

THE EXPLANATORY POWER OF IDEOLOGY

The concept of ideology is not a central topic in contemporary mainstream analytic Political Philosophy. Race theory and feminist philosophy are exceptions, but it is fair to say that their focus on ideology, like most of their contributions, have been undervalued and not well integrated into the mainstream of philosophical research.

Some political philosophers—whom I will call ideology skeptics--have offered what could be seen as a justification for the lack of attention to ideology, arguing that the concept of ideology isn't needed to explain the phenomenon whose explanation is supposed to be that concept's chief *raison d'être*: "voluntary servitude," the curious fact that the oppressed, who are much more numerous and potentially much more powerful than their oppressors, usually do not revolt. The ideology skeptics claim that voluntary servitude can be explained as the result of a simple collective action failure and that consequently that the concept of ideology is not needed to explain this phenomenon.¹ The basic idea is that even though the

¹ Rosen, Michael. 1886. *On Voluntary Servitude: False Consciousness and the Theory of Ideology*. Cambridge: Polity Press; Heath, Joseph. 2008, "Ideology, Irrationality and Collectively Self-defeating Behavior," *Constellations*, 7:3, 363-371; Heath, Joseph. 2001, "Problems in the Theory of Ideology," pp. 163-190 in *Pluralism and the Pragmatic Turn: The Transformation of Critical Theory, Essays in Honor of Thomas McCarthy*, ed. by James Bohman and William Rehg. Cambridge: MIT Press.

oppressed would be better off if the oppressive regime were overthrown, each oppressed individual will calculate that whether the revolution succeeds will depend on whether enough others join it, regardless of what he does and, since participation in the revolution is a cost, each will conclude that he or she should not join in.² This is the free-rider version of the collective action problem.

Failures of collective action can also be explained as a result of the assurance problem. Even if individuals do not refrain from participating in the production of a good because they decide to be free-riders, they may refrain because they lack assurance that others will contribute. If the explanatory power of the concept of ideology consists solely or chiefly in its ability to explain voluntary servitude and if voluntary servitude can be explained without recourse to the concept of ideology as a matter of collective action failures due to the free-rider or assurance problem, then the concept of ideology lacks significant explanatory power. The ideology skeptics raise a problem of considerable importance: what *is* the explanatory power of the concept of ideology—what sorts of phenomena can it explain?³

² Tullock, Gordon. 1971. "The Paradox of Revolution," *Public Choice*, 11, 89-99.

³ Heath claims that it is a defect of ideological explanations of voluntary servitude that they are patronizing or disrespectful in that they attribute irrationality to the individuals in question. In my judgment this claim is implausible for two reasons. First, there is much recent work in psychology and behavioral economics indicating that irrationality is pervasive among human beings, but it would be wrong to reject such research on the grounds that it is patronizing or disrespectful. Second, ideology theories, including those in the Marxist tradition, need not single out the oppressed as the only individuals subject to irrationality—they may, for example, attribute irrational ideological beliefs to both men and women (in the case of sexist ideologies), to whites and nonwhites (in the case of racist ideologies), and to capitalists as well as proletarians (in the case of capitalist ideologies).

Ascertaining the explanatory power of the concept of ideology is not in itself a normative enterprise. Yet its results can have important implications for moral and political philosophy, especially so far as these disciplines are concerned with moral progress—that is, with the part of nonideal theory that focuses on how to make the transition toward a morally better state of affairs. If ideologies create impediments to progressive moral change by helping to sustain oppressive or otherwise unjust social orders, as critical theorists maintain, then to overcome these impediments one needs to know how ideologies work. If in contrast, ideologies can facilitate moral improvement—as would be the case if there are revolutionary ideologies that help mobilize people to challenge oppressive social orders--then, an account of the explanatory reach of the concept of ideology is also something moral and political philosophers should be concerned with. In brief, to know how to combat pernicious ideologies one needs to know how they function to sustain injustices; and if there are progressive ideologies, one needs to know they can function to help overcome injustices. In either case an account of the explanatory power of ideologies is something moral and political philosophers whose work includes consideration of how to make the transition toward a better society need. So my exploration of the explanatory power of the concept of ideology in this essay is both descriptive and normative: my descriptive account focuses on the role of ideology in facilitating morally significant behavior, especially behavior that can either

block or facilitate progress toward justice. In that sense, it is a contribution to moral and political philosophy, not just to social science.

