published as a part of Shipman's article.

domination and subordination (see Section 2.2.2.3). Such socialization often works by making it *harder* for certain people to behave in certain ways. This Marxist interpretation thus runs directly counter to Shipman's vision of symbolic behavior as a tool for appropriating the world.

Shipman subscribes to a variant of what the Marxist linguist Jean-Jacques Lecercle calls the "dominant philosophy of language." The basic intuition underlying this kind of philosophy (which may vary substantially in the specifics) is that individuals use language to achieve communicative-instrumental goals.³⁹⁶ Lecercle recognizes aspects of this dominant conception in a diverse range of language philosophies, including analytic, naturalist, pragmatist, and Habermasian approaches. Of these variants, Shipman is closest to the pragmatist conception, which focuses on the practical consequences of language with a degree of social-scientific naïveté about the systematic causes and effects of asymmetrical production relations.³⁹⁷

My intellectual development from the Shipmanian approach in Article I to the Marxist approach in Article III could be summarized as an increasing emphasis on struggle as an explanation of language. I still consider it correct to theorize transparency language in terms of practice and everyday experience, as I did in Article I with welfare language. Since working on Article III, however, I have also understood transparency language in connection to professional socializers who alleviate irreconcilable conflict by seeking compromise, interpreting and producing traces, and intervening in other people's everyday life for the benefit of the ruling class. There are several axes of struggle and compromise here: amidst the people being socialized, amidst the socializers, between the ruling and the ruled, and even between the ruling class and its ideologists. Article I only begins to consider the dimensions of struggle that are embedded in the contradictions and compromises of welfare language;³⁹⁸ in Article II, the struggle component is present but in a still mostly implicit manner.³⁹⁹

All of my dissertation articles are based on evidence produced by ideologists, such as government-funded video games or corpus data dominated by professional writers. This

³⁹⁶ Lecercle 2006: 64–72. This formulation is my paraphrase of Lecercle's more elaborate account.

³⁹⁷ E.g., Rorty 1998: 298. To see how such naïveté slips into ideological socialization, consider Rorty's pleas for a "Mythic America" that would empower oppressed people through imaginary unity. Koivisto & Pietilä 1996: 55.

³⁹⁸ Torssonen 2015: 43.

³⁹⁹ Torssonen 2017: 3.

means that their depictions of struggle are necessarily one-sided. As Valentin Voloshinov pointed out already in 1929, almost everybody uses language, and variance in people's life-situations imparts upon language a degree of polysemy.⁴⁰⁰ Ideological language will therefore probably not be representative of all language.

I could have attempted to avoid ideology-centrism by interviewing non-ideologists or studying their language products. Since non-ideologists tend to be influenced by ideology, however, this would simply have displaced the problem. I would still have had to interpret ideologically-inflected language for traces of the processes in which it participates, as I have done now. Despite this, interviewing or observing non-ideologists, such as the players of the games described in Article II, might have helped me better account for the reception of ideology and its role in audiences' lives. Such an approach could also have shifted attention away from ideological vertical socialization towards horizontal socialization (see Section 2.2.2.3).

In the section that follows, I conclude the dissertation by drawing together its themes in a consideration of what non-ideological social transparency might mean. I argue, contentiously, that widespread non-ideological transparency would only be possible in a non-capitalist society, and that such transparency may even help us move beyond the capitalist mode of production.

⁴⁰⁰ Voloshinov 1973: 23.

4 Conclusions: Transparency Beyond Capital?

Within the collective society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products; just as little does the labour employed on the products appear [Erscheinen] here as the value of these products . . . [The producer] receives a certificate from society that he has furnished such and such an amount of labour (after deducting his labour for the common funds), and with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as the same amount of labour costs.⁴⁰¹

Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*

Individualist transparency offers a way for ideologists to affect members of their audience without noticeably impinging on the audience's commodity-wrought sense of autonomy. The European Commission, for instance, creates markets by modifying how welfare appears to consumers and producers, university administrators incentivize competition among researchers by giving scores to academic publications, and so on.

