A final assessment of the conception of ideology in the *German Ideology*: it is very important in that for the first time there is posed a connection between ideas and knowledge on the one hand, and the history of societies on the other. But it is a restricted conception in many senses.

It is an enigma that more or less after 1850 the term “ideology” as such does not figure in the works of Marx

**Marx: “Introduction” to the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859)**

The separation between “base” and “superstructure” and the economistic interpretation of Marxism (note though the warning of Engels)

The discussion whether in this passage ideology is equated to the whole range of the “superstructure”. In any case, it seems that we have here the extension-enlargement of the term “ideology” and its more positive conception, in the sense that it is not meant only as something that distracts men from their real problems and contradictions, but also as a necessary precondition for them to fight out their struggles (this is why a strongly anti-economist Marxist, Gramsci, pays so much attention to this passage).

This is why this passage gave way to the gradual neutralization of the concept of ideology. From a negative term that it was in The *German Ideology* - and granted that this early work of the founders was not published until 1932, so it was known to Marxist thinkers until that time- it came to mean more or less a field where class struggle is fought out, so , as in Lenin, it was very natural anymore to speak of a “working class ideology” or a “socialist ideology”.

**Marx: *Capital***

The theory of ideology that can be deduced from Marx’s magnus opus is based upon his analyses around the “commodity fetishism”. The history of the term “fetishism”. The link between fetishism and ideology: religion.

Commodity for Marx: use value and exchange value

Commodity fetishism and its connection to religion: it is not the case of a worship of commodities in terms of consumerism, similar to the worship of deities. It is rather that, such as in religion, we have the products (here of the human hands) to get an autonomous life vis a vis their creator and oppress him. It means in short that human situations, properties, relations appear overturned, in that they appear as relations between things.

Through commodity fetishism Marx explains how the structural phenomena of capitalist society are perceived on the surface of the economic relations in an inverted form, to the effect that what remains concealed is that the growth of capital is based upon human living labour (E. Balibar).

One aspect of this is how the value of a certain commodity appears in the market: as sth internal to the commodity, or as a matter of its relations to other commodities, and not as sth related to the labour time spent for its production.

Another aspect is how the value of a specific, and central to capitalism, commodity, labour power, appears through the form of wages. It appears in a form in which what remains hidden is the surplus value extracted by the capitalist within the production process. Thus, his profit appears as “money that is born out of money itself” without the mediation of human living labour.

Consequences of the above for a theory of ideology

1. Whereas in the *German Ideology* the whole discussion on ideology was focusing on the terrain of theoretical, elaborated ideas, now we “get down” to the terrain of the everyday, practical forms of consciousness.
2. We have a more complicated understanding of the inversion process itself and the appearances, hence also of the falsity of ideology. More specifically:

We have the corroboration of the idea that ideology is sth objective and necessary, and its understanding as a phenomenon characterized by sth that resembles with materiality (characteristic in this relevance is Marx’s phrase “objective mental form”). Consequently, here we are far away from a sharp separation between matter and spirit, a separation implied sometimes in the earlier Marxian work.

We also have the idea that how things appear or look like is intertwined with how things are, that the appearance of things is part of their reality. In other words, appearance does not only lie within the human mind, but in the things themselves that people handle in their everyday lives, things like commodities and money. 3. The above entail that we are not anymore close to a theory of ideology which we detect in the *German Ideology*, a theory focusing on the view that ideology constitutes a detachment from reality. In the analyses around the commodity fetishism we have anymore the idea that, on the contrary, ideology is produced rather from the attachment to reality, more specifically to its surface level. So, science, on the other side, is not conceived as a revelation of reality, but a penetration to its deeper level.

1. The above also entail some changes concerning the conception of the ruling ideology: in *Capital* we have rather the idea that it is not the case of ideas which predominate because of the predominance of a certain social class in the space of material and intellectual production, but that these ideas are produced so to speak automatically or spontaneously from the society itself where this class rules. An extension of this is that here we have the idea that there is a kind of deceitfulness integrated in the very structures of the capitalist society (Eagleton) and mechanisms of their naturalization working from “below”.
2. Due to the above, *Capital* is much more closer than the *German Ideology* to the idea that capitalism has a peculiar power of reproducing itself through the legitimization of its rule.

A general assessment of these later analyses of Marx:

What *Capital* permits us to deduce for a theory of ideology is considered to be an advancement with respect to Marxian earlier views, especially in the *German Ideology*, because here we have anymore the expansion of the concept so that it can embrace the manifestations of ideology within everyday life; and we have also a more sophisticated approach of the subject, since we have a more complex and rich understanding of the falsity of ideology and the social mechanisms which produce it.

However for several scholars (among them, also Eagleton), we should not restrict the understanding of ideology in its production on the basis of the commodity form, because, besides anything else, this would not easily avoid a reductionist and economistic understanding.

**Engels**

In 1893, in a letter he wrote to Mehring, Engels formulates a slightly different, to what he have already seen, conception of what ideology is: that one does not realize his/her real motivations behind his ideas and actions. This is rather close to the idea of “rationalization” in psychoanalysis (Eagleton). So, there is the question of how exactly does this conception of Engels relate to the other conceptions of ideology that one can detect in the Marxian work.