In Part I, I begin by showing that the fact that voluntary servitude is sometimes the result of a failure to solve the free-rider problem or the assurance problem does not show that the concept of ideology is lacking in explanatory power. I show how ideology *can prevent the oppressed from getting to the point where they would encounter a collective action problem*, either (i) by convincing them that the existing social order is natural and therefore unalterable, or (ii) by preventing them from seeing that the social order is oppressing them, or (iii) by convincing them that they lack the agency needed for there to be a reasonable prospect of successful revolution. When ideologies function in either of these three ways, the oppressed will not even consider participating in an attempt to overthrow the existing order to be a viable option. Hence, their inaction will not be explained as a failure of collective action, because both types of collective action failures occur only when individuals contemplate acting.

In Part II, I argue that when they do not prevent people from reaching the point at which they would encounter a collective action problem, ideologies can *solve* collective action problems if they include moral commitments that motivate people to disregard or over-ride calculations of costs and benefits that would result in the free-rider problem or even cause them to refrain from engaging in those calculations in the first place. The moral commitments that ideologies include and solidify can also lead individuals to believe they must act even if they lack assurance that others will do so as well.

Part III demonstrates that the concept of ideology can play a valuable explanatory role if one assumes that collective action problems are central to the success or failure of revolutions. I argue that the assumption that both sides of revolutionary conflicts are motivated by ideologies can help explain the extreme character of the spiral of violence that often occurs in such conflicts: the revolutionary leadership resorts to coercion against the masses to solve the latter's collective action problem by penalizing those who don't participate in the revolution; and then the regime responds by using coercion to raise the costs of participating so as to stymie collective action by the oppressed; and then the revolutionary leadership ups the ante by using more extreme forms of coercion to penalize nonparticipation, and so on. Because ideologies can portray conflicts in extremely moralized terms—in effect as competitions in which the highest moral stakes are to be won or lost—and can also de-humanize the enemy, they can motivate both revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries to disregard ordinary moral constraints on violence in the arms race of coercion and counter-coercion that characterizes the strategic interaction centered on the revolutionaries' collective action problem. In this way, the concept of ideology can help explain the extreme violence of the spiral of coercion.

In Parts I and II, I operate with the dominant concept of ideology, the concept employed by critical theorists. According to this understanding, ideologies are interrelated, though not necessarily consistent sets of beliefs, attitudes, and cognitive processes *that help sustain unjust social orders* by coordinating the beliefs and attitudes of multiple individuals. Prominent among the cognitive processes

characteristic of ideologies are epistemically defective cognitive dissonance resolution mechanisms that protect beliefs from being corrected. Such mechanisms for insulating beliefs from correction constitute what I shall call the doxastic immune function of ideologies.⁴

In Part Three, I take seriously the idea, endorsed by Lenin and Sorel among others, that there can be revolutionary ideologies—ideologies that challenge rather than support unjust social orders. In doing so, I employ a more general concept of ideology of which the critical theorists' concept is one specification. In other words, according to the general concept of ideology, ideologies that support unjust social orders and ideologies that challenge them share important features peculiar to ideologies, including the doxastic immune function. The general concept and the concept employed by critical theorists, then are not rivals: the latter is a specification of the former. Revolutionary ideologies are simply a different specification. So in employing the general conception Part III I am neither rejecting the critical theorists' concept nor switching to a new concept different from that employed in parts I and II. My recourse to the general concept puts the burden of argument on those critical theorist who insist that support for unjust social orders is an essential characteristic of ideologies and that the term “revolutionary ideologies” is an abuse of language.

By allowing for revolutionary ideologies, the general concept extends even further the explanatory domain of the concept of ideology. Yet even if one cleaves to,

⁴ For more on this, see Allen Buchanan (2002), “Social Moral Epistemology” *Social Philosophy & Policy* 19(2), 26-152.

critical theorists' assertion that it is essential to ideologies that they support unjust social orders, I will show that the explanatory power of ideology is much greater than the ideology skeptics—and perhaps some critical theorists as well—have appreciated.

