CDSMS

CHRISTIAN FUCHS

CRITICAL THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet.

Critical Theory of Communication:
New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet

Christian Fuchs

The full text of this book has been peer-reviewed to ensure
high academic standards. For full review policies, see:
http://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/publish/

To read the free, open access version of this book online, visit http://dx.doi.org/10.16997/book1 or scan this QR code with your mobile device:

Contents

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Critical Theory of Communication: New Readings of Lukács, Adorno, Marcuse, Honneth and Habermas in the Age of the Internet

The task of this book is to provide new readings about how some specific works of authors related to the Frankfurt School matter for critically understanding communication today. It presents five essays that review aspects of the works of Georg Lukács, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Axel Honneth and Jürgen Habermas and applies these ideas for grounding foundations of a critical theory of communication in the age of the Internet and social media. Each chapter is dedicated to revisiting specific ideas of one of these thinkers. The book is intended as a reader on aspects of cultural Marxism in the digital age. The chapters can also be read independently.

The approach this book takes is that it a) discusses elements of specific critical theories and b) relates them to the topics of communication and the Internet. It thereby wants to contribute to a renewal and sublation of the critical theory of communication as a critical theory of society.

In this introduction, I first discuss elements of a critical theory of society (section 1.1). Second, I point out the importance of Karl Marx's works for critical theory (section 1.2). Third, I provide some background on the Frankfurt School (section 1.3). Fourth, I argue that for a critical theory of communication it is a feasible approach to link the works of Frankfurt School to other critical cultural and social theories (section 1.4). Fifth, I comment on the relationship of the Frankfurt School and Heidegger (section 1.5). Finally, I provide an overview of this book's chapters (section 1.6).

The Frankfurt School is one of the traditions in Marxist theory that has drawn our attention to the importance of studying culture. It does so with profound engagements with ideology, the culture industry and communication. In the twenty-first century, digital culture and digital communication have become important phenomena. It is therefore an interesting task to revisit some of the writings of Frankfurt School thinkers in the light of these developments. This book is not an introduction to critical theory, a textbook or a historical account. Rather, it focuses on some selected key areas of critical theory as building blocks for the foundations of a critical theory of communication that goes beyond Habermas.

Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis (1992) argue in the introduction to the first volume of the three-part collected volume *Open Marxism*, that with the rise of neoliberalism and postmodern thought, it became fashionable in the 1980s to turn against Marxism and criticise it as outdated, old-fashioned, reductionist, deterministic, and a closed system of thought. They question this tendency and argue for open Marxism as a methodological approach. Open Marxism sees the 'openness of Marxist categories themselves' (Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis, 1992, xi).

> "Closed Marxism" is Marxism which does either or both of two interrelated things: it accepts the horizons of a given world as its own theoretical horizon and/or it announces a determinism which is causalist or teleological as the case may be (xii).

They mention Adorno and Lukács as two of the figures in the tradition of open Marxism (Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis, 1992, xii).

> The Open Marxism project does not aim to reconstruct Marx's thought, in the sense of presenting an interpretation which masquerades as the sole 'correct' one. Such an approach would not be helpful, for it would presuppose the possibility of a uniform and finished interpretation of Marx's work (Bonefeld, Gunn, Holloway and Psychopedis 1995, 1).

Comparable to Bonefeld, Gunn, Holloway and Psychopedis, Wolfgang Fritz Haug (1985) argues for plural Marxism, a project that is based on the dialectic of unity and diversity (Haug 1985, 12).

> Marxism does not simply exist, but is becoming. Marxism can only exist as process. Marxism's truth cannot be organised in a number of phrases, but only in the process of the inconclusive engagement of differences with each other. […] Marxism is not a given, there are Marxisms. Marxism exists in the plural. […] [Marxism requires] convergence in divergence. (Haug 1985, 20)

In contemporary society, we have witnessed a certain revitalised interest in Marx, the critique of class and capitalism, and socialism. The basic trigger of this interest was the global economic crisis. In this situation, we need an open cultural Marxism in three respects. If one looks at contemporary Marxist discussions, publications and conferences, then issues relating to communication and culture are often treated as having minor, secondary importance and as having mere superstructural character. At the same time, it is, however, difficult to deny the significant role of cultural labour and communications in contemporary society. Countering dominant trends, I have argued for a media and communication studies-focused reading of Marx and Marxism (Fuchs 2016).

First, open cultural Marxism can revisit some of the contributions to cultural Marxism in an open manner. The Frankfurt School is an important tradition in cultural Marxism. One should, however, not reify particular traditions or thinkers, but practice an open conversation between various Marxist approaches. Marxists still often like to treat themselves mutually as their worst enemies, accusing each other, for example, of interpreting Marx incorrectly, not having understood this or that aspect of Marx or another critical approach, not being Marxist at all, being orthodox Marxists, etc. They forget who their real political and theoretical opponents are. Where one should expect comradely behaviour, one sometimes only encounters dogmatism and sectarianism.

The second dimension of open cultural Marxism is that it is time for Marxism to open up further to culture and communication as theoretical and political issues that matter in contemporary capitalism. In this book, the focus is on particular topics and categories in cultural Marxism: Lukács' concept of cultural work and ideological labour (chapter 2), Adorno's critical dialectical theory of knowledge (chapter 3), Marcuse's dialectics as foundation for the analysis of social media's dialectics (chapter 4), Lukács' and Honneth's concepts of alienation and reification in the context of Facebook (chapter 5), Habermas and the dialectical critical theory of communication (chapter 6). The book suggests that knowledge, culture, communication, work, labour, ideology, alienation, reification and dialectics are some of the key categories for the foundations of a dialectical critical theory of communication. It does not have the aim to formulate such a theory, but rather provides readings that contribute to its foundations.

Critical theory is itself dialectical, which means that each new contribution relates to older contributions and sublates them in a constructive manner. A critical theory is therefore not a closed universe, but an open endeavour that cross-references other critical approaches. The six chapters in this book therefore also put some of the discussed approaches into dialogue: chapter 1 focuses not just on Lukács, but also points out Adorno's and Lukács' different understandings of ontology, as well as Habermas' interpretation of Lukács. The chapter on Adorno (chapter 2) includes a discussion of how Adorno and Lukács' aesthetic theories differ. It also relates Adorno's contributions to a theory of knowledge to Habermas' distinction of three forms of knowledge. The

chapter on Honneth (chapter 4) includes a comparison of Honneth's concept of alienation to the ones by Rahel Jaeggi and Hartmut Rosa, two other contemporary critical theorists. It shows how Honneth bases his notion of alienation on Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*. Based on this discussion, I develop multidimensional concepts of alienation and appropriation that are grounded in the works of Marx, Lukács and Honneth.

Questioning this approach, this book does not argue for a reification of the Frankfurt School, but rather for an open dialogue in cultural Marxism that opens up debates and lines of communication between thinkers related to the Frankfurt School and other cultural Marxists such as Raymond Williams, Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, or Ferruccio Rossi-Landi.

Third, this book also wants to open up Marxist discussion in respect to the way we engage with the works of thinkers in cultural Marxism. It argues for seeing the rich character of cultural Marxism and to not only focus on single works that have acquired a cult status. There are alternative, lesser-known works of cultural Marxism that are very rich and can, just like the most recognised writings, inspire contemporary debates. In respect to Lukács and Adorno, most readers first and foremost think of *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukács 1923/1971) and *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception* (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 94–136) when hearing these names. Focusing only on single works does not do justice to the richness, plurality and complexity of the writings of key figures in cultural Marxism. This book also seeks to stimulate the engagement with lesser-known texts in cultural Marxism.

It should not be a disappointment for the reader to hear that this book is not predominantly a re-engagement with these two works. Rather, I want to open up the debate by drawing your attention to alternative, lesser-known works, such as Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being*, Adorno's *Hegel: Three Studies,* and Adorno's *On Subject and Object*. There is a danger that the focus on single, well-known works reduces the engagement with cultural Marxism to a one-dimensional, reified and stereotypical analysis. In respect to Lukács and Adorno, it is certainly true that their major works are key readings for understanding ideology.

My point in the book at hand is that the tradition of the Frankfurt School has broader relevance for a critical theory of culture and communication and is not limited to ideology critique. For example, Lukács' alternative works also help us to frame cultural labour and Adorno's alternative works can inspire a critical theory of knowledge. Cultural Marxism should be open for an engagement with alternative works. Lukács' *Ontology* generalises his theory of reification, which he formulated in *History and Class Consciousness*, into a cultural materialist and dialectical critical theory of society. It is a key work for a critical theory of culture and communication. Those interested in *History and Class Consciousness* will be pleased to hear that chapter 5 in this book starts off with a discussion of this work and engages with the way Axel Honneth interpreted Lukács' concept of reification for a critical theory of recognition.

1.1. What is Critical Theory?

1.1.1. Definitions of Critical Theory

Lash (2002) distinguishes between dialectical critique based on Hegel and Marx and aporetic critique based on Kant and influenced by post-structuralism. Tyson (2006) identifies the following types of critical theories: psychoanalytic criticism, Marxist criticism, feminist criticism, new criticism, reader-response criticism, structuralist criticism, deconstructive criticism, new historical and cultural criticism, lesbian, gay and queer criticism, African-American criticism, postcolonial criticism. Tallack (1995) lists the following critical approaches: Marxism, structuralism/post-structuralism, psychoanalytical theory, feminism, post-foundational ethics/politics. Agger (2006) speaks of critical theories in the plural and thereby means approaches such as postmodernist theory, the Frankfurt School, feminist theory and cultural studies.

   Some scholars understand critical theory as the works of the Frankfurt School, a tradition of critical thinking that originated in the works of scholars like Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor W. Adorno (Held 1980; Wiggershaus 1995). Its starting point is the work of Karl Marx (Held 1980, 15; Macey 2001, 75; Payne 1997: 118; Rush 2004, 9; Wiggershaus 1995, 5). For Horkheimer and his colleagues, critical theory 'was a camouflage label for "Marxist theory"' (Wiggershaus 1995, 5) when they were in exile from the Nazis in the USA, where they were concerned about being exposed as communist thinkers and therefore took care in the categories they employed. There are definitions of Critical Theory that couple the usage of this term exclusively to the Frankfurt School or Habermasian Frankfurt School (see for example: Forst 1999, 143; Honneth 2007, 72).

1.1.2. Marxist Encyclopaedias

The entry for Kritische Theorie (Critical Theory) in the *Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften* (European Encyclopaedia of Philosophy and Science), a four-volume Marxist encyclopaedia of philosophy edited by Hans Jörg Sandkühler (1990), only provides a cross-reference to the entry Frankfurter Schule (Frankfurt School), which means that this volume assumes an identity of the terms 'critical theory' and the 'Frankfurt School'. A second Marxist encyclopaedia has taken a different approach: Gerhard Schweppenhäuser and Frigga Haug have written the entry 'Kritische Theorie' (Critical Theory) in the *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus* (Historical-Critical Dictionary of Marxism), the largest encyclopaedic project of Marxist thought (see http://www.inkrit.de/hkwm/hkwm-index.htm).

Schweppenhäuser and Haug define critical theory as

> emancipatory social philosophy. It tries to unite in *one* movement of
> thought the analysis and critique of forms of practice as well as types of
> reason and rationality of bourgeois-capitalist societies since the middle
> of the 19th century until today. Its starting point is Marx's theory of the
> law of value as the foundation of commodity-producing societies that is
> derived from the analysis of the value-form. This theory is at the same
> time a critique of the political economy, i.e. demonstration of the capa-
> bility and limit of this science for the explanation of the value-form with
> its social and ideological consequences (Schweppenhäuser and Haug
> 2012, 197).

The two authors stress the status of Critical Theory as critical philosophy and
critical economics. They understand it as a broad approach that is grounded in
Marx's thought and works. They, however, also acknowledge that the Frankfurt
School introduced the term and therefore draw a distinction between criti-
cal theory as the more general approach and Critical Theory as the Frankfurt
School-approach.

