

Interests, Interpretation and Dialogue On Renewing the Critique of Ideology

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Michael Morris' *Knowledge and Ideology: The Epistemology of Social and Political Critique* presents us with the ambitious and well-argued project of renewing the critique of ideology on the grounds of a radically contextualized conception of thought and interests. (Morris 2016) In my discussion, I will first briefly sketch the specific profile of this post-rationalist and post-functionalist critique of ideology (1), suggest then that we need to articulate the epistemic dimension more clearly hermeneutically to avoid a functionalist reductionism (2), argue that we should reformulate the critique of functionalism to save a Foucauldian critique of power (3), and finally retrace Habermas' paradigm shift from a Neo-Marxian to a communicative approach to show why the dialogical reconstruction of meaning and power should be part of any critique of ideology (4).

1. Morris' Project of a Situated Critique of Ideology

Morris develops the two core thoughts of his project of a renewal of ideology critique through a Marxian and through a Hegelian strand. The Marxian strand of his thought aims *to radically situate social thought in existential class situations*. The goal is to reconstruct such thought as the always sublimated, therefore essentially (more or less) distorted conceptual grasp of situated interests. Social thought thus becomes coextensive with a *generalized* concept of ideology, while ideology *critique (!)* should still be possible. Its aims, however, have shifted, as "this criticism now seeks to discern the sublimated and distorted forms that social aims and their attendant categories take when they enter into conscious thought." (Morris 2016, 182) Accordingly, ideology critique morphs into a situated yet reflexive adjudication of the social understanding that agents develop vis-à-vis their aims and desires which derive from and are shaped by objective social situations.

The radical situatedness of all thought nevertheless enables an 'epistemic' mode of ideology critique insofar as it allows a reflexive reconstruction, a form of collective psycho- or social-analysis which reveals the hidden under-

lying aims and desires:

“This theory of epistemic ideology critique assumes that cognitive reflection generally emerges from the partial frustration of a social practice. ... further ... that the purposes, materials, and contexts of a given social practice tend to enter consciousness in a sublimated form. Finally, ... that a contextualized form of socioanalysis may serve to illuminate the true nature of our partially thwarted aims and the obstacles they face.” (Morris 2016, 180)

Morris thus sees social thought, following Marx, as emerging from structured social contexts, which entails that the cognitive grasp of its ‘true nature of our aims and desires’ is generally distorted. Yet while ideology is distorting and misleading, it is also inevitable by establishing the hidden truths of social reality: “Without some form of ideology, the sociohistorical world presents us with an infinite and unstructured manifold. Ideology may distort and misshape this manifold, but these distortions help reveal the true structures we would otherwise miss.” (Morris 2016, 181)¹

The Hegelian strand of Morris’ thought focuses on *the overcoming of the abstract opposition between theoretical thought and normative practical interests*. Since “epistemology always emerges from reflection upon existing cognitive practices, which themselves involve an inherent fusion of descriptive and normative dimensions... in describing thought, we must always articulate the norms that it [human thought] strives to instantiate.” (Morris 2016, 181). The latter point is highlighted by the fighting slogan of Morris’ work, which challenges the deeply entrenched division between a normative epistemology and a descriptive or ‘explanatory’ social science: “The traditionally sharp distinction between the normative task of epistemology and the purely descriptive task of sociology is itself untenable.” (Morris 2016, 182)

Ideology is *social thought and as such* entails a *cognitive* dimension since it consists in the existential *self-understanding* of one’s own condition. There is thus an irreducibly *epistemic* dimension in any social thought. But as Morris rightly claims, social thought furthermore entails in its ‘ideological’ crystallizations a normative projection, expressing potentially an inverted utopian vision of how one may imagine one’s social situation, and in light of which values or norms it could or should be transformed and potentially overcome.