I. How Ideologies Can Prevent the Emergence of the Revolutionaries' Collective Action Problems

There are at least three ways in which an ideology can prevent an individual from even considering whether to participate in an attempt overthrow the existing social order and hence from reaching the point at which she would confront a collective action problem of either the free-rider or assurance variety. First, the ideology can present the existing social order as natural and therefore as inevitable or at least as not something that anyone should attempt to overthrow or could succeed in overthrowing. Ideologies perform this function when they portray deeply inegalitarian social orders as reflecting a hierarchy of different natures for different groups of individuals, in rank order from inferior to superior. If an individual believes that she is by nature a member of an inferior class of beings and that her subordination to members of a superior class is the proper order of nature, then she will not consider overthrowing the social order as an option. Ideologies that support caste systems or sexist systems typically include the belief that the social hierarchy is natural, a reflection of the different natures of those who are dominant and those who are subordinate. If something is regarded as natural, that is enough in many cases for people to think it would be wrong or at least futile to try to change it.

If one thinks of the existing social order in this way, one will not get to the point of calculating the costs and benefits of trying to overthrow it because one will not regard overthrowing it as a viable option. Nor will one get to the point of even considering whether one should attempt to overthrow if one cannot expect that others will participate in revolutionary action. Those who strive to mobilize the oppressed to revolt understand this; that is why they devote considerable energy to trying to convince people that the inequalities of the social order are not natural, but rather are human constructs, subject to alteration through human action.⁵

Second, as theorists in the Marxist tradition emphasize, an ideology can help sustain an unjust social order by masking its injustices. This would be the case, for example, with an ideology that portrayed the worst off in a capitalist social order as people who lacked drive or self-discipline, who fail to exhibit the bourgeois virtues. If one thinks that the existing order is just or at least not gravely unjust, one is not likely to take seriously the idea of overthrowing it; and if that is the case, one will not reach the stage of calculating the cost and benefits of participating in an effort to overthrow it or deciding to refrain from participation because one doubts that others will do so. The behavior of revolutionary leaders suggests that they are aware of this function of ideology: they work hard to convince the masses that their

⁵ This point is prominent in early works in feminist philosophy, including Wollstonecraft, Mary, 1792, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Poston, C., (ed.), New York and London: W.W. Norton and Company, 1988 and Mill, John S., 1869, *Three Essays: On Liberty, Representative Government, The Subjection of Women*, R. Wollheim, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

inferior position in the social order is not their fault but rather is an inevitable result of fundamental structural features.

Third, an ideology can convince the oppressed that they are powerless to overthrow the system. One way ideologies do this is by exaggerating the power of the oppressors while portraying the oppressed as inherently weak. Those who attempt to convince others to join a revolutionary struggle take this function of ideology seriously: they advocate “the propaganda of the deed,” where this includes acts of violence against people identified with the regime, especially police personnel and other public officials. The message that such acts send is that “We *can* hurt Them!” In other words, the would-be revolutionary leadership proceeds on the assumption that part of the task of generating “revolutionary consciousness” in the masses is to convince them of their agency, more specifically their potential to inflict costs on the oppressors. The first, relatively minor acts of violence toward regime officials are usually not so much designed to convince the oppressors to give up their power as to convince the oppressed that they have power. Unless the oppressed become convinced that they have power, they will not even reach the point at which a collective action problem will be encountered, because they will not contemplate taking revolutionary action. Ideologies can prevent them from reaching that point by robbing them of an appreciation of their own agency.⁶ Once one recognizes how ideologies can function in these three ways, it becomes clear that failures of collective action are not the only viable explanation of

⁶ See, for instance, Hill, T.J., Jr., 1991, *Autonomy and Self-Respect*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

voluntary servitude. Critical theorists have done much to illuminate the first two ways in which ideologies foster voluntary servitude; to my knowledge they have not emphasized the third.

At this point ideology skeptics—those who think that simple explanations of voluntary servitude in terms of collective action render explanations in terms of ideology otiose—might reply as follows: yes, it is true that voluntary servitude can sometimes be the result of an ideology preventing the oppressed from even considering the option of participation in an effort to overthrow the system; but the fact remains that voluntary servitude can be explained without appeal to the concept of ideology, simply as a failure of collective action.

This is an odd response. The question is this: what *in fact* explains the failure to revolt in any particular case? If in fact the failure is the result of ideology convincing the oppressed that they are powerless, or that the existing order is not unjust, or that it is natural, then it doesn't matter that *if* they had reached the point of considering revolting they *would* have been paralyzed by a collective action problem. The issue is empirical: in any given case, what actually caused the absence of revolution in an oppressive social order? If there are cases in which ideological beliefs played a significant causal role in the phenomenon of voluntary servitude, then the fact that voluntary servitude *would have* occurred anyway, due to collective action problems, is about as relevant as saying that we don't need the explanation of the patient's death that correctly attributes it to a heart-attack because if he hadn't had the heart-attack he *would have* died eventually from some other cause.