1.1.3. Dimensions of Critical Theory

An approach that neither lists approaches nor identifies critical theory only
with persons associated with the Frankfurt School is to identify dimensions
of critical theory at the content level. In scholarly writings, critical theory in
general is often designated in lower-case letters, whereas the Frankfurt School
is labelled as 'Critical Theory'. I do not make such a strict separation because I
think the overall approach of the Frankfurt School is quite generalised.

We can identify five dimensions of a critical theory of society:

1. Critical ethics.
2. Critique of domination, exploitation and alienation.
3. Dialectical reason.
4. Ideology critique.
5. Struggles and political praxis.

Both Marx and Frankfurt School authors stress all of these dimensions. The
Frankfurt School should, in my view, not be read as a particularistic approach,
but as a formulation of general foundations of Marxist philosophy and Marxist
cultural theory.

For grounding an understanding of critical theory that specifies dimensions
of the critique of society, some foundational texts of the Frankfurt School are
helpful. Marcuse's (1988/1968, 134–158) essay *Philosophy and Critical Theory*,

Horkheimer's (2002, 188–252) essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*, Marcuse's (1988/1968, 43–87) article *The Concept of Essence* and the section The Foundations of the Dialectical Theory of Society in Marcuse's (1941a, 258–322) book *Reason and Revolution*. These foundational texts make clear that the project of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory is not a narrow one focused on particular authors or approaches, but that Critical Theory should rather be understood as Marx-inspired and -influenced enquiries into the realities of power, exploitation and domination.

1.1.4. Critical Ethics

Critical theory has a 'concern with human happiness' (Marcuse 1988/1968, 135) and uses the Hegelian method of comparing essence and existence because in capitalism 'what exists is not immediately and already rational' (136). This essence can be found in man's positive capacities (such as striving for freedom, sociality, co-operation) and it has the ethical implication that universal conditions should be created that allow all humans to realize these capacities:

> That man is a rational being, that this being requires freedom, and that happiness is his highest good are universal propositions whose progressive impetus derives precisely from their universality. Universality gives them an almost revolutionary character, for they claim that all, and not merely this or that particular person, should be rational, free, and happy (Marcuse 1988/1968, 152).

1.1.5. Critique of Domination, Exploitation and Alienation

Critical theory holds that 'man can be more than a manipulable subject in the production process of class society' (Marcuse 1988/1968, 153). The goal of critical theory is the transformation of society as a whole (Horkheimer 2002, 219) so that a 'society without injustice' (221) emerges that is shaped by 'reasonableness, and striving for peace, freedom, and happiness' (222), 'in which man's actions no longer flow from a mechanism but from his own decision' (229), and that is 'a state of affairs in which there will be no exploitation or oppression' (241).

Marx treated Kant's fundamental philosophical questions about man and his knowledge, activities and hopes (What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? What is the human?) in a specific way. He established a critical philosophy/theory and critical political economy that 'demonstrate the concrete forces and tendencies that prevented and those that promoted' the goal of a society that benefits all and the historical possibilities of such a society (Marcuse 1941a, 321). So Marx's reformulation of Kant's questions was his categorical imperative – the critique of domination and exploitation.

1.1.6. Dialectical Reason

In Marx's works, concepts that describe the existence of capitalism (profit, surplus value, worker, capital, commodity, etc.) are dialectical because they 'transcend the given social reality in the direction of another historical structure which is present as a tendency in the given reality' and represent the essence of man (Marcuse 1988/1968, 86).

> If, for instance, it is said that concepts such as wages, the value of labor, and entrepreneurial profit are only categories of manifestations behind which are hidden the 'essential relations' of the second set of concepts, it is also true that these essential relations represent the truth of the manifestations only insofar as the concepts which comprehend them already contain their own negation and transcendence – the image of a social organization without surplus value. All materialist concepts contain an accusation and an imperative (Marcuse 1988/1968, 86).

Marx's categories 'are negative and at the same time positive' (Marcuse 1941a, 295). The concepts of contradiction (negation) and negation of the negation are crucial for critical theory: in capitalism, every fact is 'a negation and restriction of real possibilities' (282). 'Private property is a fact, but at the same time it is a negation of man's collective appropriation of nature' (Marcuse 1941a, 282). 'The historical character of the Marxian dialectic embraces the prevailing negativity as well as its negation. […] the negation of the negation […] does not steadily and automatically grow out of the earlier state; it can be set free only by an autonomous act on the part of men' (Marcuse 1941a, 315). The dialectic of capitalism has a structural-objective part; capital accumulation's contradictions result in crisis. These contradictions can only be overcome by the subjective force of the dialectic: political struggle (Marcuse 1941a, 316–319).

1.1.7. Ideology Critique

'Basic to the present form of social organization, the antagonisms of the capitalist production process, is the fact that the central phenomena connected with this process do not immediately appear to men as what they are "in reality", but in masked, 'perverted' form' (Marcuse 1988/1968, 70).

1.1.8. Struggles and Political Praxis

For the Frankfurt School, critical theory aims at and supports social struggles for a better world: 'The materialist protest and materialist critique originated in the struggle of oppressed groups for better living conditions and remain permanently

associated with the actual process of this struggle' (Marcuse 1988/1968, 141). 'The philosophical ideal of a better world and of true Being are incorporated into the practical aim of struggling mankind, where they take on a human form' (Marcuse 1988/1968, 142).

1.2. Critical Theory and Karl Marx

The six dimensions of a critical theory of society can also be found in Karl Marx's works, which shows the importance of his thought for any critical theory.

1.2.1. Critical Theory has a Normative Dimension

Criticism 'measures individual existence against essence' (Marx 1997, 61–62). This means that critical theory is normative and realistic. It argues that it is possible to logically provide reasonably grounded arguments about what a good society is, how the good society relates to conditions that all humans require to survive (the essence of humans and society), and how we can judge existing societies according to which extent they provide humane conditions or not. Marx found it important to not just analyse capitalism academically, but also to politically communicate this analysis. This explains his own practice as a journalist and political actor.

1.2.2. Critical Theory is a Critique of Domination and Exploitation

Critical theory questions all thought and practices that justify or uphold domination and exploitation. Marx formulated the categorical imperative of critical theory: it is the 'categoric imperative to overthrow all conditions in which man is a degraded, enslaved, neglected, contemptible being' (Marx 1997, 257–258). Critical theory wants to show that a good life is possible for all and that domination and exploitation alienate humans from achieving such a society. For Marx, the 'task of philosophy […] is to unmask human self-alienation' (Marx 1997, 251). In deconstructing alienation, domination and exploitation, critical theory also makes demands for a self-determined, participatory and just democracy. Such a society is not only a grassroots political democracy, but also an economic democracy, in which the producers control the production process and the means and outcomes of production. Critical theory wants to make the world conscious of its own possibilities. The 'world has long dreamed of something of which it only has to become conscious in order to possess it in actuality' (Marx 1997, 214).

One can interpret Marxist approaches and critical theory as a form of political communication: they communicate fundamental deformations of society and

humanity and potentials for political change and struggles by which humans can overcome these deformations.

Critical theory analyses how capital accumulation, surplus value exploitation and the transformation of aspects of society into commodities (commodification) work and what the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are: 'In the critique of political economy, therefore, we shall examine the basic categories, uncover the contradiction introduced by the free-trade system, and bring out the consequences of both sides of the contradiction' (Engels 1843/1844, 175).

Critical theory stresses the notions of technological rationality and instrumental reasons. In capitalism, there is a tendency for freedom of action to be replaced by instrumental decision-making on the part of capital and the state so that the individual is expected to only react and not to act. The two concepts are grounded in the notion of reification, which is a reformulation of Marx's (1867) concept of fetishism. The media in capitalism are modes of reification in a manifold way: first, they reduce humans to the status of consumers of advertisements. Second, culture is in capitalism to a large degree connected to the commodity form, in the form of cultural commodities that are bought by consumers and in the form of audience and user commodities that media consumers/Internet prosumers become themselves. Third, in order to reproduce its existence, capitalism has to present itself as the best possible (or only possible) system and makes use of the media in order to try to keep this message (in all its differentiated forms) hegemonic. The first and the second dimension constitute the economic dimension of instrumental reason, the third dimension the ideological form of instrumental reason. Capitalist media are necessarily means of advertising and commodification and spaces of ideology. Advertisement and cultural commodification make humans an instrument for economic profit accumulation. Ideology aims at instilling the belief in the system of capital and commodities into human's subjectivity. The goal is that human thoughts and actions do not go beyond capitalism, do not question and revolt against this system and thereby play the role of instruments for the perpetuation of capitalism. It is of course an important question to which extent ideology is always successful and to which degree it is questioned and resisted, but the crucial aspect about ideology is that it encompasses strategies and attempts to make human subjects instrumental in the reproduction of domination and exploitation.

1.2.3. Critical Theory uses Dialectical Reasoning as Method of Analysis

The dialectical method identifies contradictions. Contradictions are 'the source of all dialectics' (Marx 1867, 744). Dialectics tries to show that and how contemporary society and its moments are shaped by contradictions. Contradictions result in the circumstance that society is dynamic and that

capitalism assures the continuity of domination and exploitation by changing the way these phenomena are organised. Dialectics 'regards every historically developed form as being in a fluid state, in motion, and therefore grasps its transient aspects as well' (Marx 1867, 103). The 'movement of capitalist society is full of contradictions' (Marx 1867, 103). In a contradiction, one pole of the dialectic can only exist by the way of the opposed pole. They require and exclude each other at the same time. In a dominative society (such as capitalism), contradictions cause problems and are to a certain extent also the seeds for overcoming these problems. They have positive potentials and negative realities at the same time.

Marx analysed (see Fuchs 2016) capitalism's contradictions between:

non-owners/owners
the poor/the rich
misery/wealth
workers/capitalists
use value/exchange value
concrete labour/abstract labour
the simple form of value/the relative and expanded form of value
social relations of humans/relations of things
the fetish of commodities and money/fetishist thinking
the circulation of commodities/the circulation of money
commodities/money
labour power/wages
subject/object
labour process/valorisation process
subject of labour (labour power worker)/the means of production (object)
variable capital/constant capital
surplus labour/surplus product
necessary labour time/surplus labour time
single worker/co-operation
single company/industry sector
single capital/competing capitals
production/consumption
productive forces/relations of production.

The tension between opposing poles can be resolved in a process that Hegel and Marx called 'Aufhebung' (sublation) and 'negation of the negation': a new/third quality or a new system emerges from the contradiction between two poles. Sublation can take place at different levels of society, either relatively frequently in order to enable a dynamic of domination or infrequently in situations of revolution when domination is questioned. So in capitalism, contradictions are frequently sublated in order to enable capital accumulation:

use value/exchange value => value
concrete labour/abstract labour => productive force of labour
the simple form of value/the relative and expanded form of value => the money form
social relations of humans/relations of things => fetishism (the fetish of commodities and money/fetishistic thinking)
the circulation of commodities/the circulation of money => the circulation of capital commodities/money => capital
labour power/wages => surplus labour
subject/object => product
labour process/valorisation process => the production process of commodities
subject of labour (labour power, worker)/the means of production (object) => labour process/products
variable capital/constant capital => profit
surplus labour/surplus product => surplus value
necessary labour time/surplus labour time => absolute surplus value production + relative surplus value production + class struggle for reduction of the working day
single worker/co-operation => surveillance and control in the production process + alienation
single company/industry sector => capital concentration/monopoly
single capital/competing capitals => capital concentration + monopolies production/consumption => crisis
subject of labour (humans) + object of labour (technology) => technologies of means of exploitation
 (Fuchs 2016).

