II

Ideology and Film Culture

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter sketches an argument on behalf of the claim that ideology critique is a species of moral persuasion, mainly concerned with the normative evaluation of certain ways of thinking, feeling, and acting that have a bearing on our social institutions. There is a moral dimension built into the concept of ideology, as that concept is characteristically used in critical film theory. Ideology is often described as something undesirable or unworthy, something that has to be criticized. In many cases, then, the question 'What is ideology?' also means 'What does a critic of ideology do in criticizing ideology?'

One important answer to this question emphasizes the role that erroneous propositions play in ideological thinking. Ideologies are in this view comprised of false beliefs whose falsehood is in some sense caused or fostered by practices of domination. The beliefs are false because they have been distorted by a pattern of social power. Call this the 'false consciousness' model. According to Richard W. Miller, this approach faithfully reflects the impetus of classical Marxist theory. Miller argues that both Marx and, especially, Engels described ideologies as false ideas whose deficiencies are 'a product of *truth-distorting* social forces'.[1] Film scholars have sometimes upheld this model. According to Noël Carroll, for example, ideologies are false beliefs that uphold some practice of social domination, as in the statement 'all black men want to rape white women'.[2] And Terry Lovell has similarly defined ideology as 'the production and dissemination of erroneous beliefs whose inadequacies are socially motivated'.[3] In this account, ideologies belong to a class of statements that make factual claims. They are in other words comprised of assertions. Assertions have a propositional content that describes a state of affairs as being the case. Their validity can be checked by appealing to inductively acquired evidence, or by challenging the logical consistency of their premisses. Specifically, ideologies are false assertions that help uphold or rationalize a practice of social subordination.

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Consider the example of a free-market conservative who believes that the welfare state is overburdened and top-heavy. This person could defend her view by asserting that social services account for the largest portion of the US Federal budget. The endorsement of an extreme version of laissez-faire capitalism would here go hand in hand with an empirical assertion which can readily and straightforwardly be compared with the relevant evidence. Budget figures in fact reveal military spending to be the largest item.[4] It is important to note, however, that factual beliefs alone seldom suffice to justify one's approval or disapproval of social services. A conservative may after all consent to the fact that welfare is not the largest budget item while nonetheless holding on to the view that the state ought not to help the poor. To define ideological thinking as comprised *exclusively* of false assertions is, I will argue, to misrepresent the role that they play in our lives. It is not unreasonable to hold political convictions that cannot be meaningfully supported or falsified by facts. In contrast to the false consciousness model, I describe ideologies as patterns of thought, feeling, and conduct which *may, but need not*, include defeasible beliefs. Of course, ideologies are often expressed as assertions, or at least can be paraphrased as assertions. But I want to argue here against the philosophical commonplace that assertions always and everywhere advance empirical propositions. Assertions have many uses, some of which involve falsifiable claims while others do not. Whether a proposition requires evidence or not depends on its place within a broad network of human experiences and concerns. To describe ideologies as false beliefs is to abstract from these various uses and erect what I take to be a reductive view of the role that thoughts play in particular contexts of human emotions, convictions, intentions, desires, and practices. I will criticize this definition of ideology not only by presenting arguments against it, but also by sketching an alternative framework in what I take to be a compelling and persuasive form.

FALSE BELIEFS?

Consider another statement, 'women are less rational than men'. Is this a falsifiable proposition? How could one present evidence against it? Perhaps one might point to women who are quite adept at logical thinking, according to various standards. But would that be enough to dissuade someone who believed in the inferior mental powers of women? Could such a person not simply reply that those individual women are exceptions, or that, while they do seem rational, a close look at their everyday behaviour would invariably reveal that they tend to act on impulse? It is an important aspect of such assertions that those who uphold them do not always engage in empirical testing. Rather, propositions of this nature seem to be of a special

kind which expresses convictions and values rather than describing states of affairs. Political and social controversies are not always, perhaps not centrally, settled by appealing to inductively acquired evidence. Whoever states that women lack full powers of ratiocination is in many instances expressing a commitment, and commitments are not characteristically supported by facts; rather, they are distinct ways of seeing, understanding, evaluating, and otherwise relating and responding to facts.[5] If we do persuade someone to give up the view that women are irrational, we have not thereby merely altered his factual opinions about the world: we have modified the way he sees and interacts with women.

A proponent of the false consciousness model could nonetheless reply that this line of argument is trivial and misleading. The fact that factual information may fail to persuade others to change their views does not necessarily mean that the views themselves are not falsified. Any theory of ideology worth its salt must surely admit the possibility that in many cases no amount of evidence will suffice to modify someone's political beliefs. The false consciousness thesis can perhaps be construed as follows: factual evidence constitutes the sort of argument that ought to persuade a person who proceeds rationally. To be sure, it frequently happens that our passions (wishful thinking, for instance) prevent us from rationally assessing beliefs. We may continue to uphold a political ideology simply because it satisfies a wish for safety, power, pride, and so on. But this does not mean that a belief like 'women are less rational than men' is not in principle falsifiable. If I am only making the trivial comment that inductive evidence sometimes fails to convince, then my objections are obviously beside the point.

My argument is not, however, an empirical description of the practical difficulties of persuading another. I am advancing a grammatical claim about what counts as an ideological belief in our ordinary language. This kind of belief need not involve factual claims. The point is that the notion of falsification may not always make sense here. Although our moral commitments are often expressed in propositional form, they are not characteristically based on inductive evidence. They do not always furnish information. They often express an attitude to reality from which, so to speak, nothing is missing, quite unlike a hypothesis that requires factual support. They do not stand outside reality but rather help to define a whole way of living. Moral beliefs comprise an integral part of the fabric of a person's or a community's experience. In order to understand the significance that an ideology has for someone, we generally reconstruct how it hangs together with the individual convictions of the person and of other like-minded persons, how it is combined with various other thoughts, emotions, and actions, or how it may fit into a ritual of a custom or an institution. We seldom rely on protocols of inductive verification. Evidence

will often fail to convince because factual information is not a necessary ground of ideological belief.