We may now assume that the following basic assumptions are constitutive of a critique of ideology:

- (a) Social thought is contextually defined to the extent that certain class conditions define and distort the adequate grasp of these very same conditions
- (b) There is some epistemic position from which to adequately reconstruct and normatively critique the formation of social thought in light of its expressed interests and desires
- (c) We aim to transcend the current status quo and transform social and cultural conditions in light of some more or less explicit normative conception of reality based on a truer grasp of desires and interests

The unique challenge that Michael Morris' project entails is that he wants to give up any philosophical (transcendental, universal, purely cognitive) grounding or justification of the critic's epistemic standards, and yet retain ideology critique as an epistemic and normative project. Morris rejects the philosophical approach to develop transcendental or universal criteria of rationality, but also wants to avoid the functionalist reduction of thought as a mere mirror image to existing social conditions. Morris sets out to criticize and overcome both the "traditional conception of epistemology" and the "functionalist critique of ideology." He wants to arrive at a third position, defined by a Neo-Hegelian social ontology for which the division between interests and knowledge is no longer an issue: "the neo-Hegelian tradition construes the constitution of the object as the practical formation of the object itself." (Morris 2016, 57, 281) Morris consequently rejects both the need for a specific or 'transcendental' grounding of epistemic criteria, and the functionalist reduction of all knowledge to social conditions. For Morris, knowledge needs no rational grounding, but is still supposed to be epistemic in nature, and as such cannot be reduced to a merely functional alignment of thought and class. This new post-transcendental and post-reductionist ideology critique contents itself with the situated and self-reflexive adjudication of interpretations and desires.

The question is whether such a radically situated 'critique' captures the cognitive entailments as well as the critical potentials of the (however revised) critique of ideology. I argue that despite the appealing overcoming of stale oppositions (pure thought versus social interests; normative aims versus mere description), Morris ultimately undertheorizes and under-evaluates the relative autonomy of reflexive and discursive thought and complementarily the force of a social-theoretical power analysis. Regarding the rejection of any explication of rationality assumptions, I argue that the hermeneutic precondition of epistemic access to the meaning (or self-understanding) of the

agents involves an implicit reference to truth and rationality (2). Regarding the promise of analyzing the impact of social power on discursive practices or ‘ideologies,’ I argue that we should reconstruct Foucault’s project instead of merely deconstructing it (3). The learning process of Habermas’ who moved from a Neo-Marxist to a communicative approach in critical social theory seems to endorse and illustrate our claims (4).²

2. Against Traditional Conceptions of Epistemology: The Hermeneutic Challenge

Morris argues against the possibility to continue the traditional philosophical or ‘epistemological’ business of reconstructing truth entailments and rationality assumptions in our knowledge practices. He holds that the futility of any transcendental, pure, or otherwise unencumbered conceptions of knowledge has so clearly been shown, their ‘condition of possibility’ so thoroughly deconstructed, that any attempt to safeguard such an enterprise must seem hopeless. Instead, that all knowledge is pervasively shaped and defined by non-cognitive factors should be accepted: “We find that the noncognitive dimensions of thought always impinge upon and deeply impair the ideally pristine and self-contained realms of inquiry, justification, and debate.” (Morris 2016, 60) But it would be equally misguided to now simply reduce all knowledge to non-cognitive factors. Morris emphasizes the ultimate incoherence of a ‘universal noncognitivism’ (more about this in 3.), but this does not mean that we can return to separate out some sphere of ‘socially untainted thought.’ Since all thought is socially situated, we “must radically reconceive thought and social reality as inherently and appropriately interpenetrating domains.” (Morris 2016, 61) Accordingly, while Morris emphatically rejects the project of a transcendental epistemology, he is equally clear in his rejection of a social reductionism that would methodologically eliminate the epistemic nature of knowledge: “We must reject the ideal norms of traditional epistemology without thereby reducing thought to the merely descriptive categories of much sociology.” (Morris 2016, 61).