 But there are also contradictions in capitalism that are persistent and not frequently sublated. They are at the heart of human misery in capitalism. Their sublation can only be achieved by political struggle and means the end of capitalism. These are especially the antagonisms between productive forces/relations of production, owners/non-owners, the poor/the rich, misery/wealth, workers/capitalists.

The contradiction between productive forces and relations of production is partly sublated in crisis situations, but reconstitutes itself during the course of the crisis. Its true sublation can only be achieved by the overthrow of capitalism. If in capitalism an important contradiction is the one between the owning and the non-owning class, then the goal of critical theory is the representation of the interest of oppressed and exploited groups and the overcoming of class-based society. 'It can only represent a class whose historical task is the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production and the final abolition of all classes – the proletariat' (Marx 1867, 98).

In formulating a critique of domination and exploitation, critical theory develops 'new principles for the world out of the principles of the world'

(Marx 1997, 214). Dialectical thinking argues that the foundations of a classless society develop already within capitalism, that capitalism on the one hand produces new forms of co-operation that are on the other hand – within class relations – forms of domination. The forces of production are in capitalism at the same time destructive forces.

Hegel and Marx's concept of dialectics can help scholars to understand the fundamentally contradictory character of communication in modern society: communication doesn't just communicate interests, but communicates such interests due to the antagonistic structure of modern society in opposition to somebody. Critical scholarship analyses communication by identifying political contradictions and the ways in which these contradictions are communicated in public or ideologically masked and distorted.

1.2.4. Ideology Critique: Critical Theory is a Critique of Ideology

Ideologies are practices and modes of thought that present aspects of human existence that are historical and changeable as eternal and unchangeable. Ideology critique wants to remind us that everything that exists in society is created by humans in social relationships and that social relationships can be changed. It wants to bring 'problems into the self-conscious human form' (Marx 1997, 214), which means that it wants to make humans conscious of the problems they are facing in society and the causes of these problems. Arguments like 'there is no alternative to capitalism, neoliberalism, competition, egoism, racism, etc. because man is egoistic, competitive, etc.' forget about the social character of society. They create the impression that the results of social activity are unchangeable things. Critical theory provides an 'analysis of the mystical consciousness that is unclear about itself' (Marx 1997, 214).

In modern society, communication regularly takes on ideological forms. Such ideologies try to advance specific interests by communicating in ways that present certain groups positively, opponents and enemies negatively, play down or conceal negative realities about specific groups and overstate or invent negative dimensions of opponents and enemies.

1.2.5. Critical Theory is Connected to Struggles for a Just and Fair Society. It is an Intellectual Dimension of Struggles

Critical theory provides a 'self-understanding […] of the age concerning its struggle and wishes' (Marx 1997, 315), it can 'show the world why it actually struggles' and is 'taking sides […] with actual struggles' (Marx 1997, 214). This means that critical theory can help to explain the causes, conditions, potentials and limits of struggles. Critical theory rejects the argument that academia and science should and can be value-free. It rather argues that all

thought and theories are shaped by political worldviews. The reasons why a person is interested in a certain topic, aligns himself/herself with a certain school of thought, develops a particular theory and not another one, refers to certain authors and not others, are deeply political because modern society is shaped by conflicts of interests and therefore for surviving and asserting themselves, scholars have to make choices, enter strategic alliances and defend their positions against others.

In conflict-based and antagonistic societies, academic writing and speaking, scholarship and science are always forms of political communication: they are not just discovery, knowledge construction or invention, but besides knowledge creation also a production and communication of knowledge about knowledge – the political standpoints of the scholars themselves. Critical theory holds not only that theory is always political, but also that it should develop analyses of society and concepts that assist struggles against interests and ideas that justify domination and exploitation.

1.2.6. Beyond Traditional Marxism and Post-Marxism

Moishe Postone (2015, 4) suggests 'the importance of a renewed encounter with Marx's critical analysis of capitalism'. Such an encounter would have to avoid the mistakes of traditional Marxism and post-Marxism. The new crisis of capitalism would have questioned the 'one-sidedness of what have been termed the cultural and linguistic turns' (5) of postmodernist approaches. One should, however, avoid a return to traditional Marxism, an interpretative framework of capitalism that foregrounds class, exploitation and that 'socialism entails the historical coming-to-itself of labor' (7).

Problems that the traditional framework has encountered would include:

> the non-emancipatory character of "actually existing socialism", and the historical trajectory of its rise and decline which parallels that of state-interventionist capitalism (suggesting they were similarly situated historically); the growing importance of scientific knowledge and advanced technology in production (which seemed to call into question the labor theory of value); growing criticisms of technological progress and growth (which opposed the productivism of much traditional Marxism), and the increased importance of non-class-based social identities (Postone 2015, 8).

A contemporary critical theory needs to be a critical theory of capitalism, but requires along with the critique of capitalism also a critical theory of the state, labour, knowledge, technology, the environment, and the relationship of class and identities (including ethnicity and gender identities).

1.2.7. Beyond Labour Fetishism and Cultural Fetishism

Traditional Marxism has been grounded in labour fetishism that glorifies toil and wage-labour as long as it is toil and wage-labour in a socialist framework under which the means of production are owned collectively. It has advanced a Protestant celebration of hard labour. Postmodernism has in contrast been based on cultural fetishism: it has dissolved the economy and class into the realm of symbols, culture and signification. I discuss this culturalist tendency with the example of Jean Baudrillard's works in this book's section 6.3 (chapter 6).

Orthodox Marxism's labour fetishism is for example evident in article 12 of the 1936 Soviet Constitution introduced under Stalin:

> In the U.S.S.R., labour is a duty and a matter of honour for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat". The principle applied in the U.S.S.R. is that of socialism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his labour".

Jan Pakulski and Malcolm Waters (1996) wrote a book called *The Death of Class*, in which they argue that their analysis brings 'the good news that class has collapsed and is decomposing. […] [Contemporary society] is based on subscription to lifestyles that form around consumption patterns, information flows, cognitive agreements, aesthetic preferences and value commitments. Material and power phenomena are reducible to these symbolically manifested lifestyle and value phenomena' (Pakulski and Waters 1996, 7, 155). The death of class has proved to be an illusion in the very realm of culture: there is a high level of precarious freelance labour in the media, cultural and digital industries (Fuchs 2015a). New capital accumulation strategies in the culture industry involve the crowdsourcing of labour to unpaid users on the Internet (Fuchs 2014a). The culture economy is just like other parts of capitalism a realm that is shaped by class and exploitation.

1.2.8. Postmodernism = Stalinism

These are just prototypical expressions of labourism and culturalism. On the one hand, postmodernism and Stalinism seem to be quite opposed. On the other hand, they have a quite similar logic: they are both reductionist and one-dimensional. Whereas labourism reduces life to labour and toil, culturalism reduces the economy and society to culture. One fetishises labour, the other symbols. Both do not have a satisfactory answer to the question of how the economy and culture are related. The imperialism and fetishism of labour has resulted in political totalitarianism and a lack of understanding of the good

life. The imperialism and fetishism of culture has completely neglected that there is an economy shaped by class and has resulted in a theoretical cynicism that is preoccupied with postmodern language games, in which the postmodern text is a symbolic fetishism. It is devoid of radical politics or a compelling vision of a good society. Stalinism and postmodernism converge in the logic of reductionism.

Today we need readings of Marx that rethink the relationship of work and communication, labour and ideology, productive forces and language, class and identity, the economy and culture (Fuchs 2015a). I suggest that a way forward is to bring Frankfurt School's critical theory into a dialogue with Raymond Williams' approach of Cultural Materialism. Dialectical Cultural Materialism can thereby be used for grounding foundations of a dialectical critical theory of communication. In response to the overestimation of culture, traditional Marxism has often simply neglected engaging with information, communication and signification although cultural labour and the means of communication have at the same time become more important in contemporary capitalism. A critical theory of communication allows us to think about these topics in a dialectical, non-reductionist manner.

1.2.9. The Law of Value in the Computer Age

The rise of computer technology, science and knowledge in production has further deepened the antagonism between value and labour time. Marx has described this contradiction in the *Grundrisse*:

> What capital adds is that it increases the surplus labour time of the mass by all the means of art and science, because its wealth consists directly in the appropriation of surplus labour time; since value directly its purpose, not use value. It is thus, despite itself, instrumental in creating the means of social disposable time, in order to reduce labour time for the whole society to a diminishing' minimum, and thus to free everyone's time for their own development. But its tendency always, on the one side, to create disposable time, on the other, to convert it into surplus labour. If it succeeds too well at the first, then it suffers from surplus production, and then necessary labour is interrupted, because no surplus labour can be realized by capital (Marx 1857/1858, 708).

It is a mistake to assume that the rise of digital capitalism brings about the end of the law of value and the labour theory of value. Negri (1991, 172) argues that in the *Grundrisse* the 'Law of Value dies'. Virno (2004, 100) says that the law of value is 'shattered and refuted by capitalist development itself'. Hardt and Negri (2004, 145) argue that the 'temporal unity of labor as the basic measure of value today makes no sense'. Vercellone (2010, 90) writes that 'cognitive capitalism' has

resulted in the 'crisis of the law of value' and 'a crisis of measurement that desta-bilizes the very sense of the fundamental categories of the political economy; labor, capital and obviously, value' (90). Value's contradictions have been deep-ened in digital capitalism, but as long as capitalism exists, value is the foundation of the economy and there is capital's exploitation of surplus-value generating labour that is expended over time. Postone (2008, 126) stresses, in this respect, that the crisis of value in capitalism is 'not simply superseded by a new form of wealth', but rather value 'remains the necessary structural precondition of capi-talist society'. 'Capitalism *does* give rise to the possibility of its own negation, but it *does not* automatically evolve into something else' (Postone 2008, 127). One of the theoretical tasks today for a critical theory is to think about the changes of value in the digital age (see Fisher and Fuchs 2015).

1.2.10. Work and Labour

A contemporary critical theory should both avoid labour fetishism and cultural fetishism. This does however not mean that we have to read all of Marx's cat-egories as being limited to the historical specificity of capitalism. Marx elabo-rated a critique of capitalism simultaneously with a critical theory of society. The dialectic of his categories points out the specificity of capitalism and at the same time more general features of realities that point beyond capitalism. I have in this respect suggested a reading of Marx that distinguishes between work and labour (Fuchs 2014a, 2015a, 2016): work is a general feature of all societies. It is human social production that creates goods that satisfy human needs. In capitalism, work is value-generating abstract labour that abstracts from human needs and organises the economy based on the structural needs of capital as self-valorising value through the exploitation of labour. Capitalism's value and commodity form entails an abstraction from human needs, concrete social relations and individuals, the social act of production, use-values, and from the immediate experience of violence (violence takes on the structural form immanent in the dull compulsion of exchange, although also direct forms of violence, such as slavery, continue to exist in capitalism) so that 'society is governed by the movement of real economic abstractions' (Bonefeld 2014, 24).

Whereas the etymological root of terms such as work and Werktätigkeit (German) is creating, acting, doing, the etymological root of words such as labour and Arbeit is toil, slavery and hardship (Fuchs 2015a, chapter 2). Arendt (1958, 80–81) confirms the etymological distinction between on the one hand ergazesthai (Greek)/facere and fabricari (Latin)/work (English)/werken (Ger-man)/ouvrer (French) and on the other hand ponein (Greek)/laborare (Latin)/labour (English)/arbeiten (German)/travailler (French).

The point is that technological development allows us to demand the aboli-tion of labour, value and class (i.e. of both capital and the proletariat) as the potential for the transformation of the entire economy and society. This does,

however, not imply the abolition, but rather the transformation of the world of work towards a self-determined, self-managed, self-instituting, well-rounded and democratic economy free of toil and free to provide a good, pleasurable and fulfilling life for all. 'Labor in capitalism, then, is both labor, as we transhistorically and commonsensically understand it, according to Marx, and a historically specific socially mediating activity' (Postone 2015, 12). As it is confusing to use the term labour for both dimensions, the distinction between labour and work is more feasible.