Proponents of the false consciousness model could reply that, in describing ideologies as 'false beliefs', they do not necessarily mean 'false when compared with factual evidence' but also, and more broadly, 'ambiguous, vague, derived from faulty premisses, or based on unsound inferences'. A belief can be considered false when, for instance, it incorporates muddled, imprecise, or poorly defined concepts. But it is by no means evident that justified moral convictions should be expressible in clear and precise terms. What is striking about this way of putting things is of course the fact that ideological beliefs are described as subject to logical norms. But what could it possibly mean to demonstrate that a person's way of life is logically incoherent? As Paul Johnston has persuasively argued, it is difficult to specify the logical considerations that could possibly prove the rightness of acting in one way rather than another.[6] The very concept of acting incoherently does not seem to make sense here. Of course, false consciousness theorists could insist that their theory of ideology refers to ideas rather than ways of life, and ideas can be straightforwardly assessed in accordance with logical standards. But this is precisely what I take issue with. Whether an idea, or a cluster of ideas, is falsifiable or not depends on its relationship to a particular field of human experience. To detach it from that background is to misrepresent its import. In such a case, *the beliefs being criticized are simply not the beliefs that people actually believe in*. This is of course not to deny that it may sometimes matter whether a belief lacks inductive support or logical coherence. But the question of whether it does actually matter can only be assessed on an ad hoc basis by considering in detail the particular context of human thoughts, activities, and attitudes in which the belief plays its role. It seems pointless, if not downright misleading, for philosophers to believe that they can settle the matter in advance.

This line of argument brings out what I take to be another important weakness of the false consciousness account, or at least many versions of it. According to its proponents, the question of whether a thought is ideological cannot be settled by noting the role that it plays, or is meant to play, in a given social context. To demonstrate that an assertion has been put forth in order to justify a practice of social domination is not a sufficient criterion of the ideological status of that assertion. In addition, critical theorists should treat ideas as rational claims by testing their empirical adequacy and logical cogency regardless of their social origins or purposes.[7] The underlying assumption here is that a belief can be rationally evaluated without taking into account its place within a field of human practices and concerns. But I am not persuaded by this way of approaching the matter because the fact that a belief plays a role in a situation of domination may in some instances be enough to warrant our criticism of it. It is often very difficult to

evaluate the worth of a political belief, or even to understand what the belief really means, without taking into account the context of its use. The meaning of a political idea may be given precisely by its connection to a broad range of activities and experiences, and these will in some instances include a background of social institutions. Statements like 'black men want to rape white women' and 'women are less rational than men' characteristically mean what they mean in contexts of discrimination. The meaning of these assertions is partly constituted by their position within social practices.[8] Think of someone who only manages to see a single scene from a particular film, the ending for instance: that person would probably be able to follow the dialogue and more or less grasp what it is that the characters are doing, but she has not understood the action in the same way as someone who has seen the entire film. Important pieces of the context will be missing, which is precisely what happens when ideological assertions are detached from the background practices and concerns that give the point to political beliefs.

My claim is not simply that whoever adheres to an ideology is thereby pretending to make, or fictionally making, truth-claims. Rather, these assertions do not always function as truth-claims for the person who utters them. To be sure, it is often possible to specify what should count as evidence for and against a political or social belief by, for instance, compiling statistics or designing tests of various sorts, thus establishing clear defeasibility conditions. It is an important feature of ideologies that they can often be transformed into truth-claims. But this does not entail that they already contained truth-claims to begin with. There is a confusion here, which Pierre Bordieu has brought out in an anthropological study influenced by Wittgenstein. The confusion consists in treating our patterns of conduct, our everyday ways of thinking and living in the world, as rational products subject to logical laws and inductive protocols. Bordieu's favourite example is Plato's question as to whether 'it was the earth that imitated woman in becoming pregnant and bringing a being into the world, or woman that imitated the earth'.[9] In trying to furnish a logically consistent account of religious beliefs, Plato misses precisely what is distinctive about those beliefs, the complex ways in which they are woven into the fabric of everyday experience. The bias for logical order does not necessarily clarify the main features of our commitments but rather tends to distort the role that they play in the texture of our lives. For the aims and concerns of moral convictions are directly connected to, expressed by, patterns of human conduct that need not fit the requirements of any logical paraphrase. Plato's confusion, which Bordieu terms the 'scholastic fallacy', recalls the definition of ideology as false consciousness, an approach which makes our political and social commitments answerable to inductive standards. In contrast, I argue that, while ideologies may include factual assertions, and to this

extent the definition does correctly capture *one* extremely important aspect of the phenomenon at hand, truth-claims are characteristically *not* the foundations on which all the other elements of the ideology rest. Rather, propositions are usually connected with overlapping networks of emotions, convictions, and activities. An important consequence of this line of argument is that our rational beliefs are not, and should not be required to be, the final ground of our conduct. Human actions are not everywhere bound by reasons. They are rooted in fields of experience that may not be entirely dependent on rational considerations. A critic of ideology has to recognize that arguments sometimes leave untouched the core of an opponent's political beliefs, which is the way these beliefs ramify into a whole way of life.[10]