Yet can the reduction of meaning to social circumstances be avoided without reference to at least some epistemic criteria and presuppositions that distinguish distorted from less distorted thoughts and beliefs? If we want to avoid the reduction of knowledge to nothing but effects or epi-phenomena of non-discursive and non-cognitive factors, need we not reconstruct a realm of knowledge and experience that justifies such an anti-reductionism? In what follows I suggest that this non-reducible domain consists in the *hermeneutic*

dimension of ideology critique. Note that the interpretive reconstruction of the situated self-understandings of agents—which is an indispensable feature of any critique of ideology as it relates to agents’ beliefs and cognitive dispositions—requires a hermeneutic engagement with the agents’ intentional orientations. If we would not be able to reconstruct the meanings of the agents at stake, we could not even begin to define and analyze their views as ‘ideologies.’ However, the reconstruction of agents’ beliefs and assumptions necessarily draws the theorist into a normatively reconstructive endeavor about the issues and values at stake. As hermeneutic reflection has shown, the interpreter has to bring her own validity-laden pre-conception of the issues and objects to the social analysis. Even the situated critic of interest-based social thought, as Morris envisions her, needs to *cognitively address and understand* the intentional thoughts and claims of the agents in order to *non-reductively* correlate them with the objective social situation. If there is to be any *cognitively serious assessment* of the inherent claims expressed by the symbolically mediated (and according to Morris sublimated) vision, such a vision must thus be first hermeneutically reconstructed as an intentional understanding of the other about the world, others, and themselves.

Only if this methodological step is included, can the ‘merely descriptive categories of much sociology’ be avoided, as Morris himself aims to do. Through the hermeneutic disclosure of thoughts and beliefs about something, states of affairs, norms, events or experiences, the ‘discursive facts’ (Foucault) are now transformed into the intentional validity-entailing thoughts of agents. This first step avoids a reduction of thoughts to social situations. Yet in a second step, thoughts or ‘ideologies’ can now be correlated with social practices and situations as ‘socially situated thought expressing interests and desires.’ These two interrelated methodological steps combine the first and second person participant’s perspective towards thoughts and assumptions with a third person observer’s perspective towards these thoughts as related to social circumstances and thus as ‘ideologies.’³

Morris asserts the argument from hermeneutic access himself when he reconstructs Mannheim’s social epistemology; here he argues that the hermeneutic interpretation of the class-based self-understandings of situated agents prevents such an understanding from being merely ‘sociological,’ i.e. functional and thus reductive to existing material conditions; instead, such an interpretive understanding is always also epistemic. By this, I take it, he can only mean that the agents’ cognitive self-understanding is taken seriously as an interpretive and discursive dimension *sui generis*. If this is indeed the case, then the ideological mediation of the class situation is never mechanistic or automatic, because it involves a hermeneutic and thus to some extent reflex-

ive construction of the situation by the agents themselves.⁴ This symbolic construction or situated worldview can then be understood as ideological to the extent that it may distort and sublimate the actual social situation and its interests; it is thus open for an ideology-critical adjudication, that is for a more authentic or adequate assessment of its claims vis-à-vis the social context and practice.

Once this methodological double-step is taken, the issue of the adequacy and justifiedness of correlating particular self-understandings with certain objectively detectable interests becomes possible, but also unavoidable. Unless Morris denies—which would be counterintuitive and absurd in the context concerning ‘ideology’—that the participants may be mistaken about how their self-understanding reflects and expresses their real interests and desires, it is not clear how the need for a justification of the theoretical critic’s criteria of assessing symbolic perspectives as ideologies can be avoided. Yet it is precisely this reflective step of the epistemic and normative presuppositions of the critique of ideology that Morris seems to have given up.⁵

Our analysis forces us to acknowledge that the discursive mediation of interests and desires posits a new dimension of ontological construction. It is this new linguistically mediated level that alone safeguards the ideology critique from a social reductionism according to which the class situation would completely determine the cognitive self-understanding of the agents. That it is the discursive mediation of meaning and reality which actually prevents social reductionism escapes, as far as I can see, the theoretical-analytic grid that Morris presents us in *Knowledge and Ideology*. Differently put, only the discursive mediation entails the intentional disclosure of something as something and thereby the epistemic dimension as the intended claim of the ‘truth’ of one’s understanding. Understanding the meaning of texts and social practices demands of the interpreter to disclose the discursive events in terms of beliefs and concepts that make sense to her, which means that they have some epistemic content. As Hans-Georg Gadamer has shown, such a truth-based pre-understanding is essential for the understanding of meaning as such. I can only understand the other’s expressions if I interpret them according to beliefs and assumptions that are ‘true’ or ‘rationally acceptable’ to me (even if I come to challenge the other’s beliefs, or in retrospect my own, through the dynamic process of the interpretive encounter.) (Gadamer 1989; Kögler 1999).