1.2.11. Werner Bonefeld's Critical Theory

Werner Bonefeld is a professor of politics at York University. He has been influenced by Adorno and the Frankfurt School and has together with people such as John Holloway, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis established the open Marxism approach. He is one of the thinkers, who have made an interesting contribution to the development of contemporary critical theory. In his book *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy*, Bonefeld (2014) provides for example a criticism of the logic that the enemy of one's enemy is one's friend, an analysis of the difference between racism and anti-Semitism, and argues that primitive accumulation is a continuous feature of capital because workers' separation from the products and the surplus-value they create is inherent in capital accumulation itself. He also makes the point that 'class is the critical category of the entire system of capitalist wealth' (102) so that labour and capital appear 'on the labour market as equal subjects', which 'masks their fundamental inequality' (106). 'Violence hides in the civilized form of the equivalence exchange relations as economic compulsion' (95).

Bonefeld stresses that abstract labour is a category specific for capitalism and cannot be a transhistorical category, because then the double character of labour as abstract and concrete labour could not be a defining feature of capitalist commodity production. The demand for praxis that is based on the insight that the 'whole has to go' (223) is for Bonefeld one of critical theory's inherent features. 'Critical theory demands a praxis that fights barbarism and argues that in hell everything is hellish' (222). Engaging with Bonefeld's writing is an inspiring endeavour for anyone interested in critical theory.

Critical theory is for Bonefeld anti-reifying thinking that deconstructs fetishisms. 'The critique of political economy is thus subversive of the reified economic categories' (38). Bourgeois economics would present contemporary economic life as natural economic laws and would thereby disregard that such laws' 'validity is fundamentally social, and they are valid in and through society and society is always concrete society' (26).

> For the critique of political economy the critical issue is thus not the discovery of general economic laws of history. Rather, its object of critique

is the existent society, in which definite social relations subsist in the form of abstract economic forces, things endowed with an invisible will that "asserts itself as a regulative law of nature" (27).

Bonefeld based on these insights criticises certain Marxist approaches (such as Althusser and Balibar's theory) that assume that capitalism is an expression of some general trans-historical economic laws. 'In sum, instead of thinking out of society, worldview Marxism analyses capitalist society to discover the general economic laws and then conceives of capitalist society as a manifestation of those same general economic laws that its analysis of capitalism established' (35). In contrast to worldview Marxism, Marx would characterise 'his "materialist method" as a critique of existent social relations, not from the standpoint of some abstractly conceived materiality of labour, but from within their own conceptuality' (36).

1.2.12. Abstract and Concrete Categories in Critical Theory

Such a critique certainly is important in respect to orthodox forms of Marxism that celebrate toil and wage-labour under socialist conditions and imitate Protestant labour ethics. Bonefeld leaves open the question whether there are any categories in Marx that are not just specific for capitalism, but also for other types of society or society in general. One gets the impression that Bonefeld tends to see any such assumption as automatically reified thought that denies the sociality of the critique of the political economy's categories. Bonefeld (2014, 4) argues that especially the so-called 'new reading of Marx' approach that goes back to the works of Hans-Georg Backhaus and Helmut Reichelt, 'renounced the classical argument about trans-historically valid economic laws of development and in its stead, conceptualized the economic appearance of society as the necessary manifestation of definite social relations'.

　Marx's (1857/1858, 471–479) thoughts on the 'Forms which precede capitalist production' in the *Grundrisse* show that surplus-labour, alienation and the appropriation of the surplus product are also features of pre-capitalist societies. Value is in contrast specific for capitalism: 'The aim of this work is not the creation of value – although they may do surplus labour in order to obtain alien, i.e. surplus products in exchange – rather, its aim is sustenance of the individual proprietor and of his family, as well as of the total community' (Marx 1857/1858, 471–472). Some categories in Marx's works are characteristic for all class-based societies.

　Marx also uses categories such as the *Gattungswesen* (species-being), by which he characterises features of all societies. This does not mean that he thereby assumes the existence of natural laws in society that take place outside of human's social relations and are transhistorical. Fundamental social features of society are those social relations that humans *have to* enter, in order for the

human being and social systems to exist. They do not exist outside of history, but are concrete, recurrent social relations in and through which history is made. Such *necessary* social relations include for example social production, communication, social relations of production, reproduction, a certain degree of co-operation, consumption, the social use of means of production, etc. It is in contrast a reification of capitalism to assume that value, abstract labour, capital, money, exchange, the commodity, the division of labour or class are fundamental social features of society. Communication is necessary for all societies. One cannot not communicate in a social situation. Even if you do not say anything in a specific situation, then your silence also communicates something to others. Social relations are organised in and through communication. In class-based societies, communication takes on specific forms and has a necessary organising role of social relations that are class relations. In capitalism, communication in class relations is then oriented on the capital-labour relation.

The notion of the human as the social species-being is not something that is limited to Marx's early writings, but can also be found in his later works. In the *Grundrisse*, Marx (1857/1858, 496) for example argues: 'But human beings become individuals only through the process of history. He appears originally as a species-being'. In *Capital,* Marx continues his early idea that co-operation is a human species activity, but makes clear that it is not a static metaphysical category, but that the human species-being capacities (such as co-operation) develop historically and take in specific forms under particular societal circumstances: 'When the worker co-operates in a planned way with others, he strips off the fetters of his individuality, and develops the capabilities of his species' (Marx 1867, 447). Marx's theory certainly does not contain trans-historical reified categories that describe phenomena assert themselves as natural laws in society, but there is a range of general social categories that do not exist outside, but in and through history.

For Marx, all categories of analysis are social categories. There are, however, some categories that describe phenomena that are necessary for society in general. And there are others that describe phenomena that are necessary for particular societal formations. Marx's critique of the political economy of capitalism is by being a critical theory of capitalism at the same time a critical theory of class-based society and a critical theory of society. A critical theory of society needs to distinguish between the levels of society, class-based societies, capitalist society, contemporary capitalist society, and the dialectical mediation of these levels. Such a theory needs to take into account the dialectical of the universal, the particular and the individual at the level of its categories.

An example is the category of co-operation: Humans in all societies need to co-operate to a certain degree in order for society to exist. In class-based societies, co-operation takes on the form of a division of labour. In capitalism, co-operation takes on the form of a division of labour that is highly technified so that machine systems emerge, in which workers become appendages of capital and technology. Co-operation has a universal, a particular and an individual

dimension. It exists in society, in class-based societies and capitalist society and takes on a particular form in a specific societal formation.

Already Marx elaborated upon the dialectical relationship of general and specific categories as a fundamental epistemological principle of critical theory. This principle is most systematically expressed in the *Grundrisse*'s introduction.

1.2.13. Marx's Introduction to the Grundrisse: The Method of Ascending from the Abstract to the Concrete

In the introduction to the *Grundrisse*, Marx (1857/1858, 101) characterises his own method as 'rising from the abstract to the concrete'. One would have to analyse e.g. different levels of organisation of society, such as a) the population, b) classes, c) wage labour and capital (Marx 1857/1858, 100). Traditional theory would simply start with abstract categories and then move analytically towards ever more concrete ones (100). Marx sees such a method as limited and argues that critical theory starts with concrete categories that contain the abstract ones in them, and then develops along with a concrete critical theory the more abstract categories.

> The concrete is concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations, hence unity of the diverse. It appears in the process of thinking, therefore, as a process of concentration, as a result, not as a point of departure, even though it is the point of departure in reality and hence also the point of departure for observation [Anschauung] and conception (101).

Marx mentions as example that the analysis of exchange-value presupposes the existence of classes and of a population:

> For example, the simplest economic category, say e.g. exchange value, presupposes population, moreover a population producing in specific relations; as well as a certain kind of family, or commune, or state, etc. It can never exist other than as an abstract, one-sided relation within an already given, concrete, living whole (101).

Marx's epistemological method of advancing from the abstract to the concrete allows us to understand that capitalism contains within itself sublations of all previously existing societal formations. It therefore becomes possible to analyse older societies and society in general when we conduct an analysis of capitalism.

> Bourgeois society is the most developed and the most complex historic organization of production. The categories which express its relations, the comprehension of its structure, thereby also allows insights into the

structure and the relations of production of all the vanished social for-
mations out of whose ruins and elements it built itself up, whose partly
still unconquered remnants are carried along within it, whose mere
nuances have developed explicit significance within it, etc. Human
anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of
higher development among the subordinate animal species, however,
can be understood only after the higher development is already known.
The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to the ancient, etc. (105).

1.3. The Frankfurt School

1.3.1. Three Generations of the Frankfurt School

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-
University Frankfurt was founded in 1923. Its first directors[1] were Carl Grün-
berg (1923–1930), Max Horkheimer (1930–1953), and Theodor W. Adorno
(1959–1969). After Adorno's death, a committee of directors, including Ger-
hard Brandt, Rudolf Gunzert, Ludwig von Friedeburg, Wilhelm Schumm and
Helmut Dubiel, led the Institute. Von Friedeburg was its director in the years
1997–2001. Axel Honneth has held the directorship since 2001. The Institute
has been a space for the development of critical theories of society.

Rolf Wiggershaus (1995, 1) differentiates in his book *The Frankfurt School: Its
History, Theories and Political Significance* between the Frankfurt School's first
and second generation. He wants to 'distinguish the older Frankfurt School
from what has developed from it since the 1970s'. Martin Jay (1996, xv, 356–
364) in his book *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School
and the Institute of Social Research 1923–1950* discerns between the Frankfurt
School's first generation (e.g. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Friedrich Pollock,
Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann, Otto Kirch-
heimer), second generation (e.g. Jürgen Habermas, Alfred Schmidt, Albre-
cht Wellmer), and third generation (e.g. Axel Honneth, Oskar Negt, Helmut
Dubiel, Claus Offe, Hauke Brunkhorst, Detlev Claussen). Also a fourth genera-
tion of thinkers in the tradition of the Frankfurt School has emerged. They tend
to have a background in critical humanities or critical social sciences. It for
example includes works by the social philosopher Rahel Jaeggi, the sociologists
Hartmut Rosa and Thomas Lemke, etc.

1.3.2. Georg Lukács and the Frankfurt School

This book applies specific thoughts from selected key thinkers from three gener-
ations of the Frankfurt School to the realms of communication as well as digital
and social media. Lukács, Adorno and Marcuse represent the Frankfurt School's

first generation, Habermas the second one, and Honneth the third one. Lukács is a foundational thinker of the Frankfurt School and of cultural Marxism in general. His notion of reification that is grounded in Marx's concept of fetishism influenced Horkheimer and Adorno's distinction between instrumental and critical reason (Horkheimer 1947, Horkheimer and Adorno 2002), Horkheimer's (2002) differentiation between traditional and critical theory, and Marcuse's (1941b, 1964) concept of technological rationality. It is therefore a logical step to start this book with a chapter dedicated to Lukács' thought (chapter 2). Adorno and Marcuse, to whom chapters 3 and 4 are dedicated, built their thought, among others, on Lukács. I focus on Honneth, a representative of the third generation, in chapter 5, and then on Habermas, a representative of the second generation, in chapter 6. I have chosen this sequence because Honneth, more than Habermas, grounds his thoughts in Lukács, which is more closely related to Adorno and Marcuse, and because Habermas is the key Frankfurt School thinker who thought about communication. For focusing on a critical theory of communication, he is therefore the central point of engagement. Dedicating the final and concluding chapter to Habermas with the aim of elaborating some foundations and prolegomena to a dialectical-critical theory of communication allows me to conclude with a focus on the most foundational questions.