To be sure, critical theorists do often use the terms 'true' and 'false' in assessing rival political frameworks. Ideology critique frequently amounts to the exclamation 'But in all truth things are not really like that!' It is, however, important to remind ourselves that this expression, which seems to me aptly to describe what critical theorists tend to do, contains exclamation marks: the point of ideology critique, I would suggest, lies precisely in those exclamation marks. The enterprise of critical theory is in many cases akin to a startling gesture, like shaking someone who holds what we believe to be inappropriate or flawed attitudes. What is often asked of the other person is not that she should give up a factual opinion but that, she should substantially modify, or sometimes radically change, her ways of seeing and living. The concepts of falsehood and truth are being used in a rather special sense here. In some instances, a successful critique of ideology brings about a thoroughgoing and fundamental transformation, something akin to a religious conversion. To replace a Christian ethic with a socialist or anarchist one, to give up homophobic or patriarchal sentiments, or to acquire an active interest in the emancipation of an oppressed people, frequently involves a basic change in one's attitudes towards the world. A belief is in such instances true ('compelling' might be a better term) if it persuades us to see the world in a new light and to act in accordance with this new way of seeing and feeling: if we come to feel at home in this particular moral framework. Truth is here shown by the capacity of a belief to modify how we look and act, not by appealing to inductive protocols. The truth of the picture is shown by our response to the picture. This is the kind of commitment that Wittgenstein had in mind when he noted that moral beliefs 'will show, not by reasoning or by appeal to ordinary grounds for belief, but rather by regulating for all in his life'.[11] In other cases, however, ideology critique may be more piecemeal, addressing a particular commitment without completely altering the whole fabric of a person's experience. We may, for instance, convince an environmental activist that free-market capitalism does not foster ecological balance. In this case, the person has incorporated

a socialist commitment into a prior set of political convictions without necessarily effecting a total change in her general ways of thinking and acting. In this piecemeal kind of persuasion, inductive evidence is more likely to play an important role than in the more spectacular 'conversion' cases. And there are intermediate cases which are more deeply rooted in one's enduring traits of character than a mere factual belief but can nonetheless be given up without a total conversion: some forms of sexism may perhaps be described that way. We may even embark on a particular critique in order to reaffirm or illuminate our own political commitments rather than to change someone's opinion. But it is my central contention that none of these instances must always and everywhere depend on factual information or logical norms.

MORAL PICTURES

Proponents of the false consciousness model could reply that my line of argumentation only reasserts a dubious distinction between fact and value. But nothing said thus far rules out the possibility that moral evaluation could sometimes mainly depend on the truth or falsehood of a belief, and to that extent I do not claim that questions of fact are always irrelevant to, or independent from, questions of value. There need not be a sharp demarcation between factual and normative matters, but this does not mean that the distinction is entirely without value. My point is that the practice of ideology critique does not necessarily rest on judgements of truth and falsehood; even when it does, it is precisely as a moral matter that the falsehood of a belief interests the critical theorist. False consciousness theorists could nonetheless reply that there is a compelling account of what morality is which emphasizes questions of truth and falsehood. The assessment of evidence is arguably more central to the enterprise of morality than I have allowed for. To describe ideology critique as a moral enterprise is compatible with the assertion that ideology critique rests on the assessment of factual evidence. The account I have in mind here circumscribes the moral domain in terms of the concept of action, narrowly understood as the domain of rational deliberation and choice. Morality would therefore involve patterns of decision-making that involve the application of general norms and principles to particular circumstances. Those norms and principles may be said to guide action, in the sense that they help us choose an appropriate goal in the light of our beliefs about the situation at hand. Morality would consist in finding the proper way to hook general principles up with the concrete facts of a particular situation. This view would therefore assign the procedures of rationally assessing factual information a central role in the moral domain. For example: given the hypothetical principle that sentient beings

should not be harmed, and given a definition of what counts as sentience, then the question of whether a camel should or should not be harmed would partly depend on whether there are general facts about camels which fit the general description of a sentient being. From this standpoint, which may be termed the 'principles-facts' account, it is arguably misleading to sharply separate fact and value. If I understand him correctly, Noël Carroll sometimes seems to endorse a similar model, although it is by no means clear whether he upholds the principles-facts account as a general description of what morality is or simply as one possible type of moral deliberation.[12]

In any case, I would suggest that, in so far as the principles-facts account makes ethical practice a function of logical deliberation, it is reductive as a general description of what morality is, for reasons which Cora Diamond has persuasively outlined. Patterns of moral conduct are not always based on deliberation and choice, or on the concrete application of general rules and principles. To overemphasize the relationship between abstract norms and the activity of deciding what to do is to produce an impoverished account of morality.[13] Moral visions can also inform, for instance, the way one smiles or refrains from smiling, the differences between one's public and private behaviour, or the way one relates to and moves about the spaces one inhabits. What counts in such instances is not necessarily how a general norm helps us decide between alternative courses of action in the light of factual information, but how a vision of the good is expressed in the texture of our conduct. I am using the phrase 'texture of our conduct' to include not only patterns of rational decision-making, but also habits and gestures, styles of thinking and feeling, turns of speech, conceptions of aesthetic order or beauty or pleasure, patterns of theatre-going, as well as conceptions of costume, architecture, and food—all those enduring traits of culture and/or character, those ways of acting and living that manifest underlying attitudes towards the world, towards ourselves, and towards others. The point is also the emotional and imaginative quality, the richness and sincerity and complexity, the overall tonality and creativity, of one's moral work and one's enduring traits of character: the manner in which we, for instance, listen to the concerns and values of others, or attend to the subtle nuances of a particular situation, or respond to complicated shifts in our own passions.

In a similar vein, contemporary philosophers working within an Aristotelian understanding of virtue, such as for instance Martha Nussbaum and Nancy Sherman, have emphasized the capacity for 'discernment' or 'ethical perception' as a key component of moral conduct.[14] Discernment takes place before or alongside action. The term describes our quality of attention and response to the particular features of a situation. As Sherman glosses it: 'Discerning the morally salient features of a situation is part of expressing virtue and part of the morally appropriate response . . . In this sense,

character is expressed in what one *sees* as much as in what one *does*.'[15] And Nussbaum notes that moral insight 'is not simply intellectual grasp of propositions; it is not even simply intellectual grasp of particular facts; it is perception. It is seeing a complex, concrete reality . . . with imagination and feeling.'[16] Discernment is an important aspect of morality, which goes beyond the mere application of general rules or the assessment of propositions.