Any disclosure of the other’s meaning and practices requires first to orient ourselves towards the meaning in some validity-oriented way. But this means also that the so-called ‘non-cognitive factors,’ about which Morris talks a great deal, are always already related to a validity-defined domain of

meaning: any account of non-cognitive factors, inasmuch as it claims to be an account of the influence of non-cognitive factor on cognition, presupposes the validity-based access to cognitions. Accordingly, even the most thorough analysis of non-cognitive factor still requires the validity-based dimension of cognition as a *sui generis* dimension to first identify the meaning as such. This is in fact good news, because it is this hermeneutic dimension of meaning in ‘ideologies’ which allows the social theorist to avoid the reduction of all meaning to nothing but causal effects of specific social situations, and to critically correlate meaning/context relations according to their presumed validity or distortion.⁶

3. Against the Functional Critique of Ideology: Reconstructing Foucault

Morris equally sets out to deconstruct the functional critique of ideology. While he himself draws on its strength to undermine any hopes in resurrecting the traditional epistemic approach, he nevertheless presents the functionalist project itself as hopelessly flawed. Morris develops two lines of attack against the functional reduction of all knowledge to social circumstances. The first one is oriented towards the debilitating effects of the universalization of a functionalist critique of power, and thus indirectly relates to the need of an epistemic stance or level from which to adequately assess practices of power, and from to which to reconstruct their undermining or challenging influence on thought (something Morris often describes as the impingement of non-cognitive on cognitive factors). If all thought would be reduced to nothing but an (involuntary, mechanic, determined) reflex of objective power or social functions, then all thought would seem to be undermined in its validity, and therefore also in its cultural (or illocutionary) force. Thought would be assimilated to a mere instrumental rationality, to mere perlocutionary effects, to practices and structures beyond value-based rational control. The effects must then be political apathy, cynicism, fideism, and skepticism. As Morris states unequivocally:

“This tendency derives largely from the skeptical and epistemically corrosive effects of functional ideology critique. As groups in society become directly focused upon the noncognitive associations and self-interested effects of an increasingly broad range of beliefs, any appeal to truth becomes suspect, apparently revealing culpable naïveté, self-serving hypocrisy, or cynical calculation. In short, if every claim or conviction represents or serves some particular interest, then

social life becomes nothing but the repeated and endless conflict of interests, the clash of discordant power.” (Morris 2016, 116)

The apathetic political effects of the functionalist critique of ideology are thus to be avoided, yet without, as we saw, falling back onto a purely illusory philosophical grounding of truth and knowledge. However, due to Morris’ own neglect of the epistemic presuppositions of knowledge, he does not pursue the immanent criticism of a self-contradiction of (truth-based) analysis of power, which must assume itself some epistemic standpoint from which power practices can be assessed, challenged, critiqued, and adequately understood (see also Habermas 1988a). Because Morris folds the reflective clearing of the ‘true nature of interests and desires’ into the situated clarification of the inverted and dreamlike ideologies of agents’ practices, he feels no need to present us with any criterion or standard how such a true understanding is to emerge from the distorted and confused nature of social thought.

The second line of criticism is constructively oriented towards presenting, in broad outline, his own Marxian conception of socioanalysis as the preferred alternative to a functionalist account of knowledge. Morris aims to offer a much-needed alternative to an approach that would reduce all social thought to nothing but an expression of underlying power and domination, while avoiding any reference to transcendental criteria. But if I see this correctly, this second attack is itself a sociological ideology critique of functionalism. Morris plays his Marxian ideology critique off against that other bohemian type by reducing this ‘ideology’ to its social roots. The analysis suggests that the ‘functionalist critique of ideology’ has a petty bourgeois origin and is not truly interested in the social plight of the working class. Morris articulates a shared or overlapping ‘ideological profile’ of such diverse thinkers as Ernst Jünger, Max Stirner, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, George Sorel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Adolf Hitler (!), and Michel Foucault to make his case. This analysis may be original and in parts insightful, but the sociological reconstruction of the emergence of patterns of thought does not by itself decide the case of the viability, truth, and productivity of the cognitive perspective thus articulated.