There are other important thinkers that stand in the Frankfurt School tradition or are close to it, such as Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm, Leo Löwenthal, Franz Neumann, Siegfried Kracauer, Alfred Schmidt, Claus Offe, and Oskar Negt. A book only has limited space, however. So the exclusion of these and other authors does not imply that their work is unimportant in the age of the Internet. Updates of these and other critical approaches in cultural Marxism in the context of digital media are much needed today. The book series *Critical Digital & Social Media Studies* is a space for such engagements.

David Held (1980, 22–23) in his study of Critical Theory (*Introduction to Critical Theory*: *Horkheimer to Habermas*) stresses the important influence of Lukács' thought on this School's thinkers:

> [C]ritial theorists retained many of Lukács's concerns: the interplay between history and theory, the importance of theory as a "promotive factor in the development of the masses", the relation of production and culture, the effects of reification and the way each aspect of society contains within itself "the possibility of unravelling the social whole or totality". […] the impetus Lukács gave to the interrogation of orthodox Marxism and to the reworking of Marx's ideas was built upon by each of the critical theorists.

Martin Jay (1996, 175) argues that the Frankfurt theorists and Lukács 'spoke to similar questions from within a common tradition'.

1.3.3. Lukács' Ontology of Social Being

Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* is an extensive book comprising of 1,460 pages in total, separated into two volumes in the German edition. Some chapters of the *Ontology* have been translated into English and published in three parts in a total of 436 pages, which shows that large parts have remained thus far untranslated. We do not know why exactly there has thus far not been an interest to translate the whole book into English and why the excerpts that have been published in English as three short volumes have hardly been read, cited and discussed. *History and Class Consciousness* is extremely dominant in Lukács' reception. In March 2016, *History and Class Consciousness* had around 5,400 citations on Google Scholar, the *Ontology*'s English excerpts' first volume eight citations, the second four, and the third volume five. The German version of *History and Class Consciousness* had 1,372 citations, whereas the complete German version of the *Ontology* published in Lukács' Collected Works only had four.[2]

My point is that also Lukács' final work has key relevance for Marxist cultural theory. One can say that the *Ontology* is Lukács' ultimate critical social theory. In it, he, in contrast to most of his previous works, also reflects on the relationship of the economy and culture, the relationship of labour and ideology, and the relationship work and communication. In the *Ontology*, Lukács introduces the concept of teleological positing for describing human activity and for arguing that the economy and culture are identical and non-identical at the same time. In the aforementioned essays, Adorno conceives Hegel's dialectical thought as the dialectic of identity and non-identity. Applying this idea to the relationship of the economy and culture allows him to therefore also stress that these two realms are at the same time identical and non-identical. These and other works come quite close to Raymond Williams' understanding of dialectical Cultural Materialism. It is therefore time to no longer think about Williams and the Frankfurt School in terms of non-equivalence, but rather as a dialectic of identity and non-identity that recognises different backgrounds and context, but also stresses their commonalities.

1.3.4. Negative Critique?

I want to pre-empt the criticism that this book is just a form of negative critique that is not constructive, does not analyse social movements, does not make suggestions how to change things, is therefore pessimist, etc. Critical theory critically interprets the world and has the potential to clarify what is wrong in it and why. We all have to politically change the world. Theory is an intervention into politics, but is not an autonomous political world in itself. Critical theory has first and foremost to be a negative dialectical theory in order to be critical. The demand that one has to be constructive, optimistic and looking for social

change tends to limit critique and to draw attention away from what is wrong with the totality. Too much research that sympathises with and studies progressive societal change, i.e. research on progressive social movements, is a celebration of the radical and novel potentials of political groups, how they use various media in protest and mobilisation communication, etc. What is often forgotten is how difficult activism often and necessarily is in the global capitalist world because it automatically has to act from a position of resource inequality, where those in power control much more economic, political and cultural resources than civil society.

Positivist social theory and research that stresses that critique has to be constructive, has to have a vision for a future society, foregrounds positive visions, etc., harbours the promise and threat of a deterministic concept of history that sees history as an unfolding of reason. In contrast, critical theory:

> is entirely negative, that is, what is "negative" in revolution/critique does not harbour in it the notion of a teleological or progressivist "positive resolution". […] History does not lead anywhere, has no telos, no objectives, no purpose and it does not take sides. […] There is no reality beyond the existent social relations (Bonefeld 2014, 221, 223, 225).

1.3.5. Habermas and the Critical Theory of Communication

One cannot talk about communication theory without talking about Habermas. One can also not talk about critical theory without talking about Habermas. When bringing up the notion of a critical theory of communication, most readers will inevitably first and foremost think of Habermas. Habermas' profound engagement with social theory, political theory and communication theory was one of the most influential theories of the twentieth century in the social sciences and humanities. Updating critical theory and communication theory therefore requires a substantial engagement with Habermas' works. There are many virtues of Habermas, not least that he is a true public intellectual who has intervened in everyday political debates.

Habermas is not just known for the *Theory of Communicative Action*, but also for his earlier work, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Both works have become key readings in media and communication studies. In a sense, Habermas' later work retains the notion of the public sphere, but connects it to the notion of communication, which has resulted in the concept of the lifeworld. In media and communication studies, both Habermas and Raymond Williams are key thinkers – Habermas in respect to the concept of communication, Williams in respect to the notion of culture. There has, however, been hardly any direct connection between the two authors' works.

But the critical theory of communication does not end with Habermas. Today, we need to go beyond Habermas in an open manner. Habermas has not theorised

digital communication, i.e. communication via computer networks such as the Internet, social media platforms, mobile media, etc. This is not to say that the rise of the computer and the Internet has changed everything and that we have entered a new society. Rather, we live in a capitalist society that has been significantly transformed in order to stay the same system of exploitation and domination. The Internet, social and mobile media can certainly not be ignored. Critical theory must be updated to the realities of the twenty-first century. New communications technologies are one of many realities that today need to be critically theorised (see Fuchs 2008, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2016). The Internet's power structures are not profoundly different from those of traditional mass media, yet it has new potentials and limits that interact with structures of accumulation in the economy, the political system and the cultural system.

1.4. Linking the Frankfurt School and other Critical Theories: Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Raymond Williams

One must also see the limits of Habermas' theory. This book advances the argument that Habermas' theory of communicative action is a dualist theory that separates the system from the lifeworld and thereby also work from communication. It in contrast argues for taking a dialectical cultural materialist position in order to elaborate some foundations of a dialectical critical theory of communication. In order to establish such foundations, I draw on two theoretical sources. On the one hand, I engage with Frankfurt School thinkers, who are often thought of as not having much to say on communication, but whose thought reveals interesting undercurrents that can be productively used and further developed in a dialectical critical theory of communication – Georg Lukács (especially his final book *The Ontology of Social Being*), Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, and Axel Honneth. On the other hand, I also draw on other critical social theories that standing in the Marxist tradition have contributed to critically theorizing culture, signification, information and communication: Lev Vygotsky's activity theory, Valentin Vološinov's Marxist philosophy of language, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's Marxist semiotics, and Raymond Williams Cultural Materialism.

None of these approaches has elaborated a systematic dialectical critical theory of communication, but we can build on certain elements of these thinkers and set them in a dialogue with Frankfurt School thinkers for grounding a dialectical cultural materialist position that allows us to think critically and dialectically about communication. I will do so by, on the one hand, theorising reification, knowledge, the relationship of the economy and culture, the relationship of work and communication, the relationship of labour and ideology in more general terms at the levels of society and capitalism, and by, on the other hand, applying these more general foundations to the concrete case of

digital and social media in order to critically understand phenomena such as digital labour, online alienation, and social media ideologies.

Not every reader will be familiar with all of the thinkers just mentioned: Lev Vygotsky's, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Raymond Williams.

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)[3] was a Marxist psychologist from Belarus. He developed a theory of activity, whose basic point is that human cognition and language are grounded in human activity. Valentin Vološinov[4] (1895–1936) was a Russian linguist. He was interested in establishing foundations of the Marxist philosophy of language. Foundations of this approach have been formulated in his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi[5] (1921–1985) was an Italian Marxist semiotician. His main theoretical insight is that language and communication are not just semiotic production processes, but specific forms of work. Raymond Williams[6] (1921–1988) was a Welsh literary critic, cultural and communication theorist, and novelist. He developed the approach of Cultural Materialism and worked not just on British literature, but also on topics such as communications, television, everyday culture, the sociology of culture, political theory, ecology, language, etc.

Vygotsky, Vološinov, Rossi-Landi and Williams share with the Frankfurt School not just the interest in critical dialectical thought, but also the application of the dialectic for critically understanding how the economy and culture are related. Discussing the relations between all of these approaches is therefore an interesting task for open cultural Marxism. It should also be stressed that the list of relevant thinkers is incomplete and that, in the spirit of an open Marxism the thoughts and writings of other Marxist thinkers should also be used in cultural Marxism today.

1.4.1. Raymond Williams and the Frankfurt School

Raymond Williams (1983) commented on Georg Lukács' works, especially his later ideas on aesthetics. Williams describes these works as having 'some remarkable resemblances to a familiar nineteenth-century idealism of art' because of linking of works of art to 'general human liberation' (273). He also describes his own approach of Cultural Materialism as 'a diametrically opposite answer to the questions which Lukács and other Marxists have posed' (273). In his book *Marxism and Literature*, Williams (1977, 102) comments that Lukács' theory of art faces the 'danger of reducing this theory to art as the typification (representation, illustration) not of the dynamic process but of its ("known") laws'.

Williams (1977, 98–99) also argues that, for the Frankfurt School, being and consciousness are mediated. 'The Frankfurt School, with its special emphasis on art, undertook a sustained re-examination of "artistic production", centred on the concept of "mediation"' (Williams 1977, 53). It would see mediation as 'a positive process in social reality, rather than a process added to it by way of projection, disguise, or interpretation'.

It is no surprise that Williams engages in more detail with Lukács than with the other thinkers discussed in this book because Williams and Lukács were both not just general critical theorists, but also literary critics, for whom aesthetics was very important. Williams' reading of literature is indeed considerably different from Lukács often socialist-realist position. But for example also Adorno strongly disagreed with Lukács' theory of art, as I discuss in detail in section 3.3 (chapter 3) of this book. Lukács' oeuvre is quite heterogeneous and therefore involves manifold, often contradictory strands of theory. His concept of reification had a positive influence on all Frankfurt School thinkers. Therefore Lukács' (1923/1971) *History and Class Consciousness* is often seen as one of the Frankfurt School's intellectual starting points. It is 'the founding text of the entire tradition of Western Hegelian Marxism' (Žižek 2000, 152)

In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams discusses various concepts that Marxist theories have used for conceptualising the relationship of the economy and culture: determination, reflection, reproduction, mediation, and homology. He argues that these concepts all assume a relationship between the economy and culture that to a varying degree is shaped by causal determination or mutual causality. But all of them would share the assumption of 'the separation of "culture" from material social life' (Williams 1977, 19) that Williams (1977, 59) considers to be 'idealist'. In Williams' view, the problem of these approaches is not that they are too economistic and materialist, but quite on the contrary that they are not 'materialist enough' (Williams 1977, 92). For Williams, culture is not a superstructure independent from an economic base, but rather culture understood as 'language, ideas, values, beliefs, stories, discourses and so on' is for him 'itself material' (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 176).

Williams (1977) criticises the 'idealist separation of "ideas" and "material reality"' (59). The reflex against 'idealist dualism' would often be a 'mechanical materialism' that 'leads directly to simple reductionism: "consciousness" and "its" products can be *nothing* but "reflections" of what has already occurred in the material social process' (61). But consciousness and its products would always be 'parts of the material social process itself'(61).

The basic insight of Williams' Cultural Materialism is that the economy and culture are identical and non-identical at the same time (Fuchs 2015a, chapters 2 and 3). Culture is part of the economy and at the same time goes beyond it. There is an economy that produces culture, but neither can we reduce the economy to culture nor culture to the economy. Williams' approach is a dialectical Cultural Materialism.