This is not, however, the only possible or historically extant form of social transparency. In fact, radical socialists and communists have often produced analyses and mechanisms of what could be called anti-capitalist social transparency. In this section, I draw the first outlines of a research program that would continue this work by conceiving of social transparency as an element of horizontal socialization and thereby as a deterrent to exploitation and oppression. In contrast to the discussion in Chapter 2, this new program focuses on non-ideological social transparency as one element of the broader process of horizontal appearance planning.

In this dissertation, I have laid the foundations of a Marxist conception of transparency. The basic argument has been that in societies structured around exploitation and oppression, appearance planning tends to be concentrated in the hands of ideologists. Furthermore, in societies dominated by commodity production, ideological appearance planning is affected by commodity fetishism, which tends to make people see themselves as independent individuals even in the absence of planning. Ideological appearance planning incorporates fetishism through individualist transparency—it works to socialize ostensibly-independent individuals under the pretense of direct perception.

⁴⁰¹ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 24, p. 86; Marx & Engels 1975–: vol. 1.25, p. 13.

Ideological transparency is not the only form of social transparency, however, nor is all appearance planning ideological. I have barely scratched the surface of horizontal forms of appearance planning. In such forms, conscious appearance planning is conducted in and through people's horizontal relations. Further research is needed on this topic. Such research could show how appearance planning, including transparency planning, can be organized horizontally in a way that undermines exploitation and oppression but still guarantees reproduction.

For horizontal appearance planning to be practically realizable, its seeds must exist already within present society. I can think of three specific research questions that could help discover whether this is the case:

- 1) What *capacities* required for horizontal appearance planning do people currently have, how are such capacities distributed, and why?
- 2) To what degree do people *disagree* on appearance planning, and to what degree are these disagreements linked to exploitation and oppression?
- 3) In what respects are social appearance processes *changing*, and under what conditions could these changes lead to a future without exploitation and oppression?

Answering the first question would involve identifying and analyzing extant non-ideological aspects of appearance planning and sifting out the variants that are relevant to ending oppression and exploitation. Most people are capable of objectifying and modifying processes of appearance, which suggests that horizontal planning may be widespread. People block online advertisements and hide snacks from themselves, for instance, purposefully intervening in the preservation of traces. Groups do this, too, such as when people coordinate their behaviors by marking online calendars and deciding who gets to see them or who else's information they want displayed.

While people may plan appearances, appearances also strengthen or diminish people's capacities for social planning, therefore explaining the capacity or incapacity for horizontal appearance planning. The example given above is that although prices may be transparent to economists, for everyone else, fetishism makes them difficult to understand. This is a problem for bottom-up social planning, which is only possible given that everyday life is

organized such that most people understand society well enough to plan it.⁴⁰² Markets serve as a cautionary example of a process of social appearance that, although essentially horizontal, is not conducive to horizontal socialization at the level of the entire society and over the long run. Research on processes of appearances should therefore identify processes that hinder or advance capacities for horizontal appearance planning at different scales and temporalities.

The second research direction concerns the politics of appearance planning, such as the factors that cause disagreement about which traces should be preserved and which should not. Laborers often resist their employers' efforts to monitor their productivity,⁴⁰³ for instance. Parliamentarians are often opposed to providing the public with information about their meetings with lobbyists.⁴⁰⁴ Subordinated wives in transnational marriages resist the efforts of their jealous husbands to monitor their fidelity over the internet.⁴⁰⁵ Research on such phenomena could shed light on which conflicts around appearance and transparency could be resolvable by changing the underlying conditions of exploitation and oppression.

Some forms of transparency conflict would probably persist even without exploitation and oppression, as is implied by Richard Wolff's non-perfectionist understanding of communism.⁴⁰⁶ Future research would therefore need to integrate transparency planning as an element of post-capitalist politics. For instance, Cockshott and Cottrell have outlined a conception of randomly selected stakeholder juries as a form of post-capitalist political organization.⁴⁰⁷ Appearance planning could be one task of such juries. From the point of view of horizontal socialization, stakeholder juries have the advantage that appearance

⁴⁰² See Ollman 1997: 42–43. Cockshott and Cottrell propose to counter the obfuscating tendencies of markets by basing prices directly on labor time. This would make it easier to understand issues such as public budgets, because it would be immediately evident how many hours per day one must work to sustain a given item of public expense. Cockshott & Cottrell 1993: 165–166.