Indeed, a major problem of Morris’ account is that Foucault’s approach, whose significance and influence can be compared to Marx in recent human and social sciences, is dramatically mischaracterized. Politically active in prison and anti-psychiatry (and later gay) movements (Foucault 1979), engaged in resurrecting technologies of the self to resist an omnipotent micro-practical institutional power (Foucault 1993), and centrally focused on debunking power-based essentialisms couched in scientific discourses and legal-political imperatives (Foucault 1972a/1972b), Foucault’s ‘methodologi-

cal skepticism' is of a reflexive, engaged, and politically forward-looking kind. The deconstruction of inherited identities and norms are meant to create new spaces of self-realization and self-invention by overcoming the falsely assumed 'essentializing identities' vis-à-vis madness, delinquency, race, sex, class, etc. Foucault's work can easily be characterized as a critique of the ideology of essentialism. True, in certain works (the ones selectively picked out by Morris) the self is presented as hopelessly defined and entangled in inescapable power practices (Foucault 1979, but see Kögler 1999), and the desiring body is heralded as a potential source of something radically other beyond the scientific-normalizing disciplines (Foucault 1994; Butler 2006). But the overwhelming constructive reception of Foucault's methodologies shows clearly how both his discourse analysis and his genealogy of power can and have been productively integrated into normatively and critically oriented perspectives (Hoy 1979; Dreyfus/Rabinow 1982; Kögler 1999; 2017).

Accordingly, we can and should fuse Foucault's discourse analysis and genealogy of power into a conception of agency that entails the cognitive capabilities to make critical use of its insights and analytic techniques. Yet precisely this possibility, which would challenge a reductive sociological critique of ideology while being able to mine its methodological potential, is not considered by Morris. The self-declared Marxist Morris focuses solely on what he deems the ideological roots of a social thought prone to endorse a functionalist critique of ideology. The conceptual demarcation of this functional critique-type is undertaken with the aim to show that its origin is socially and class-wise different from the (good and productive) Marxian critique. Morris argues that because the functional critique has its origin in a frustration owed to the bourgeois and bohemian existence, its normative scope is therefore limited to the cultural dimension of self-expression. In contrast, the true Marxian critique is instead grounded in an understanding of the existential plight of the working class; it is thus driven by the right normative orientation to overcome and revolutionize the economic order of things.⁷ But even if the normative orientation of Foucault would consist in the problematic focus of 'mere' existential self-expression, the Foucauldian approach to discourse and power provided critical theory with categories and analytic techniques that clearly transcend its alleged social origin.

4. From Marx with Habermas to Dialogue and Power

We established that Morris' project must assume some epistemic access to the real interests and desires that must somehow be accessible in

order to be critically compared and introduced vis-à-vis the distorted sublimations of situated agents. It may be for this reason that Morris sees in the early Habermas a fellow traveler of sorts. In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), Habermas argues that practical interests provide the *epistemic grounds* for knowledge in the natural, human, and social sciences (Habermas 1972). According to this approach, universal interests define the basic world-relations of the human species and as such are constitutive of our practically situated yet nevertheless cognitive world-disclosure. This means concretely that the practical need to technically control nature, the cultural need to communicate freely with our tradition, and the emancipatory need to overcome unjust and unnecessary forms of domination and oppression internally structure our reflexive knowledge in the respective natural, human, and social sciences. Habermas argues that inasmuch as experimental control (natural sciences), hermeneutic access (humanities), and reflexive insight in power structures (critical social sciences) are *internal methodological features of the respective types of sciences*, they are grounded *socio-ontologically* in universal interests. Since their *methodological orientations* are logically defined by practical interests, these interests can be taken to be epistemically constitutive of the knowledge produced in the respective sciences.