Williams considered the Frankfurt School's focus on mediation as too dualist and not dialectical and not materialist enough. But his knowledge of the Frankfurt School's works was certainly limited and for certain reasons had to remain limited. I argue in this book that there are certain works in the Frankfurt School tradition that, just like Williams, take a dialectical cultural materialist position on the question of how the economy and culture as well as work and communication are related to each other. I focus in this respect especially on Georg

Lukács' (1986a, 1986b) final book *The Ontology of Social Being,* Adorno's (1963) book *Hegel: Three Studies*, and Adorno's essay *On Subject and Object* (Adorno 1998, 245–258).

Williams (1969) reviewed Marcuse's (1988/1968) book *Negations*. He finds Marcuse's approach of trying to combine Freud and Marx confused and argues that these two approaches do not go together. But Williams found particular interest in Marcuse's essay 'The Affirmative Character of Culture'. He argues that this essay is very close to his own materialist understanding of culture because it questions 'the separation of ideal and material life' (Williams 1969, 165). Marcuse would show how this separation turns into an ideology he terms the affirmative culture. Williams' interest in Marcuse is an indication that there are certain parallels between Williams and the Frankfurt School's understandings of culture. Drawing on both of these traditions therefore promises to be a fruitful approach for a critical theory of communication and culture.

Williams was also aware of Horkheimer and Adorno's work. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams (1977, 98) stresses that Adorno is a representative of a position in Marxist theory that sees mediation as the key concept for relating the economy and culture. Williams commented that the notion of mediation other than the one of reflection 'indicates an active process', but 'perpetuates a basic dualism' (99). So his criticism was that it is not dialectical enough.

1.4.2. Habermas: Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas' theory is one of the most influential communication theories of the twentieth century. For example, the *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory* lists the publication of the *Theory of Communicative Action* as a milestone in a chronology of the field and says that it has had 'huge impact' and 'greatly influences critical communication theory' (Littlejohn and Foss 2009, lxv). Jürgen Habermas built his approach on the classical Frankfurt School and at the same time worked out the concept of communicative rationality, by which he went beyond the classical tradition. Habermas (1984, 285–286) distinguishes between instrumental (non-social, success-oriented), strategic (social, success-oriented) and communicative action (social, oriented on understanding). Habermas (1987, 333) argues that 'Horkheimer and Adorno failed to recognize the communicative rationality of the lifeworld'. For Habermas (1987, 375), critical theory questions the fact that steering media (money, power) attack 'the communicative infrastructure of largely rationalized lifeworlds'. Habermas (1971, 53) conceives instrumental action and communicative action as the two fundamental aspects of social praxis. What Habermas wants to express is that the human being is both a labouring and a communicating being: 'the reproduction of life is determined culturally by work and interaction' (Habermas 1971, 196). Dallas Smythe expressed the

same idea as foundation of a Marxist theory of media and communication: 'there will be no general Marxist theory of communication until Marxism comes to comprehend man as a message system- and symbol-using animal as well as a working animal' (Smythe 1994, 258).

For Habermas, emancipatory interest 'aims at the pursuit of reflection' (Habermas 1971, 198), it enables 'liberation from dogmatic dependence' (Habermas 1971, 271). In those passages, where Habermas tries to define what critical theory is all about (Habermas 1987, 375; Habermas 1971, 198, 271), his formulations remain abstract and vague. He mainly points out the emancipatory role of communication and that the goal is undistorted communication. He thereby falls short of the concreteness of Lukács', Horkheimer's, Adorno's and Marcuse's notions of critical theory. These thinkers left no doubt that such a theory is all about questioning all structures of domination and exploitation. In a way, Habermas retains the classical Marxist distinction between base and superstructure, but inverts it by putting the stress on communication. Doubts arise if work can be so strictly separated from communication in a dualistic way. The twentieth and twenty-first century have seen a rising importance of communicative and cultural work in the economy. But if such activity takes on value-generating form, then culture and communication must be part of the economy themselves, base and superstructure become integrated, labour and communication cannot be separated.

Communication is one of the crucial foundations of the economy: the latter is not just a system of the production of use-values and in class-based societies of exchange values. It is also a social system because production in any society takes on complex forms beyond individual self-sustenance. The only way for organising the relational dimension of the economy is via communication, in the form of symbolic interaction and/or anonymous forms of indirect communication (as for example via money, markets, the price system, etc.). Human thought is a precondition for human communication and existence. When humans produce in the economy, they do so with a purpose in mind, which means that they anticipate the form of the object and how it will be put to use. The economic existence of man requires anticipative thinking just like it requires communication. It is in these two specific senses – the importance of communication and thought – that the economy is always and fundamentally cultural. Capitalism's history has also been a history of the commodification of culture and communication, especially since the twentieth century. This is not to say that culture and communication necessarily take on the form of a commodity, but that in capitalism they frequently do so in the form of content commodities, audience commodities and cultural labour power as commodity. In this sense culture has been economised, or, to be more precise commoditised, i.e. put under the influence of the commodity logic.

Communication is certainly an important aspect of a domination-less society. Communication is, however, in capitalism also a form of interaction, in

which ideology is with the help of the mass media made available to the dominated groups. Communication is not automatically progressive. For Habermas, the differentiation is between instrumental/strategic reason and communicative reason, whereas for Horkheimer the distinction is between instrumental reason and critical reason (Horkheimer 1947) and based on it between traditional and critical theory (Horkheimer 2002).

Habermas splits off communication from instrumentality and thereby neglects that in capitalism communication just like technology, the media, ideology or labour is an instrument that is used by the dominant system to defend its rule. Communication is not pure and left untouched by structures of domination, it is antagonistically entangled into them. For Horkheimer (based on Marx), critical theory's goal is man's 'emancipation from slavery' (Horkheimer 2002, 249) and 'the happiness of all individuals' (248). Horkheimer has the emancipation of communication just like the emancipation of work, decision-making and everyday life, in mind. His notion of critical rationality is larger than Habermas' notion of communicative rationality that risks becoming soaked up by non-critical approaches that use Habermas' stress on communication for instrumental purposes. The concept of communication can be critical, but is not necessarily critical, whereas the concept of a critique of domination is necessarily critical.

1.5. The Frankfurt School and Martin Heidegger's Philosophy[7]

Martin Heidegger has influenced some critical theorists, such as Herbert Marcuse, Günther Anders, Hannah Arendt, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Derrida, Giorgio Agamben, Bernhard Stiegler, or Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Because he was not just a philosopher, but also a philosopher of technology, he has influenced studies of media and culture and continues to today influence the study of digital media, including critical studies. At the same time, many critical scholars, including Adorno, Marcuse, Anders and Habermas, have always been very sceptical of Heidegger because of his membership in the Nazi party.

The publication of Heidegger's philosophical notebooks, the *Black Notebooks*, as the final volumes in the collected Heidegger works, has since 2014 resulted in heavy debates about anti-Semitism and Heidegger. As a result, for example the President of the Heidegger Society Günter Figal stepped down. Explaining this move, he argued that he was shocked and that the revelations meant the end of Heideggerianism.[8] Given that Heidegger remains influential in critical theories of digital media, I want to discuss why I think his approach is highly problematic and that Heidegger scholarship can after the *Black Notebooks* not simply continue as it did before.

1.5.1. Heidegger and Digital Media

In his book *Critical Theory and the Digital*, David M. Berry (2014) provides thoughts on how to use critical theory. I find this project feasible and can relate to it to the extent that Berry uses Frankfurt School concepts such as instrumental reason and the dialectic of the enlightenment in order to criticise what he terms computational ideology, authoritarian-computational epistemology, and computationality. New communication technologies have often come along with enthusiastic optimistic ideologies or cultural pessimistic ideologies, in which these tools are presented either as solving humanities' problems and bringing about a much better society or as causing the decline of culture and society. Ideology critique of digital technologies is therefore a much-needed important endeavour. My own approach, however, diverges from Berry in respect to the fact the he is 'drawing on the work of the later Heidegger, to create new concepts for thinking the digital, indeed, contributing to a critical theory for the digital' (Berry 2014, 19).

I do not have the space here to detail the full argument of why I think Heidegger and a critical theory of technology and communication are incompatible, and therefore have to refer the reader to two essays that I have written on this topic (Fuchs 2015b, 2015c). I can here only point out some aspects of this complex topic in a necessarily brief manner. I recommend to those who are further interested in Heidegger, anti-Semitism and the philosophy of technology, to read my two articles in full and to also engage with related works that I reference there.

1.5.2. Heidegger's Black Notebooks

In the *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger (2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2015) argues that Jews have a calculating, instrumental form of reason. Two examples:

> Jewry's temporary increase in power is, however, grounded in the fact that Western metaphysics, especially in its modern development, furnishes the starting point for the diffusion of a generally empty rationality and calculative ability, which in this way provides a refuge in "spirit", without being able grasp the hidden decision regions on their own[9] (Heidegger 2014c, 46 [XII, 67–68]).
>   The Jews "live" by their marked talent for calculation second only to the principle of race, which is why they are resisting its consistent application with utmost violence[10] (Heidegger 2014c, 56 [XII, 82–83]).

Heidegger sees Jews as a powerful group, which plays with the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy. Furthermore, he argues that this group has a specific quality, namely a calculative rationality that is grounded in Western metaphysics. He

does not argue that this is a biological characteristic, but a socio-natural one, i.e. he constructs 'the Jews' as a homogenous collective, attributes to them and blames them for qualities of capitalism. The identification of Jews with instrumental rationality has a double feature: instrumental rationality, on the one hand, is an expression of the drive to accumulate capital and power, and on the other hand, the operating principle of modern technology. Heidegger blames Jews for both the logic of capitalism and industrialism.

Heidegger in the *Black Notebooks* employs six of the seven elements of anti-Semitism that Adorno (2002) identified: he sees Jews and Germans as forming two races (I), identifies Jews with modernity, capitalism, and modern technology (II, III), makes use of mystical and naturalistic logic by arguing that Jews are uprooted and threaten the Germans' rootedness (V), and describes Jews as a powerful 'world Jewry' that rules the world (VI) as well as a homogenous collective to which he ascribes negative biological, social, and political characteristics (VII). The only feature of anti-Semitism that is not present is the religious element (IV), which can be explained by the circumstance that Christian religion does not play a role in Nazi ideology.

1.5.3. Heidegger's Philosophy

Heidegger (1927) already in *Sein und Zeit* advanced a conservative critique that sees modern technology as such as a problem. The problem is formulated abstractly as das Man (the they), but its causes and context remain unclear in the phenomenology that Heidegger formulated in *Sein und Zeit*. It is for Heidegger certainly not the capitalist use and design of and bureaucratic shaping of technology that form this context because class, the state, and capitalism are categories that are absent from his analysis. Heidegger does not argue for a redesign of modern technology and modern society, but for their abolishment. Heidegger's most important works on technology are the two essays *The Question Concerning Technology* and *The Turning* that go back to a series of lectures that he gave in the years 1949, 1950, and 1955 in Bremen and Munich. They were published together as the book *Die Technik und die Kehre* (Heidegger 1962) in German and *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Heidegger 1977) in English. In this work, Heidegger characterises modern technology as 'Ge-stell' (the Enframing).

The power of capitalism and the modern state, or what Habermas (1984, 1987) terms the systems of modern society that colonise the lifeworld, are absent both in *Being and Time* and *The Question Concerning Technology*. This circumstance is idiosyncratic, given that modern society is based on the accumulation of capital and bureaucratic power, two structures that frame the development and use of modern technology. So a major problem of Heidegger's approach is that it is not a political economy, but merely a phenomenology of technology. He describes attributes of modern technology, such as instrumental logic,

calculation, physics, the exact sciences, mathematics, in both books, but leaves open the question what the structural context of modern technology is. Heidegger's phenomenology in both books does not give an answer to the question what the causes of the problems he ascertains are. But he makes clear that the problem is not technology itself: 'What is dangerous is not technology. There is no demonry of technology' (Heidegger 1977, 28). The danger would rather be the Ge-stell (Heidegger 1977, 28). The Ge-stell is however not an explanation in-itself, but an attribute of modern society. Heidegger neglects the analysis of capital and state power, two main features of modern society. So the two books leave open the question of the contexts of modernity's problems.