⁴⁰³ O'Connor 2016.

⁴⁰⁴ FinnishNews.fi 2017; European Parliament 2016.

⁴⁰⁵ Hannaford 2014: 50. Were the marriages not transnational, such monitoring might be conducted by private detectives, priests, or neighbors.

⁴⁰⁶ Wolff 2007: 332.

⁴⁰⁷ The members of these juries are randomly selected with limited terms in order to avoid the aristocratic tendency of elections and bureaucracies. Only those who have an interest in the competence of the jury are eligible, such as with consumers, producers, or other stakeholders. These competences are defined by the jury's scope and level of aggregation, such as one school or the educational system as a whole. The juries monitor and make decisions related to the work of the full-time professionals within their competence, such as teachers. They also decide on what percentage of the labor product of their constituencies will be used to maintain the public services in which they are stakeholders. Due to the large number of such bodies, everyone would be a member of some jury at least some of the time. Only matters pertaining to the entirety of the population would be subject to a direct-democratic vote, and only after public deliberation. Cockshott & Cottrell 1993: 157–169.

planning takes place across society and over many levels of aggregation. This would require substantial work, however. For instance, Cockshott and Cottrell's analysis of appearance is overly focused on labor values, as they themselves admit,⁴⁰⁸ reducing the labor process to just one of its elements. Labor values, in themselves, are an inadequate tool for social planning.

The third research direction would investigate ongoing social and natural changes that affect the possible futures of social processes of appearance. The intuition here is that for horizontal appearance planning to become possible, the historical conjuncture must be suitable. In other words, society must be developing in a direction that supports conscious attempts to change it, and purposive politics must be attuned to this development.⁴⁰⁹ Otherwise, radical projects are mere wishful thinking.

One especially interesting research direction here would be a Marxist technology studies approach to current technological developments that enable cost-efficient trace production and planning at various levels of abstraction. Such technologies are currently spreading rapidly. Amazon, for instance, has recently patented a wristband that tracks the location of employees' hands in real time and gives haptic feedback to guide them.⁴¹⁰ Practices of environmental assessment and the objectification of non-human experience are also expanding.⁴¹¹ Such measurement and feedback devices enable qualitative and quantitative real-time global, direct measurement of things like labor, need, and impacts on non-humans.

The data produced by new measurement technologies can be broadcast to select segments of society in many ways. Commercially available data manipulation and visualization tools already enable effortless interpretation of large datasets.⁴¹² New bodily senses are even being developed and technically augmented: researchers have produced a vest that communicates data by actuators on the skin, and people have learned to use its prototype to feel stock market data.⁴¹³ Perceptions and behaviors can likewise be induced by directly stimulating the brain,⁴¹⁴ and they can also, conversely, be read from neural activity.⁴¹⁵

⁴⁰⁸ Cockshott & Cottrell 1993: 191.

⁴⁰⁹ See Ollman 2013: 66–67.

⁴¹⁰ Boyle 2018.

⁴¹¹ UN Environment 2018; Norwood & Lusk 2011.

⁴¹² Fearn & DeMuro 2018.

⁴¹³ Novich & Eagleman 2018; Novich & Eagleman 2015.

⁴¹⁴ Polanía, Nitsche, & Ruff 2018.

⁴¹⁵ St-Yves & Naselaris 2018.

At present, such technologies are being designed for societies pervaded by exploitation and oppression. This is most obvious in cases such as the CCTV systems that are coupled with automatic facial recognition and, in China, social credit scores.⁴¹⁶ When integrated with swarms of tiny drones equipped with weapons and cameras,⁴¹⁷ the oppressive potential of these technologies is enormous. One reaction to such dystopian developments has been to prohibit or greatly limit data collection,⁴¹⁸ although I suspect these reactionary measures are going to fail. The new social transparency technologies are incredibly efficient as elements of ideological socialization and state violence, and they will probably become increasingly indispensable to maintaining ruling-class power.