It is instructive to see why Habermas gave up this approach to further articulate my concerns with Morris' proposal. The knowledge-constitutive features of human interests derive for early Habermas from the *universal form* that can be ascribed to these interests. Habermas takes them to constitute *general* human interests of our species. Yet in the exchange with Hans-Georg Gadamer concerning hermeneutics and ideology-critique, Habermas realizes that the talk of *objective universal interests* of humanity derives from a quasi-metaphysical view of one *collective* species subject (Habermas 1988b; Thompson 1984). This unified and teleological conception of a super-subject 'humankind' proves problematic if we consider our actual situatedness of individual agents in contingent social practices, something which also Morris endorses. If we accept that all knowledge is socially situated in practices and traditions, then the critical theorist cannot simply posit universal general interests as a given. *What those interests are is itself up to situated agents who determine their content in the process of communicative practices.* Habermas adopts this position from hermeneutics, but still rightly argues against Gadamer that the ubiquitous 'ontological' role assigned to language as the medium of the reproduction of tradition remains problematic (Habermas 1988b). This is so because language, conceived as the holistic mediation of the contents, values, and perspectives of the social lifeworld, is itself also structured by labor and power, i.e. expressive of functional modes of practices defined by capitalist

economy and bureaucratic administration (Habermas 1988b, 143 ff.).

The critique of ideology thus targets the causal and structural influence of economic and political power on linguistically mediated beliefs and assumptions. Yet since ideology critique is now embedded in a theoretical model in which dialogically interacting agents construct interpretations and ideologies, power may never become (as in the functional critique of ideology) ontologically basic or totally pervasive. Since social reality is mediated by language, and language is conceived as entailing the potential of critical self-reflexivity, the social critic can now draw on the hermeneutic starting point of the mediated self-understanding of traditions. Functionalist reductionism is therefore avoided.⁸ In fact, by means of a hermeneutic radicalization of this intuition, agents are now themselves able to make use of the inherent critical and distancing potential of language (Kögler 1999). They are able to critically reflect on the basic assumptions of their practices, reconstruct the objective social practices that have impinged themselves on concepts, assumptions, and interpretive schemes, in order to critically evaluate how to proceed vis-à-vis the perceived power effects and oppressive functions. The contrast to Morris' conception of situated ideologies as expressing objective aims and desires based on class-defined social practices consists thus not in an abstract or transcendental conception of utopian or idealized reason. It rather consists in the reconstruction of critical potentials as inherent in the discursively mediated practices of situated agents.

We can now also see how the *analysis of discourse and power* following Foucault can be mediated with truth and rationality. While agents' intentional thoughts are oriented towards the subject matters explicitly articulated in their beliefs and assumptions, these thoughts are embedded in discourses and power practices. Agents are capable of a reflexive appropriation of these background features of social agency. Background formations of one's own self-understanding can thus be analyzed with the Foucauldian means of discourse analysis, combined with genealogical probes into historically contingent and power-defined origins of allegedly universal aspirations, and with the modeling of an embodied habitus as pre-defining one's beliefs and assumptions (Kögler 1997). Since these reconstructive studies target the background of intentional and reflexive agents, this can be done without reducing agency functionally to social power and noncognitive factors.

The critique of ideology is now embedded in a radically *reciprocal model of critical self-analysis*, where the interpretation of the telos of social practices is a reflexive practice engaged *by the situated agents themselves*, equipped with the tools of critical theory. This model does justice to the inescapably situated and symbolically mediated starting point of all social

thought, a point that Morris rightly emphasizes throughout his work. But it does not, as he wrongly suggests, fall into a skeptical or cynical mode of thought. Due to the idealizing rational presuppositions in which such a power analysis is now embedded, this type of power critique does not limit social thought (or the critique of its ideological distortions) to a specific local and class defined context, but entails the normative vision of the other as both concretely situated and as a co-subject of a universal egalitarian community (as in G.H. Mead's 'Generalized Other' (Mead 1934). Accordingly, the discursive mediation of social thought does not detach thinking from its concrete social contexts in order to catapult it into the abstract neverland of empty universals. Instead, dialogical practices provide the reflexive and challenging battle ground for reconstructing our always situated self-understanding with regard to some utopian and politically progressive visions, thereby paving the way for shared interpretations of our interests and desires.