The *Black Notebooks* are a work, in which Heidegger provided an answer to the question of the structural contexts of modernity and modern technology. He says that the logic of calculability is Jewish. Heidegger identifies instrumental reason with Jews. So for him the cause and context of modernity and modern technology's problems – the rise of world-lessness and alienation – is seen in Jews.

There is a logical link between the *Black Notebooks*, *Being and Time*, and *The Question Concerning Technology*. The first provide the missing link and grounding for the second and the third. The *Black Notebooks* help explaining a theoretical void in the other two books. Das Man (the they) and das Ge-stell (the enframing) have in the *Black Notebooks* a grounding for Heidegger, namely what he and others term 'world Jewry', i.e. the myth of a Jewish world conspiracy.

1.5.4. Heidegger and the Critical Theory of Society, the Media and Technology

The Frankfurt School's works form a critique of instrumental reason, a critique of capitalism's reduction of humans to instruments whose labour serves capital accumulation, a critique of domination questioning the instrumentalisation of humans for fostering the rule and power of the few, and a critique of ideology questioning the instrumentalisation of human thinking. The Frankfurt School critique of instrumental reason is however fundamentally different from Heidegger's analysis. Whereas Critical Theory's context is political economy, Heidegger's phenomenology is short-circuited and therefore prone to turn into an instrumental ideology itself. If one wants to ground a critique of modern technology and media, then approaches that are much better grounded in the analysis of society and political economy than Heidegger's phenomenology are available.

Heidegger and the critical theory of society, the media and technology are irreconcilable. Such a theory can in contrast in a feasible manner be grounded in Karl Marx's dialectic of technology, Georg Lukács' notion of reification, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's concept of instrumental reason, and Herbert Marcuse's category of technological rationality.

1.5.5. Heidegger and Lukács

On *Being and Time*'s concluding page, Heidegger (2010, 414) says:

> We have long known that ancient ontology deals with 'reified concepts'
> and that the danger exists of "reifying consciousness". But what does
> reifying mean? Where does it arise from? Why is being "initially" con-
> ceived' in terms of what is objectively present [*Vorhanden*], *and not* in
> terms of things at hand [*Zuhanden*] that do, after all, lie *still nearer* to us?
> Why does this reification come to dominate again and again?[11]

Lucien Goldmann (1913–1970) was a French Marxist philosopher. He argues in
respect to this passage in his book *Lukács and Heidegger* (Goldmann 1977, chap-
ter 1) that Heidegger refers to Lukács without naming him. He says that Lukács
and Heidegger both criticise positivist thought and knowledge that is based on
the separation of object and subject (Goldmann 1977, 29–31). Heidegger's con-
cept of Vorhandenheit would parallel Lukács' notion of reification, Heidegger's
concept of Zuhandenheit would parallel Lukács' category of praxis (35–39).

Lukács in contrast to Heidegger sees reification as a consequence of class-
based society and capitalism, whereas Heidegger's Vorhandenheit is a much
more abstract category, devoid of class relations, capitalism, and commodity
fetishism. Goldmann hints at this fundamental difference: He says that whereas
Lukács speaks of praxis in relation to 'social classes' (8), for Heidegger 'histori-
cal action is the privilege of élitists to the exclusion of the masses' so that 'only
a certain number of élite individuals are creators of history' (9). 'Contrary to
Lukács who, starting from commodity fetishism and the collective subject, suc-
ceeds in explaining the genesis of the given world as a spectacle, Heidegger
does not go beyond a phenomenological description of the world of evil and of
inauthenticity, and has not succeeded in explaining its historical source' (45).
For Goldmann, Heidegger and Lukács are not irreconcilable, which in my view
is a mistaken conclusion.

In contrast to Heidegger, Lukács (1923/1971) leaves no doubt about the
source and context of reification in modern society, arguing that it is 'growing
out of the fetish character of commodities' (84). 'Reification is, then, the neces-
sary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society' (197). Marx's

> chapter dealing with the fetish character of the commodity [*Capital
> Volume 1*, chapter 1, section 4; see Fuchs 2016, chapter 1.4, pp. 41–47]
> contains within itself the whole of historical materialism and the whole
> self-knowledge of the proletariat seen as the knowledge of capitalist
> society (and of the societies that preceded it) (170).

We today know that the *Black Notebooks'* anti-Semitism is the ideology that fills
the void that Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit* creates in respect to the question of how

reification is grounded. Heidegger thought that Jewry is the cause of reification. Given Heidegger's philosophy, it is difficult to see parallels between Lukács and him. Goldmann's (1977, 17) mistaken characterisation also leads him to underestimate Heidegger when he writes that for Heidegger, 'anti-Semitism could only be regarded as a profound and regrettable error, the biological having no place in ontology and being totally unable to limit or further the Being-there's possibilities of choosing between the authentic and the inauthentic'.

1.5.6. Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse about Heidegger

Herbert Marcuse was in the 1920s influenced by Heidegger, but turned away from him when his Nazi sympathies became evident. Frankfurt School authors such as Marcuse, Adorno and Habermas were extremely critical of Heidegger and certainly share the assessment that a critical theory of society is not possible with, but only against Heidegger.

Theodor W. Adorno argues that Nazi ideology is immanent in *Sein und Zeit*, which was published in 1927 (Heidegger 1927). Adorno writes in his analysis that Heidegger's 'metaphysics of death' cultivates 'the heroic possibilities of death' and is 'a propaganda for death' (Adorno 1965/2001, 131; see also Löwith 1946). Heidegger's combination of philosophy and poetry is for Adorno (1960/1961) 'provincial kitsch' (229) that uses 'archaic language' (230). For Adorno, Heidegger's fetishism of the origin is a form of mysticism (Adorno 1960/1961, 32–34). The 'cult of origin and renewal' would 'not by accident and not externally have sympathy with the barbarism that took shape in his [Heidegger's] political history' so that foundations of 'National-Socialist ideology' would be contained in *Sein und Zeit* (241) [translation from German]. 'Heidegger's agreement with fascism and the ideology of the conservative revolution, the more elegant version of fascist ideology, was not a lack of character of the philosopher, but lay in the content of his doctrine' (287).

In a lecture from 1935 that after its re-publication in 1953 resulted in public debates, Heidegger (2000, 213) spoke in the context of National Socialism of the 'inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely the encounter between global technology and modern man)'. Jürgen Habermas (1953, 197) drew the German public's attention to his discovery that Heidegger in 1953 'publishes his words, in the meantime eighteen years old, about the greatness and inner truth of National Socialism' and that it was therefore 'time to think with Heidegger against Heidegger'.

1.5.7. Heidegger and Marcuse

Herbert Marcuse in 1928 moved from Berlin to the University of Freiburg in order to start a habilitation project under Heidegger's supervision. Marcuse's

thought was in the mid- to late-1920s deeply influenced by Heidegger's (1927) *Sein und Zeit*. This also becomes evident in Marcuse's first published essays, such as *Contributions to a Phenomenology of Historical Materialism* (Marcuse 2005, 1–33). Marcuse tried to combine Marx and Heidegger. This influence also becomes evident in Macuse's habilitation thesis Hegel's *Ontology and the Theory of Historicity*, which he prefaces with the words: 'What this work contributes to the unfurling and clarification of problems, it owes to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger' (Marcuse 1932a, 8). Because of his Jewish background, Marcuse could never defend his habilitation thesis. With the rise of Nazism, he had to flee Germany and spent the rest of his life in the USA. In 1941, he published his first English book, which was a second monograph about Hegel: *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. In this book (1941a), Marcuse does not mention Heidegger at all. By the 1930s he had completely turned against Heidegger's philosophy.

Marcuse described his relationship to Heidegger's philosophy in an interview:

> I read *Sein und Zeit* when it came out in 1927 and after having read it I decided to go back to Freiburg (where I had received my PhD in 1922) in order to work with Heidegger. I stayed in Freiburg and worked with Heidegger until December 1932, when I left Germany a few days before Hitler's ascent to power, and that ended the personal relationship. I saw Heidegger again after the war, I think in 1946–47, in the Black Forest where he has his little house. We had a talk, which was not exactly very friendly and very positive, there was an exchange of letters, and since that time there has not been any communication between us. […] We saw in Heidegger what we had first seen in Husserl, a new beginning, the first radical attempt to put philosophy on really concrete foundations— philosophy concerned with human existence, the human condition, and not with merely abstract ideas and principles. That certainly I shared with a relatively large number of my generation, and needless to say, the disappointment with this philosophy eventually came—I think it began in the early thirties. But we re-examined Heidegger thoroughly only after his association with Nazism had become known. […] But I soon realized that Heidegger's concreteness was to a great extent a phony, a false concreteness, and that in fact his philosophy was just as abstract and just as removed from reality, even avoiding reality, as the philosophies which at that time had dominated German universities, namely a rather dry brand of neo-Kantianism, neo-Hegelianism, neo-Idealism, but also positivism (Marcuse 2005, 165–166).

Marcuse realised that in order to ground a concrete, praxis-relevant Marxist philosophy, it is not necessary to rely on non-Marxist philosophy. He found the philosophical work he was looking for in Marx's *Economic and Philosophic*

Manuscripts of 1844 that were first published in 1932. Marcuse published in 1932 an enthusiastic review of the book (*New Sources on the Foundation of Historical Materialism*, Marcuse 1932b), in which he argued that these manuscripts' publication 'must become a crucial event in the history of Marxist studies' (Marcuse 1932b, 86).

The significance of Marcuse's rejection of Heidegger's philosophy also becomes evident in a review of 'German Philosophy, 1871–1933' that he wrote in 1934. In a section about Heidegger's work, he characterises this philosopher's work as racist:

> Heidegger's philosophy is weeded to the idea of an authentic existence that is realized through a firm willingness to die for one's own possibilities. It is here that Heidegger's existential analytic is transformed into a politics of heroic, racist realism. […] The characteristics of authentic existence – the resoluteness toward death, the decision, the risking of life and the acceptance of destiny – are severed from all relations to the real misery and the real happiness of mankind and from all relations to the reasonable ends of humanity. In this abstract form, these characteristics become the fundamental categories of the racist worldview (Marcuse 2005, 160–161).

Marx's early philosophical writings remained a major influence on Marcuse's works, whereas he did not further engage with Heidegger's theory after Hitler's rise to power.

In August 1947, Marcuse wrote a letter to Heidegger, in which he said:

> You never publicly denounced any of the actions or ideologies of the regime. Because of these circumstances you are still today identified with the Nazi regime […] But we cannot make the separation between Heidegger the philosopher and Heidegger the man, for it contradicts your own philosophy. […] Is this really the way you would like to be remembered in the history of ideas? (Marcuse 1998, 263–264).

In a response to Herbert Marcuse, Heidegger wrote in January 1948 that Marcuse's letter 'shows me precisely how difficult it is to converse with persons who have not been living in Germany since 1933 and who judge the beginning of the National Socialist movement from its end' (Wolin 1993, 162) and that there was not just a 'regime that murdered millions of Jews', but also one that murdered millions of 'East Germans' (Wolin 1993, 163). Marcuse, who coming from a Jewish family and being a Marxist had to flee from Nazi Germany, answered in May 1948 that Heidegger tried 'to relativize […] a crime by saying that others would have done the same thing. Even further: how is it possible to equate the torture, the maiming, and the annihilations of millions of men with the forcible relocation of population groups who suffered none of these outrages' (Wolin 1993, 164).