II. How Ideologies Can Solve Collective Action Problems

Thus far I have argued that there are at least two explanations of why revolutions against oppressive orders do not occur: collective action failure explanations and explanations that invoke the concept of ideology to show why oppressed individuals may not even take the possibility of revolting seriously. Now I want to explore the possibility that ideology can explain why revolutions sometimes *do* occur in spite of collective action problems.

An ideology can solve collective action problems if it includes a moral element that motivates the oppressed either to refrain from or to disregard the calculations that generate the free-rider problem or to not base their decision on whether others will participate. Ideologies—including revolutionary ideologies—typically have a moral dimension. For example, capitalist ideologies present capitalism not only as the most efficient economic system but also as one that maximizes individual freedom and rewards people according to merit. Consequently, capitalist ideologies can lead people to be morally motivated to support capitalism. Similarly, Marxist-Leninist ideology presents capitalism as an economic order that necessarily exploits workers, stunts their development as human beings, and alienates them from one another. Even if Marx and Lenin sometimes wrote as if they thought their critique of capitalism was nonmoral and strictly scientific, the appeal of their views was surely do in part to the fact that they engaged moral motivations.⁷

⁷ See Allen Buchanan (1982), *Marx and Justice* (Totowa, New Jersey: Rowman and Littlefield).

Moral considerations can function as exclusionary reasons—they not only supply reasons for acting, but exclude certain reasons from consideration. In doing so, they can serve to dismiss calculations of self-interest, to exclude them from consideration in an agent’s decision-making process. Some moral considerations, in particular, those framed in terms of rights, serve to trump not just calculations of self-interest, but also considerations of what would maximize social utility. Given that this is so, an ideology, because of its moral dimension, can motivate the individual to refuse to base her decision whether to participate in the revolution on the calculations of costs and benefits that generate the free-rider version of collective action problems.

Sorel provides a vivid portrayal of the effects of this aspect of ideologies. He describes a soldier in the French revolutionary army who dies with a smile on his face as his comrades tread on his broken body through a breach in the enemy’s defenses.⁸ The clear implication is that the revolutionary zeal of this individual motivated him, directly, as it were, to participate in the revolution, indeed to participate to the point of self-sacrifice, rather than to calculate whether his action would produce a benefit that exceeded the costs to himself (the free-rider problem). Nor does the ardent revolutionary soldier consider whether others will make similar sacrifices (the assurance problem). Because some of the most fundamental moral commitments serve to exclude basing one’s conduct on calculations of what would maximize net benefits and are understood not to depend upon reciprocation

⁸ Sorel, 2004.

by others, ideologies that include such commitments can solve both versions of the collective action problem. In this way, recourse to the concept of ideology can explain why the oppressed sometimes do rise up, even though in principle their doing so could be stymied by collective action problems.

One need not to look only to historical examples of revolutionary ardor that side-steps or overrides calculations of costs and benefits or considerations of whether others will participate in the revolutionary endeavor. Contemporary behavioral experiments yield the same result: people who are morally motivated can often achieve collective action when they would not be able to do so in the absence of that motivation.⁹ They don't determine how to act on the basis of the calculations that are supposed to thwart collective action according to simplistic rational choice theories. Nor do they always make their participation in collective action conditional on credible assurance that others will participate.

Even if the moral motivation that ideologies supply doesn't simply by-pass the calculations that generate the collective action problem, it can override them.

⁹ Panchanathan, Karthik and Robert Boyd. 2004, "Indirect Reciprocity Can Stabilize Cooperation Without the Second-Order Free Rider Problem," *Nature: International Journal of Science*, 432, 499-502; Elster, John, 1989, "Social Norms and Economic Theory," *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 3:4, 99-117; Elster, Jon, 1985, "Rationality, Morality, and Collective Action," *Ethics*, 96:1, 136-155; Chaudhuri, Ananish. 2011, "Sustaining Cooperation in Laboratory Public Goods Experiments: a Selective Survey of the Literature," *Experimental Economics*, 14, 47-83..