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Endnotes

1 A good example of such a distorted desire is Marx's interpretation of religion, as it "represents 'an illusory happiness' and a 'protest against real misery.' ... Even if religion distorts an underlying social aim, it also provides a principle avenue through which this aim emerges into consciousness. Thus, if correctly interrogated, religion manifests the aims it distorts." (Morris 2016, 210). Although religion is an 'inverted consciousness,' it nevertheless structures an otherwise manifold social world and dialectically leads a reflexive critic to the reconstructing of the true underlying desire. Morris discusses religion as an illustration of his method which he culls from a rereading of Marx; he also discusses German idealism, following Heine and Marx, as the frustrated sublimation of a revolutionary impulse of the German political situation; see Morris 2016, 202 – 212.

2 Morris seems to suggest that we can do with a situated and self-reflexive 'adjudication' of the specific ideologies based on the particular interests of the agents. I suggest in turn that the critical force of such a reflexive endeavor unfolds only through a practice of critical dialogue concerning these visions expressed, and which provides the forum of assessing how these visions are supposed to be paired with social interests, and ultimately be evaluated.

3 I have detailed this methodological criticism in my analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's functionalist sociology of knowledge (Kögler 1997)

4 See my own reconstruction and interpretation of Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge, in Kögler 1997.

5 So even if we claim—something that one may be cautious about and that is more asserted than shown by Morris—that all knowledge is ultimately socially situated and as such interest-defined, the inherent claim by Morris that the ideologies can still be critically assessed and adjudicated entails that there is an epistemic dimension of adequate representation, of the correct grasp of the underlying 'distorted and sublimated interests' that asserts itself as a truth claim, and, similarly, since we are talking about interests, also a normative claim. It is this presupposition that is not articulated in Morris' account as it stands.

6 It goes without saying that in her concrete proposal with regard to existing ideologies, the social theorist is herself always presenting her 'critical interpretations' from a situated and thus potentially distorted standpoint. The fact that social theory or the critique of ideology coherently applies the 'premise of social situatedness' to her own work does not destroy the validity claims, nor does it dissolve the need to explicate in what such epistemic or

normative claims consist. Instead, the social critique is drawn into a situated yet dialogical exchange in which her methodologically and historically informed analyses help to reflexively distanciate and critically assess culturally pervasive patterns of thought and interest-articulation.

7 Throughout his analysis, Morris seems highly dismissive of the bohemian grounds of social criticisms, and strongly supportive of the Marxian source of social critique. The class bias to conceive a 'Bohemian' ideology critique as a type of deluxe discontent of a petty-bourgeois obsession with self-realization, against which the solidaric feeling of empathetic identification with the dehumanized, objectively exploited, oppressed, and alienated worker stands, is never justified or explicitly argued for, nor is the concept of true interest or desire ever explicated.

8 For Habermas after his paradigm shift to communicative action (Habermas 1982/87), the starting point is the communicatively situated speaker, who, by means of the medium of language, is capable to critically challenge and argumentatively decide one's stance towards practices, interests, and assumptions. In other words, we move from an objective teleology of interests in Habermas—which for Morris have become localized interests and aims defined by one's objective social situation—to the model of a reflexive communicative agency that deliberatively decides upon the norms and values it aims to endorse. Habermas develops his theory of communicative action as grounded in a theory of meaning for which the understanding of speech acts entails validity claims vis-à-vis the objective, social, and subjective worlds. Speakers thus articulate factual, normative, or expressive speech acts entailing claims towards objective truth, normative rightness, and subjective authenticity. The philosophical meta-theory of these rational presuppositions of communication allows for the reconstruction of normative concepts like mutual respect and recognition, since partaking in communicative practices presupposes the possibility of a reason-based consensus vis-à-vis these claims, without which a rational conversation would make no sense. The presupposition of unconstrained rational consensus could thus serve as a principle of explicit orientation towards the rational entailments and potentials of our language use. The status and necessity of such an idealized assumption in Habermas's core theory remains controversial (for further discussion see McCarthy 1981).