New transparency technologies could also be mobilized against exploitation and oppression, however. People's ability to perceive labor values, rates of exploitation, human and non-human suffering, or environmental impacts could be improved via augmented reality technologies. Such appearances could also replace the torrent of ideological manipulation that now streams forth from the likes of Facebook and Google.⁴¹⁹ Rather than generating desire for commodities or loyalty to political parties, technologically preserved traces could generate socialized intrinsic motivation and increase planning capacity. This would arguably strengthen individual autonomy in the face of totalitarian tendencies, while offering the political advantage of mobilizing the individualist intuitions that stemmed from commodities in the first place.

New tracing technologies could also be useful for replacing and grading property rights. Traces in people's bodies or social lives, for instance, could be read automatically to allow access to scarce use values based on objectivized need, such as transportation for a commute or medicine for a sickness. They could also be used to mark and track items of personal property and facilitate their efficient use, such as broadcasting the presence of expensive and rarely used equipment to ease borrowing.

Radicals of various denominations have attempted to connect technologies of appearance planning to broader social-natural mechanisms of differing complexities, from Marx's rudimentary labor certificates⁴²⁰ and Gosplan's material balances⁴²¹ all the way to the

⁴¹⁶ Denyer 2018.

⁴¹⁷ Hruska 2018.

⁴¹⁸ European Commission 2018.

⁴¹⁹ E.g., Greenfield 2018.

⁴²⁰ Marx & Engels 1975–2005: vol. 24, p. 86.

Chilean Cybersyn⁴²² and Soviet OGAS⁴²³ cybernetics projects, not to mention labor value broadcasts over the Teletext TV system.⁴²⁴ Such attempts illustrate how important social technologies of producing, preserving, and interpreting traces are to non- and anti-capitalist social organization. Future research would do well to update, compare, criticize, systematize, and horizontalize these theories and practices of anti-capitalist trace preservation and appearance planning.

Above all else, the possibilities for horizontal transparency in the future depend on the balance of power between capital and labor. When Chilean socialists under Allende attempted cybernetic appearance planning, for instance, their plans were foiled by a military coup supported by the CIA that resulted in the slaughter of Chile's radical left.⁴²⁵ Non-ideological transparency and appearance planning would probably face similar resistance from most factions of the capitalist ruling class. The overall strategic situation therefore determines whether horizontal appearance planning is practically possible.

A deep, multi-faceted crisis of the capitalist mode of production could substantially improve the prospects of horizontal appearance planning. A major crisis could weaken the ruling class, which in turn may be conducive to social change, for good or for ill. Several severe crisis developments are currently underway in the economic,⁴²⁶ environmental,⁴²⁷ and political⁴²⁸ realms that could together threaten the dominance of the capitalist class. The outcomes of such processes are uncertain, however, and contingent on the specifics of the initial conditions.

In conclusion, while studying transparency might seem like a strange way to wage the class struggle, ideological transparency does socialize people into relations of exploitation and

⁴²¹ Davies & Khlevnyuk 1997: 32.

⁴²² Beer 1981: 270.

⁴²³ Beissinger 1988: 248–249; Gerovitch 2004. Organizational cybernetics remains a highly developed branch of theoretical literature on using modern technology for social appearance planning. The literature is problematic, however, in its rudimentary theory of politics and its assumption of capitalist relations of production. For instance, cybernetics now tends to see conflict as merely a side effect of bad design, and works ideologically to increase “cohesion” and “performance” within the capitalist mode of production. See Espejo & Reyes 2014: 94; Espejo & Bula 2012: 344. This is a substantial step back from the revolutionary cybernetics in Allende's Chile, which still had political and anti-capitalist economic aspects, although engineering-heavy ones. Beer 1981: 252; 278–306.

⁴²⁴ Cockshott & Cottrell 1993: 51–52.

⁴²⁵ Devine 2014.

⁴²⁶ Roberts 2018b; Roberts 2016a: 21–22; Milanovic 2016: 44; Piketty 2014: 434; International Monetary Fund 2018; Authers 2018.

⁴²⁷ Ripple et al. 2017.

⁴²⁸ Benhabib & Rasmussen 2017; Collins 2018.

oppression, and abolishing it is a reasonable goal of the exploited and the oppressed. The problem of appearance planning will not disappear, however, even if individualist transparency and the class divide cease to exist. Marxists cannot ignore the question of transparency any longer.

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Appendices: Publications I, II, and III

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