This occurs when an ideology leads the individual to believe that the moral stakes were extremely high. In that case, even if the individual made the calculation that it would be best, from the standpoint his own interests or even from the standpoint of the maximization of social utility, to refrain from participation, his ideology-grounded moral priorities (at least if they are deontological in nature) may override any such calculations. Similarly, with regard to the assurance version of the collective action problem, an individual's ideology may lead her to conclude that it is important to participate, even if others are not likely to do their fair share. In other words, depending on the character of the moral commitments they include, ideologies can present participation as unconditionally mandatory, not mandatory conditional on congruence with one's own interests or the maximization of utility or on reciprocation by others. In this way, ideologies, because they include moral beliefs, can solve collective action problems that would otherwise stymie revolution.

III. How the (General) Concept of Ideology Can Illuminate the Spiral of Extreme Coercion in Revolutionary Conflicts

Contemporary empirical research on violent revolutions and other intrastate armed conflicts supports the assertion that collective action problems loom large. They also document a spiral of extreme forms of coercion that often occurs as a result of strategic interactions between the revolutionaries and regime forces—strategic interaction that is centered on the revolutionaries' collective action

problem.¹⁰ Because the revolutionary leadership knows that collective action problems may result in lack of sufficient participation in the revolution, they employ coercion against those they hope to mobilize, in order to make the costs of not participating exceed the cost of participating. The coercion involved runs the gamut from acts of terrorism, to conscription enforced by harsh penalties, to confiscation of the means of subsistence. The regime then responds by using similarly coercive means to thwart this effort to solve the collective action problem by raising the costs of participation in the revolution.

An example from the Vietnam War will make this point clearer, though many if not all cases of insurgency, civil war, or revolution would serve as well. Suppose the year is 1968. The Viet Cong come into your village and threaten to kill everyone if the village doesn't make some of its young men join their ranks and provide hidden storage for Vietcong weapons and supplies. If these threats are credible, they change the pay-off matrix that otherwise might have produced a refusal to participate in the revolution. According to the logic of collective action, this means that if the costs the Viet Cong credibly say they will impose exceed the benefits of non-participation, then (so far as they base their decision on cost-benefit calculations), you and your fellow villagers will decide that the best alternative is no longer to refrain from participation. Similarly, if American forces come into your village the next day and tell you that they will destroy it if any member of the village

¹⁰ Van Belle, Douglas. 1996, "Leadership and Collective Action: The Case of Revolution," *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:1, 107-132, *World Politics*, 59:2, 177-216.

aids the Viet Cong, their strategy is to convince you that the costs of participating in the revolution outweigh the benefits of participating, including the avoidance of the costs that the Viet Cong may impose if you don't participate.

Regime leaders know that revolutionaries will try to solve the revolutionary collective action problem by raising the costs of nonparticipation; so they respond by raising the costs of participation, also using various forms of coercion, from imprisonment or summary execution of those suspected of participating in the revolution or cooperating with the revolutionaries, to confiscating property and conscripting potential revolutionaries into the regime's armed forces. The revolutionary leadership then responds by escalating their use of coercion, in order to tilt the cost-benefit ratio in favor of participation. And so on. That is the spiral of coercion at the locus of the revolutionaries' collective action problem.

The spiral of coercion is extreme: it typically proceeds in violation of the most basic rules of just warfare, often exhibiting a lack of restraint that is exceptional even in interstate conflicts. An explanation of why participants in the struggle would be motivated to engage in such extreme violence is needed. Ideology theory can provide it.

The fact that ideologies typically if not always contain a moral dimension and can frame conflicts in heavily moralized terms—as a contest in which the moral stakes are extremely high—can help explain why the spiral of coercion in the revolutionary context exhibits an exceptionally flagrant disregard of ordinary moral constraints on armed conflict. According to the general concept of ideology, there can be revolutionary ideologies as well as ideologies that support the existing social

order. If one's revolutionary ideology convinces one that the regime is evil and the fate of human progress or at least the liberation of oneself and many others from a soul-crushing tyranny depends on the success of the revolution, one may in effect regard oneself as being in what Walzer calls a "Supreme Emergency" and accordingly be willing to set aside the moral constraints on the use of force that one would take to be mandatory in any other context. Similarly, if one's counter-revolutionary ideology convinces one that the success of the revolution will mean the destruction of all that is good and wholesome, then one may be willing to engage in the most extreme forms of coercion to convince potential revolutionaries that they should not become revolutionaries.