I propose to use the expression 'moral pictures' as a term of art to refer to the underlying configurations of moral thought, perception, and feeling expressed in our actions. The expression is meant to highlight the extent to which morality is (1) not necessarily a rule-dependent domain but also a matter of practical discernment and responsiveness, and (2) not necessarily the product of conscious reflection but also of enduring traits of character. Of course, it *is* possible to devise general maxims to cover everyday attitudes, something like 'do not be arrogant when giving moral advice' or 'always try to understand how others feel about things before judging them', but our ordinary concept of morality does not require the application of such abstract principles or general rules to particular cases. We can of course always organize our moral commitments into a comprehensive doctrine in order to, for instance, explain their import to someone from another culture or to a young person from our own, or to attain a clearer sense of what matters most in our own life, or to clarify the moral stakes of a particularly painful dilemma, or to see whether our spontaneous patterns of conduct are undesirable and for that reason worth changing. But the ability explicitly to formulate and apply rules derived from abstract principles does not exhaust the entire field of moral practices. Morality is not simply a matter of applying general norms to particular circumstances. It also includes the capacity to express, in the enduring fabric of our conduct, a sense of what is valuable. And this practice need not be governed by, or subject to, either explicit rules or tacit presuppositions. What I am suggesting is that, rather than factual beliefs, the concept of ideology often designates the styles of perception and feeling that come together as moral pictures.

Ideologies are distinct configurations of moral thoughts, emotions, and practices that play a part in a situation of domination. Loosely speaking, domination occurs whenever an agent or group of agents place another group in a subordinate or marginal position, the most common form being the imposition of restrictions on access to resources or opportunities. Domination in the relevant sense is often institutionalized, by which I mean that it is systematically sustained by the rules or practices of a community or organization, as in laws denying women the right to vote. In using the term 'domination' as opposed to a more neutral word like, say, 'authority', I am of course also suggesting that this form of power is in some sense moral

unjustifiable. Certain controls over infants, for instance, are perhaps justified exercises of power. A central aim of ideology critique therefore consists in assessing the legitimacy of a practice of subordination. Some, but only some, moral pictures sustain one's adherence to patterns of unwarranted domination. The conviction that women are too emotional or irrational to participate in political activities, and should therefore be legally prevented from voting, fulfils the main criteria of ideology. The belief supplies a background of thoughts and emotions in relation to which it makes sense to commit oneself to an institution or set of institutions that unjustifiably subordinates a group of people.

MORAL REASONS

An important consequence of the framework I am proposing contends that moral discussions are not necessarily settled by appealing to any grounds of independent assessment, such as facts about reality. There is no neutral way of adjudicating between different moral standpoints: whenever one criticizes a moral picture, one does so from the perspective of an alternative moral claim, of another way of seeing and living in the world. This conclusion of course has important consequences for critical theory. In adopting a set of political commitments, left-wing critics do not proceed on the basis of value-free empirical facts any more than their conservative opponents. The difference between the left and the right is often one of moral commitment rather than access to more information. Whenever one argues that, say, conservative criticisms of the welfare state are contemptible, narrow-minded, and harmful, one proceeds from a (socialist or liberal) moral standpoint rather than from neutral evidence. The evaluation of a moral position is itself a moral activity.

This conclusion, however, seems to deprive ideology critique of its rational force. If moral convictions do not necessarily follow from information about reality, and if, more generally, our political commitments do not completely depend on rational considerations, then there can be no neutral way of adjudicating between different moral standpoints. Someone may hold the same factual information that we do while nonetheless choosing to act differently, not out of ignorance but on the basis of an alternative set of convictions and concerns. Is there no cogent way to offer objective arguments for or against a particular set of political convictions? As Carroll has rightly noted, the concept of ideology has a 'pejorative force. Ordinarily we do not want our ideas and our thinking corrupted by ideology.'[17] In order to explicate the concept of ideology, it is important to specify precisely according to what critical standards any given belief should be evaluated and criticized, and to provide concrete illustrations of ideology at work in

the cinema. Having stipulated that ideologies should be rationally criticizable, Carroll himself goes on to argue that to criticize them is to falsify them. Refusing to make political disagreements non-rational, he rightly wants to hold on to the view that critical theory is a matter of considered reflection. There are, then, very good reasons why he stipulates that ideologies must be false beliefs.

My argument contends that political beliefs are characteristically rooted in ways of life which are not everywhere bound by reasons: but it does not follow that reasons play absolutely no part in our lives, or that political disagreements are in every respect unreasonable. I do argue that reasons do not mainly consist of facts, but this does not mean that no reason of any kind whatsoever can be meaningfully given in defence of a political belief. To criticize, say, corporate capitalism is not to express an arbitrary opinion, but to put forth a strong conviction which one takes to be right. Commitments advance the moral claim that certain responses, certain ways of thinking and acting and feeling, are appropriate to particular situations: that, say, outrage and political activism are in some sense desirable responses to racial segregation or economic exploitation. This claim can sometimes include factual information. My sympathy towards a capitalist whose property has been seized by a new revolutionary government is likely to change if I acquire information about his prior exploitation of workers. But facts do not always function as inductive evidence in the usual sense; they are often exemplars of a way of seeing and living. In alerting a bigot to the suffering that racial segregation has brought about, for instance, one may use figures, dates, and other historical data, but the point is the emotional attitude embedded in the presentation of those facts, the effort to bring the other person to see the moral outrage that is racism. The information may illustrate the suffering brought about by segregation, and the moral concern, anger, and activism that should follow from the acknowledgement of that suffering. Instead of furnishing information, these facts help to guide one's way into a particular apprehension of our predicament as social beings, bringing out a distinct way of responding to states of affairs. In the context of moral controversy, evidence is often used to illustrate a certain conception of what it means to be human, of the proper ways to regard and interact with others, of the nature of ethical dilemmas, of the place that moral values occupy or ought to occupy in our life and tradition, and so forth. In arguing that moral pictures are not mainly comprised of factual claims, then, I do not mean to suggest that they are for that reason not rationally criticizable. It is possible to bring out, say, the emotional deficiencies of a person's beliefs without appealing to criteria of falsehood: one may point to her apathy, detachment, rigidity, narcissism, love of power, or insensitivity to the suffering of others.

Narrative fiction can itself criticize an ideology by presenting an alterna-

tive moral picture, a different set of feelings and attitudes. Consider, for instance, film historian Charles Musser's description of *The Pawnshop* (Charles Chaplin, 1915). Chaplin's actions throughout the film 'undermine work as productive labor' by either destroying tools of labour or transforming them into objects of play: 'Cleaning the balls from the pawnshop symbol, he bounces them off the head of his co-worker; and when he sweeps, he sweeps a piece of string into a straight line and walks on it as if it were a tightrope.'[18] The film consistently reduces wage labour to an object of anger, violence, contempt, or ridicule and, in so doing, represents those emotional responses as singularly appropriate to the suffocating, oppressive conditions of everyday menial work. A moral picture is here expressed by the emotional texture of fictional situations, by the ways in which the viewer is invited to react with liberating laughter at Chaplin's revolt against wage labour. The behaviour of the tramp passes a moral judgement on a social practice. Of course, it is possible to reconstruct this judgement as an assertion, something like 'Wage labour is suffocating,' and it may perhaps be sometimes valuable to put things this way, but such a paraphrase simply fails to capture what is distinctive, indeed powerful, about the vision embodied in the film: its playful, anarchic disregard for social rules and the barely contained anger that it projects. *The Pawnshop* rules out any complacent idealization of the predicament of a worker while mocking the suffocating discipline of wage labour. Chaplin's film exemplifies the fact that, precisely because there is a way of using the imagination to criticize the emotional underpinnings of a political or social belief, narrative fiction can unfold a practice of ideology critique. There is an important use of story-telling that makes a contribution to the enterprise of critical philosophy. *Drugstore Cowboy* (Gus Van Sant, 1988), for instance, criticizes the repugnance shown by many right-wing politicians towards drugs by sympathetically showing the painful experiences that may foster or sustain addiction. The film-makers tend to view the story from the perspective of a group of addicts themselves. Narrative fiction here provides a paradigm of a mode of looking at a particular predicament from the standpoint of a participant rather than a detached observer, and it is here that its critical import lies.

A narrative film can criticize an ideology by expressing a paradigm of discernment that runs counter to dominant forms of representation. *Jeanne Dielman, 23 Quai du Commerce* (Chantal Ackerman, 1975), for instance, is a critical feminist film that redeems certain daily experiences normally excluded or denigrated in a patriarchal culture. The plot records in meticulous detail the obsessively repetitious daily routines (shopping, cleaning, cooking, and so on) of a middle-aged woman. This narrative to my mind incorporates a moral aim, that of bringing the viewer to attend carefully to an individual woman's everyday experience. The repetition of similar events

throughout the film, the confinement of the story to a few, often claustrophobic, middle-class locations, the careful observation of the woman's mounting desperation and anxiety with a static camera and long takes, all evoke a sense of time and place at once hopeless and suffocating. The formal composition of the film is governed by a moral aim respectfully to represent a woman's quotidian experiences, precisely those which are seldom shown in commercial cinema, as worthy of careful, loving attention in their own right. Once again, these aspects could be summarized into straightforward assertions and maxims, something like 'ordinary housewives lead a monotonous, confined life' or 'we ought to respect and acknowledge her efforts to create her own space', but this sort of paraphrase of course leaves out precisely the texture of the experience of viewing the film: not only the sheer tenacity of the protagonist's daily efforts to stake out a space of her own in such dreary circumstances, but also the film-maker's careful, loving attention to these efforts. In this context, the most valuable contribution of a critic is precisely the willingness to describe the quality of attention, the point of view, conveyed by the formal structure of narrative fiction. Narrative fictions can project configurations of human conduct, thought, and feeling that come together as distinct ways of living.[19]

In his recent work on the political implications of the cinema, Carroll has refined his concept of ideology, bringing it closer to the alternative framework I am here proposing. Following Ronald de Sousa, Carroll draws our attention to the presence of 'paradigm scenarios' embodied in the stories people create, disseminate, and consume. The force of these scenarios lies in the ways objects and situations are depicted in connection to sets of emotions.[20] Stories provide paradigms of ways of feeling, and it is the ongoing encounter with such scenarios that helps to shape our emotional attitudes. In this context, a film may reinforce, refine, or challenge the dominant paradigm scenarios of a culture. Carroll's main focus is the representation of women and the ways in which, for instance, they are depicted in accordance with a very narrow range of images: the dichotomy of virgin and whore is an obvious illustration. Carroll now contends that, in addition to propositional beliefs held assertively, ideologies may also include emotional attitudes as well as non-propositional categorial frameworks, 'ways of carving up phenomena'.[21] What is important to recognize is that ideologies do not refer exclusively to beliefs, but also to ways of feeling, acting, and seeing.[22] In Carroll's refined definition, ideologies are either false or, *in some sense*, epistemically defective (misleading, ambiguous, or otherwise unwarranted) ideas or frameworks that uphold a system or practice of social domination. I am prepared to accept this formulation, provided that the expression 'epistemically defective' be broadly construed in moral epistemological terms. Whereas epistemology in a narrow sense studies the conditions or procedures for the justification of factual statements and

beliefs; moral epistemology studies the justifiability of normative statements and patterns of conduct. It addresses itself to such questions as: can moral beliefs be true or false? And, if not, does it make sense to justify or criticize them? Broadly speaking, then, a belief is epistemically defective if it can be shown to be *in some sense* unjustified. Throughout this chapter, I will continue to use the term 'unjustifiable' rather than 'epistemically defective' to avoid the impression that ideology critique need always involve the assessment of factual information.[23]

AN EXAMPLE

John Millius's *The Wind and the Lion* (1975) strikingly shows how an individual film can express an interlocking network of morally undesirable social pictures, including not only explicit thematic messages but also ways of feeling and acting embedded in the choice of narrative genre. Before turning to this example, however, it is worth emphasizing that my overall account of ideology does not privilege textual analysis over reception studies. It is to my mind legitimate to discuss an individual film as the product of an author, or a group of film-makers, or as the product of a social context, or as a combination of those factors. But it is also illuminating to consider the ways in which different viewers consume or use films in everyday reception situations. My broad approach is indifferent to the ongoing debates between text-centred and audience-centred film scholars. I would only suggest that the matter is best approached on a case-by-case basis. In some instances, ethnographic research at the reception end may be far more illuminating than textual interpretations. John Champagne has called our attention to an important example. Gay porn parlours where viewers characteristically engage in various sexual practices during screenings obviously invite a more ethnographic approach: after all, the films themselves, which few people actually watch, are only a pretext for a wider field of activities.[24] In most instances, however, I would conjecture that both text-centred activities and reception research can fruitfully complete and illuminate one another. At any rate, the following example should be taken as a modest illustration of the aims and concerns of critical theory rather than a defence of the practice of textual analysis. For reasons of space, my analysis will not be a comprehensive one.