Ideologies can also "dehumanize" the Other, depicting them as less than human, as dangerous, unclean beasts not entitled to the basic moral regard accorded to human beings. As the extensive literature on genocides attests, dehumanization prepares the way for the most ruthless and cruel violence.

The doxastic immune function of ideologies contributes to the development of more extreme views by screening out beliefs that challenge the beliefs that help constitute the ideology. Ideologies also tend to promote loyalty and solidarity, which can deter people from associating with those who might question shared beliefs. When this occurs, opportunities for qualifying and moderating those beliefs in the light of such challenges are precluded. The result is the so-called echo-chamber effect: beliefs tend to become more extreme.¹¹

¹¹ C. Thi Nguyen, "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles," *Episteme* 17, no. 2 (2020): 141–61; Hanna Kiri Gunn, "How Should We Build Epistemic Community," *Journal of*

In brief, once one acknowledges the moral dimension of ideologies, and recognizes that ideologies can both support and challenge the existing social order, one can take seriously the possibility that the concept of ideology can help explain the extreme violence that characterizes revolutionary conflicts. And one can do so while foregrounding, rather than ignoring, the important role that collective action problems sometimes play in the revolutionary context. Contrary to what the ideology skeptics suggest, we need not choose between an explanatory framework that focuses on collective action problems and one that includes a significant role for ideology.

It is a commonplace that ideologies can encourage people to violate widely accepted rules of war in interstate wars as well as revolutions, that ideologically motivated wars of either type can be more savage than those motivated simply by interests. My point in focusing on revolutionary wars is that that in this sort of conflict one party's collective action problem looms large: the revolutionaries lack the resources that states enjoy, including standing armies and institutions that encourage collective action in times of conflict. This fact about the revolutionary context has important implications. It is the starting point for the spiral of coercion that ensues when the revolutionary leadership tries to give the masses effective incentives to participate in revolution and the regime responds by raising the cost of participation in order to thwart revolutionary collective action. An appreciation of this feature of the revolutionary context, then, shows that it is a mistake to think

Speculative Philosophy 34:4 (2020), 561-581; Yuval Avnur, "What's Wrong with the Online Echo Chamber?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 37:4, 578-593.

that the failure to revolt must either be understood as a failure of collective action or as an effect of ideology—that collective action failure explanations and ideological explanations are competitors. Instead, ideology can affect the means by which the oppressed attempt to solve their collective action problem and the nature of the response to that attempt by the regime.

So, even if one believes that the key to understanding why revolutions fail—when they do fail—is that the oppressed were unable to solve a collective action problem, the concept of ideology can play a valuable role in explaining both the extremes to which revolutionaries are willing to go in trying to solve their collective action problem and the equally extreme response of regimes in their efforts to thwart revolutionary collective action.

Conclusion

I have argued that the concept of ideology has greater explanatory value than is often recognized. In particular, the fact that voluntary servitude can sometimes be explained as the failure to solve collective action problems does not show that the concept of ideology is explanatorily otiose or of limited explanatory power. Recourse to the concept of ideology can explain both why the oppressed do not even reach the point where revolutionary action would be stymied by collective action problems and also why collective action problems do not always prevent revolution.

Ideologies can prevent people from encountering collective action problems by undermining the sense of agency that would enable them even to contemplate acting or by convincing them that the existing order is natural and inevitable, or by disguising its oppressive character. Ideologies can also help people to overcome

collective action problems when they do consider action to be an option, by virtue of including moral commitments that either lead individuals to refrain from calculating the costs and benefits of various actions or to disregard the results of those calculations. Ideologies can also lead people to regard their participation in revolution as unconditional—not dependent upon assurance that enough others will participate to achieve success. Finally, in contexts in which revolutionary conflicts have already begun, the fact that ideologies have a moral dimension, taken together with their doxastic immune system function and the fact that they create communities united by the same extremely resilient beliefs that tend to become more extreme through a kind of echo chamber effect can help to explain the extreme violence employed in efforts to solve collective action problems or to thwart an opposing group's efforts to solve its collective action problem.

The critical theorists' focus on how ideologies function to sustain oppressive social orders is laudable. But if my arguments are valid, then I have shown that the way in which ideologies perform this function are more diverse than is generally thought. In addition, I have shown that the general concept of ideology of which the critical theorists concept is particular specification, can explain both the fact that people do not always persist in a condition of voluntary servitude and the spiral of extreme coercion that often occurs when they do revolt. The explanatory power of the concept of ideology, then, is impressive.

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