The plot of *The Wind and the Lion* follows an episode of US military intervention in what is now often called the 'Third World': the ambivalent struggle and mutual admiration between President Theodore Roosevelt and Moroccan rebel fighter Raisuli. Millius's main achievement as a film-maker consists in building a convincing and compelling relationship between two historical figures who never actually meet. Separated by the Atlantic Ocean,

they only hear about each other's great deeds. The interconnection of their lives despite their vast geographical distance of course marks them as players within an encompassing global political environment of colonial intervention and resistance. Characters in the film often compare this military intervention with other instances of US expansion, particularly the Panama Canal, thus depicting the Moroccan conflict as a particular example of the broader aims and interests of US expansionism. Made in the shadow of the Vietnam war, *The Wind and the Lion* endeavours to justify the military subjugation of Third World nations at a time when that subjugation was being increasingly contested both inside and outside the USA. The film-maker's aim can be reconstructed as a solution to the following problem: how to rationalize the military violence that underpins foreign intervention. The film realizes this aim by depicting modern history as an enterprise carried out by great men who stand out from the mediocre crowd by virtue of their courage, honour, foresight, audacity, virility, and even a touch of madness. Roosevelt himself suggests that the price of individual greatness is loneliness: 'The road traveled by great men is dark and lonely, and lit only at intervals by other great men.' The superhuman dimension of both Roosevelt and his enemy Raisuli is underscored by heroic situations (bear hunting, riding, slaying enemies, executing daring escapes) that bring out the dauntless strength and unshrinking impetuousness of both protagonists. Great men are those who, in Roosevelt's words, recognize that 'nothing in this world is certain' and squarely face this existential predicament by risking their own lives. Only by overcoming all fear about the future can human beings realize their full potential as human beings and thus stand out from the quietly mediocre, docile existence of the crowd who remain timidly apprehensive of anything different or new. This self-realization can only be achieved through action and struggle, because it is only in battle that human beings can continually test themselves by risking everything they have.

The Wind and the Lion therefore describes the individual's capacity for self-perfection through violence as the fundamental moving force in international politics. The film justifies the violence of modern colonialism by inviting the viewer to see foreign policy in terms of a warrior ethic, as an arena for the self-realization of great men. This picture underpins a form of Social Darwinism according to which might makes right because victory testifies to the valour, fortitude, and intelligence of the victor. Millius defends this approach by invoking and idealizing certain historical facts, such as Roosevelt's 'big stick' doctrine, his hunting trips and love of the wilderness, and his well-known espousal of a Social Darwinist outlook. One of the film's most sympathetic American characters, the brash and impetuous captain Jerome, vehemently defends the value of military intervention by quoting Roosevelt's dictum: 'We are the greatest power, we carry the

biggest stick . . . we must seize the [Moroccan] government at bayonet point.' Military interventionism in northern Africa is therefore depicted as a test of the evolutionary superiority of some nations and national heroes over others. Whereas Moroccan society has remained static, trapped in an unchanging way of life, the United States embodies the vigour, majesty, and dynamism of historical progress. In pop existentialist terms, American culture is not; it becomes. In the film's coda, a respectful letter written by the defeated Raisuli to his victorious doppelgänger Roosevelt describes the American struggle against Morocco as a struggle between history and stasis: 'You are like the wind, and I like the lion. You form the tempest, the sand stings my eyes, and the ground is parched. I roar in defiance but you do not hear. But between us there is a difference. I, like the lion, must remain in my place. You, like the wind, will never know yours.' John Millius uses narrative fiction as a pattern of argument for an entire way of living that exalts imperial intervention by depicting it as an evolutionary test of epic courage wherein the forces of modern history must inevitably destroy the anachronistic remnants of traditional culture.

The confrontation between Raisuli's 'primitive' desert forces and Roosevelt's modern military technology foreshadows the struggle between native American warriors and the US cavalry in the later western *Geronimo* (1992, Walter Hill), also scripted by Millius. The film-maker's use of extreme long shots of the vast, arid Moroccan landscapes throughout *The Wind and the Lion* recalls the generic iconography of the American western, described by Robert Stam and Ella Shohat as a 'dry, desert terrain [that] furnishes an empty stage for the play of expansionist fantasies'.[25] Millius mobilizes a tradition of American painterly images, exemplified by Frances Palmer, which connects the national identity with a sense of landscape, rooted in the epic adventure of westward expansion.[26] The film depicts military intervention in the 'Third World' in terms of the conquest of the West, mobilizing one of the most insistent political tropes of American political culture: the violent domination of virgin or primitive land by hunters and Indian fighters. In a famous phrase not quoted in Millius's film, Roosevelt had praised the 'iron in the blood of our fathers' which had domesticated the frontier and brought America to a dominant position in the international arena.[27] Narcissistically projecting the iconography of the American West onto the oriental world of north Africa, *The Wind and the Lion* regards imperialism as an expression of the epic competitiveness and expansionism putatively characteristic of the national soul. In the film, Roosevelt uses natural metaphors to describe the national character: 'The American grizzly bear is a symbol of the American character: strength, intelligence, ferocity—a little blind and reckless at times, but courageous beyond all doubt. Another trait [is] loneliness. . . . The world will never love us. For we have too much audacity, and we are a little blind and reckless at

times.' It is obvious that Roosevelt's assertions do not mainly convey factual information but rather bring out a picture of foreign policy that idealizes the putative audacity and strength of his nation. The ideological work of the film consists precisely in this idealization. *The Wind and the Lion* therefore presents a kinder vision of imperialism that justifies US foreign policy without dehumanizing its opponents. Millius wants to show respect and admiration for the struggles of Third World liberation movements, while proving that such respect is compatible with an ongoing commitment to First World military intervention. Moroccan rebels do have a grandly epic charm, but they must give way to the (American-dominated) forces of historical evolution.

The ideological aim of the film is embedded in the narrative structure. The plot opens with the kidnapping of US citizen Eden Pedicaris and her children by Raisuli. Eden's relationship to her captor evolves from initial hostility and distrust to wholehearted admiration for his unflinching virile courage. This love is shared by her children, who gradually begin to wear bedouin clothing and praise Raisuli's dauntless boldness. Having destroyed the sheltered, edenic tranquillity of their mansion, Raisuli becomes the children's ideal, heroic father, introducing them to the more fulfilling world of violent struggle. In contrast to this masculine epic world, the mother is associated with the pastoral seclusion of her domestic space: her name, Eden, obviously suggests an idyllic withdrawal from history, which in the film means the world of epic combat, a restful paradise which Raisuli destroys with masculine vigour. It had to be destroyed, of course, because it was deeply confining, cutting her children and her own self off from the possibility of risk and adventure. Raisuli's mission is precisely to educate the family into the violent, competitive ethos that alone makes life worth living. At the same time, the film retains a refreshingly comic attitude towards Raisuli's lovable, and at times charmingly naive, bravado, allowing Eden and her children occasionally to laugh at him without, however, undermining his overall heroic stature. Using slow-motion images, point-of-view shots, and majestically slow dollies, Millius persuasively renders the way the children see and admire their hero. *The Wind and the Lion* vividly recreates the texture of youthful tales of exotic adventures, a world reminiscent of novels by Emilio Salgari and Karl May, suggesting that, in order to achieve our full potential as human beings, we need a certain openness to the sense of wonder and amazement expressed in children's fantasies about wilderness adventures. In those fantasies is expressed a general refusal to dry up in a mediocre existence, an existence without risk and without value. What the film gives us is not only a set of ideas but also a certain way of looking at the men who make history from a child's point of view, an attitude that idealizes the capacity to face tremendous odds with determined self-confidence.

Broadly speaking, then, the ideological aim of *The Wind and the Lion* is to bring the viewer to see history as a heroic arena where adventurous characters realize their full human potential by boldly putting their lives on the line. The film defends a social picture according to which history is made by great patriarchs who, having overcome the widespread human fear of uncertainty and risk, undertake impetuously virile and dangerous actions. Greatness means strength, boldness, and nobility, which are said to be the underlying motives of US military intervention and, more generally, the fundamental traits of the national character. Particularly important here is the connection between American nationalism and a certain vision of the landscape rooted in the generic iconography of the Western and orientalist fantasies of north Africa as a backdrop of imperial adventure. It is certainly possible to argue that the film's depiction of Moroccan history is factually inaccurate, but this line of argument to my mind misses what is distinctive about the film-maker's ideological intent. Millius invites us to see colonial history in terms of a moral picture that endeavours to legitimize his country's foreign policy by idealizing military conquest as the expression of an existential confrontation with risk and death. This picture, which mobilizes a broad repertoire of orientalizing images, many of them derived from the conquest of the American frontier and from the iconography of colonial adventure, systematically overlooks the patterns of systematic exploitation and abuse imposed on colonized peoples, as well as the economic institutions and interests that encourage and subsidize military expansion.

THE AIMS OF CRITICAL FILM THEORY

This description of *The Wind and the Lion* is meant to illuminate what I take to be the main goals and concerns of critical theory. A critic of ideology brings out the pictures that undergird a certain pattern of social and political commitment, so as to reveal something morally undesirable about those pictures and that commitment. I am arguing that, whenever critical theorists describe a particular film or set of films, or a practice of film exhibition and distribution, as ideological, they characteristically proceed by reconstructing the social pictures that govern or undergird those patterns of film-making or exhibition or distribution in order to show how these pictures underpin such morally undesirable patterns of institutionalized domination as colonial conquest.

Having outlined the main features of ideology, and illustrated them with a cinematic example, it is now important to recognize that my account has a modest aim: to provide a clear description of a practice with which we are already familiar. I only claim to survey the distinctive concerns and

strategies that already animate the enterprise of critical theory as it is practised by many film scholars. My goal is to reconstruct what critical theorists are already doing, in such a way as to clearly map out their goals and protocols. I do not, of course, claim that critics of ideology would always agree with my description of their own work. What critical film scholars believe they are doing need not correspond to what they are actually doing. It is conceivable for theorists to give erroneous or one-dimensional accounts of their own practices, in the same way that, say, a linguist who is perfectly capable of forming intelligible sentences could nonetheless produce a misleading theory of what it is to make meaning. One reason to command an overview of the goals and protocols of ideology critique is precisely because critical theorists themselves sometimes give confused accounts of their own practices. One of the most widespread confusions is the extension of a legitimate insight beyond the proper scope of its application. Because a felicitous formulation illuminates a wide range of social or cultural practices, theorists can be seduced into believing that it covers all possible practices, as in the Althusserian claim that subjectivity is everywhere ideological because it involves processes of narcissistic projection and identification.

In order to show the accuracy of my account, I now conclude by describing two familiar examples of ideology critique from the closely connected fields of film studies and mass communication theory. I will not contend that these authors are correct in drawing the conclusions that they draw (although I believe that for the most part they are) but, rather, that the framework I have outlined faithfully captures their core aims and interests. The point of the following remarks is to show that my approach accurately describes the distinctive concerns and procedures of critical film theory.

Mary Ann Doane has suggested that many Hollywood melodramas picture women as pathological, as prone to hysteria or narcissism or frigidity and thus in need of a male psychiatrist who subjects them to forms of clinical observation, classification, diagnosis, and cure. This picture, expressed in films like *The Lady in the Dark* (Mitchell Leisen, 1944), *Now Voyager* (Irving Rapper, 1942), or *The Snake Pit* (Anatole Litvak, 1948), depicts women as subject to forms of scientific control and supervision. Moreover, the women's psychological deficiency in those films often manifests itself in a pathological inability to care for their own appearance; they often look overweight, unkempt, and dirty, so that '[the]"cure" consists precisely in the beautification of body/face'.[28] What is diagnosed in the patients is, in other words, their failure to fulfil rules of feminine behaviour; these rules demand that the woman should model her conduct on the expectations and desires of the men around her. By thus describing the pictures underpinning a group of Hollywood films, Doane also undermines the rationale behind those films, in that the putative representation of a

medical or scientific cure is shown to be part of a situation of institutionalized domination.

My second example is derived from the work of John Berger, and Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, who have traced the role of glamour in both mass media advertising and the Hollywood star system. 'The state of being envied', writes John Berger, 'is what constitutes glamour.'[29] According to this analysis, many Hollywood films and mass media advertisements rely on stars and models who are depicted as possessing intensely enviable attributes. Glamour projects a social picture, a way of seeing and responding to the world, wherein happiness depends on the judgements of others, on the acquisition of idealized qualities that others would also desire for themselves. In the rhetoric of advertising, the goal of being envied requires that persons transform themselves by buying particular products, thus partaking of what Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen call 'consumption as a way of life'.[30] This social picture underpins and purports to justify a style of conduct that requires the mass production of consumption goods, and it does so by defining self-improvement in relation to the desires and expectations of others, thus encouraging a diminished, impoverished sense of personal autonomy.

Doane, Berger, and Ewen and Ewen share a common set of goals, concerns, and protocols. They characteristically describe a certain way of life as expressing or defending a social picture designed to justify such forms of institutionalized domination as patriarchy and capitalism, which justification is in some sense false or morally undesirable. A critic of ideology rearranges the way we think of a particular activity, or set of activities, by forcing us to confront aspects of our pictures that had been previously overlooked or underplayed. What critical theory invites us to consider is the extent to which a picture involves erroneous or unjustifiable rules of institutionalized domination. The enterprise of ideology critique in the field of cinema studies is a moral practice underlain by an interest in clarifying and evaluating the desirability of our social commitments and beliefs. By challenging the legitimacy of particular styles of conduct and imagination, critical film scholarship addresses itself to our moral awareness. In this way, theory becomes an ethical practice that shakes us from our complacency and encourages a fresh apprehension of familiar social phenomena.[31]

NOTES

1. Richard W. Miller, *Analyzing Marx: Morality, Power and History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 46.

2. Noel Carroll, *Mystifying Movies: Fads and Fallacies in Contemporary Film Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 73.
3. Terry Lovell, *Pictures of Reality* (London: British Film Institute, 1980), 31.
4. Noam Chomsky, 'Rollback, Part I: the Recent Elections, the State of the Nation', *Z Magazine* 8: 1 (1995), 24.
5. Cf. Cora Diamond's excellent *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 310.
6. Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1989), 67.
7. A proponent of this view is Richard Allen in his otherwise excellent work *Projecting Illusion: Film Spectatorship and the Impression of Reality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 15.
8. I am only advancing a local point about a few examples of ideological assertions. I am not advancing an argument about language use in general. My point is therefore not that making meaning is necessarily a social activity.
9. Pierre Bordieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 155–6. See also, Pierre Bordieu, *In Other Words*, trans. Matthew Adanson (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), 112.
10. Note, however, that it is not impossible in principle, although it may be very difficult in practice, for people who uphold different convictions to find common ground and communicate intelligibly about topics of shared concern. Nothing said here leads to the conclusion that different moral standpoints are always and everywhere incommensurable.
11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press), 54.
12. Noël Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 123.
13. Diamond, *The Realistic Spirit*, 373–6.
14. See the essays collected in Martha Craven Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 148–67. More recently, Nancy Sherman has outlined a similar argument in *The Fabric of Character: Aristotle's Theory of Virtue* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 3–4, 28–55.
15. Sherman, *The Fabric of Character*, 4–5.
16. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 152.
17. Carroll, *Mystifying Movies*, 73.
18. Charles Musser, 'Work, Ideology, and Chaplin's Tramp', *Radical History Review*, 41 (1988), 50.
19. See for instance A. R. Louch, *Explanation and Human Action* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), 103.
20. Carroll, *Theorizing the Moving Image*, 268.
21. Ibid. 279.
22. To speak of categorial frameworks can nonetheless lead to the misleading conclusion that the meaning of a belief can be grasped independently of the circumstances of its use by an individual or a group of individuals. This is a minor point which, in any case, Carroll is probably willing to concede.
23. Now, I am not sure that I would wholeheartedly subscribe to the cognitivist assumptions of Carroll's approach. He argues (ibid. 268) that paradigm scenarios make it possible for us to 'gestalt' particular situations: 'Given a situation, an enculturated individual attempts, generally intuitively, to fit a paradigm scenario from her repertoire to it.' But, in any case, Carroll has modified his original model in a promising direction. He now admits that emotions can play a central role in ideological thinking. For an important implication of this is that ideologies can be criticized for their emotional deficiencies rather than their epistemic shortcomings.

24. John Champagne, 'Disciplining the (Academic) Body: Film Studies, Close Analysis, and Pornography,' paper delivered at the Seventeenth Annual Ohio University Film Conference, Nov. 1995.
25. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routlege, 1994), 116.
26. For a succinct and informative discussion of the nationalistic uses of landscape, see Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), 174–99.
27. Quoted in Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan: The Movie, and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 188.
28. Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940's*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 41.
29. John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), 131.
30. Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1982), 24.
31. Cf. John Wisdom, *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969).