1.5.8. Whoever Is Not Willing to Talk about Heidegger's Relation to Nazi Fascism and Anti-Semitism, Should Also Keep Quiet About Heidegger in Respect to Capitalism and Critical Theory

When Max Horkheimer (1939/1989, 78) wrote in his essay *The Jews and Europe* that 'whoever is not willing to talk about capitalism should also keep quiet about fascism' (78), he expressed that there is an inherent connection of the logics of capitalism and fascism: 'Fascism solidifies the extreme class differences which the law of surplus value ultimately produced' (Horkheimer 1939/1989, 78). It is disturbing that many of those who are impressed by Heidegger's philosophy and try to use it in critical theory try to talk with Heidegger about capitalism, but keep quiet about Heidegger's relationship to anti-Semitism and Nazi fascism. Whoever is not willing to discuss Heidegger's relation to Nazi fascism and anti-Semitism shouldn't discuss Heidegger in respect to capitalism and critical theory.

1.6. The Chapters in this Book

This book consists of five essays that contribute to grounding foundations of a dialectical critical theory of communication that takes a cultural materialist approach (see also Fuchs 2015a for a discussion of Cultural Materialism). Each chapter is focused on specific works of one critical theorist and their application: Georg Lukács (chapter 2), Theodor W. Adorno (chapter 3), Herbert Marcuse (chapter 4), Axel Honneth (chapter 5), and Jürgen Habermas (chapter 6). I will give a brief outline of these essays.

1.6.1. Chapter 2: Georg Lukács as a Communications Scholar: Cultural and Digital Labour in the Context of Lukács' Ontology of Social Being

The task of this chapter is to apply thoughts from Georg Lukács' final book, the *Ontology of Social Being,* to the theoretical analysis of cultural and digital labour. It discusses Lukács' concepts of work and communication and relates them to the analysis of cultural and digital work. It also analyses his conception of the relation of labour and ideology and points out how we can make use of it for critically understanding social media ideologies. Lukács opposes the dualist separation of the realms of work and ideas. He introduces in this context the notion of teleological positing that allows us to better understand cultural and digital labour as well as associated ideologies, such as the engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology, today. The analysis shows that Lukács' *Ontology* is in the age of Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter still a very relevant book, although it has thus far not received the attention that it deserves. This chapter also introduces the *Ontology*'s main ideas on work and culture, which is important because large parts of the book have not been translated from the German original into English.

1.6.2. Chapter 3: Theodor W. Adorno and the Critical Theory of Knowledge

This chapter explores which insights of Adorno's philosophy can be used for grounding a critical theory of knowledge? Adorno's contribution to a critical theory of knowledge is analysed by revisiting the assumption that he is a media pessimist, reconsidering the debate about aesthetics between Lukács and Adorno and generalising its conclusions from art to the theory of knowledge, and by discussing and further developing Adorno's dialectical concept of knowledge. Adorno's theory of knowledge is not, as often claimed in media and cultural studies, a form of media and cultural pessimism that sees humans as passive, manipulated by ideologies, and incapable of resisting a society without alternatives. He saw alternative and critical potentials of the media. A critical theory of knowledge can be grounded in dialectics of identity and non-identity and the subject and the object. Adorno made important contributions to the foundations of such a theory. His works not just foreground the power of ideologies, but also stress the importance that one can learn from Hegel's anti-positivist, dialectical language and thought how to criticise, deconstruct, and struggle against ideologies. Adorno's works give us hope that instrumental knowledge that expresses partial interests is not the final world and can be changed by critique, which is the very process of the dialectic and dialectical knowledge.

1.6.3. Chapter 4: Herbert Marcuse and Social Media

This chapter reflects on the relevance of Herbert Marcuse's philosophy of technology in the age social media. Although Marcuse did not experience the rise of the Internet, the World Wide Web and 'social media' as major means of communication, his insights about technological rationality, technology and the role of technology in the context of labour allow us to today reflect on the relevance of Marcuse's philosophy of technology for a critical theory of digital and social media.

The chapter first gives an overview of how Marcuse thought about computer technology. It then engages with Marcuse's interpretation of Hegelian dialectics for analysing social media's dialectics. It also uses Marcuse's works for critically theorising digital labour on social media and social media ideologies. The chapter engages with Marcuse's understanding of the dialectical logic of essence in order to provide some foundations of social media ethics.

1.6.4. Chapter 5: The Internet, Social Media and Axel Honneth's Interpretation of Georg Lukács' Theory of Reification and Alienation

This chapter poses the question, what are the potentials of the concept of alienation/reification for a critical theory of society today? Based on the example of

Facebook, it then asks, how can we understand alienation in the realm of the media? Axel Honneth has reformulated Georg Lukács' theory of reification and alienation in a critical theory of recognition. The advantage of this theory is that it is based on the distinction of three subdomains of society, reformulates Hegel's dialectic of essence and existence in moral theory and thereby transcends postmodern moral relativism, stresses the importance of sociality as moral essence, and distinguishes between alienation's subjective, intersubjective and objective dimensions. It however downplays the importance of the economy and co-production in society.

Building on and departing from Lukács and Honneth, this chapter first formulates some principles of a moral theory that is grounded in the notion of co-operation as co-production that allows to identify nine dimensions of alienation: economic, political, cultural, subjective, intersubjective and objective alienation. The example of Facebook shows that alienation has not ceased to exist in the world of digital media, but has become more complex. The exploitation of digital labour, the surveillance-industrial complex, and centralised online visibility constitute additional forms of digital alienation.

1.6.5. Chapter 6: Beyond Habermas: Rethinking Critical Theories of Communication

This chapter asks, what is the relationship of labour and communication? This question is one about how the economy and culture are causally connected in society in general and contemporary society in particular. The chapter discusses several critical theories of communication and provides a classification of approaches. It engages especially with the approaches of Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Jean Baudrillard, Jürgen Habermas, Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Raymond Williams.

It applies a reading of these theorists to foundations of a dialectical critical theory of communication. Such a theory is dialectical in a manifold sense. It theorises the dialectics of work/communication, body/mind, individuality/sociality, internalisation/externalisation, subject/object, practices/technology, communication/media, agency/structures, communication/communications, instrumental communication/co-operative communication that are fundamental determinants of communication.

Notes

1. See: Geschichte des Instituts für Sozialforschung, http://www.ifs.uni-frankfurt.de/institut/geschichte/, accessed on 6 January 2016.
2. Google Scholar, accessed on 19 March 2016.
3. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky
4. See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentin_Voloshinov

5 See: http://www.ferrucciorossilandi.com

6 See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Williams

7 This section is based on parts of the following two articles. The passages are reproduced with kind permission of the journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique*: Fuchs, Christian. 2015. 'Martin Heidegger's Anti-Semitism: Philosophy of Technology and the Media in the Light of the "Black Notebooks"'. Implications for the Reception of Heidegger in Media and Communication Studies'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 13 (1): 55–78; Fuchs, Christian. 2015. 'Anti-Semitism, Anti-Marxism, and Technophobia: The Fourth Volume of Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks (1942–1948)'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 13 (1): 93–100.

8 'Das Ende des Heideggerianterums'. *Badische Zeitung Online*, 23 January 2015.

9 Translation from German: 'Die zeitweilige Machtsteigerung des Judentums aber hat darin ihren Grund, daß die Metaphysik des Abendlandes, zumal in ihrer neuzeitlichen Entfaltung, die Ansatzstelle bot für das Sichbreitmachen einer sonst leeren Rationalität und Rechenfähigkeit, die sich auf solchem Wege eine Unterkunft im, Geist' verschaffte, ohne die verborgenen Entscheidungsbezirke von sich aus je fassen zu können'.

10 Translation from German: "Die Juden, leben" *bei ihrer betont rechnerischen Begabung* am längsten schon nach dem Rasseprinzip, weshalb sie sich auch am heftigsten gegen die uneingeschränkte Anwendung zur Wehr setzen'.

11 German original: 'Allein was bedeutet Verdinglichung? Woraus entspringt sie? Warum wird das Sein gerade, zunächst' aus dem Vorhandenen, begriffen' und nicht aus dem Zuhandenen, das doch noch näher liegt? Warum kommt diese Verdinglichung immer wieder zur Herrschaft? Wie ist das Sein des, Bewußtseins' positiv strukturiert, so daß Verdinglichung ihm unangemessen bleibt? Genügt überhaupt der "Unterschied" von "Bewußtsein" und "Ding" für eine ursprüngliche Aufrollung der ontologischen Problematik?' (Heidegger 1927, 576).

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1960/1961. *Ontologie und Dialektik.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1963. *Hegel: Three Studies.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1965/2001. *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1998. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2002. 'Elements of anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment'. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, 137–172. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Agger, Ben. 2006. *Critical Social Theories: An Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm. Second edition.

Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. 2nd edition.

Berry, David M. 2014. *Critical Theory and the Digital*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Bonefeld, Werner. 2014. *Critical Theory and the Critique of Political Economy. On Subversion and Negative Reason*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Bonefeld, Werner, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis, eds. 1992. *Open Marxism: Volume I: Dialectics and History*. London: Pluto.

Bonefeld, Werner, Richard Gunn, John Holloway and Kosmas Psychopedis, eds. 1995. *Open Marxism. Volume III: Emancipating Marx.* London: Pluto.

Engels, Friedrich. 1843/1844. 'Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy'. In *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 and the Communist Manifesto*, 171–202. Amherst, MA: Prometheus.

Fisher, Eran and Christian Fuchs, eds. 2015. *Reconsidering Value and Labour in the Digital Age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Forst, Rainer. 1999. 'Justice, Reason, and Critique: Basic Concepts of Critical Theory'. In *The Handbook of Critical Theory*, ed. David M. Rasmussen, 336–360. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014a. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014b. *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014c. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015a. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015b. 'Martin Heidegger's Anti-Semitism: Philosophy of Technology and the Media in the Light of the "Black Notebooks": Implications for the Reception of Heidegger in Media and Communication Studies'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 13 (1): 55–78.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015c. Anti-Semitism, Anti-Marxism, and Technophobia: The Fourth Volume of Martin Heidegger's Black Notebooks. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 13 (1): 93–100.

Fuchs, Christian. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age: A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on 'Capital Volume I'*. New York: Routledge.

Goldmann, Lucien. 1977. *Lukács and Heidegger*: *Towards a New Philosophy*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1953. 'Martin Heidegger: On the Publication of the Lectures of 1935'. In *The Heidegger Controversy,* ed. Richard Wolin, 186–197. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. 2004. *Multitude.* New York: Penguin.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 1985. *Pluraler Marxismus 1*. Berlin: Argument.

Heidegger, Martin. 1927. *Sein und Zeit. Gesamtausgabe Band 2*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Die Technik und die Kehre*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta.

Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*. New York: Harper.

Heidegger, Martin. 2000. *Introduction to Metaphysics.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 2010. *Being and Time*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Heidegger, Martin. 2014a. *Gesamtausgabe, Band 94*: *Überlegungen II-VI (1931–1938)*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Heidegger, Martin. 2014b. *Gesamtausgabe, Band 95*: *Überlegungen VII-XI (1938/1939)*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Heidegger, Martin. 2014c. *Gesamtausgabe, Band 96*: *Überlegungen XII-XV (1939–1941)*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Heidegger, Martin. 2015. *Anmerkungen I-V (Schwarze Hefte 1942–1948). Gesamtausgabe, Band 97*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.

Held, David. 1980. *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Honneth, Axel. 2007. *Disrespect*: *The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.

Horkheimer, Max. 1939/1989. 'The Jews and Europe'. In *Critical Theory and Society. A Reader,* ed. Stephen E. Bronner and Douglas Kellner, 77–94. New York: Routledge.

Horkheimer, Max. 1947. *Eclipse of Reason*. New York: Continuum.

Horkheimer, Max. 2002. *Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: *Philosophical Fragments.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jay, Martin. 1996. *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923–1950*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Lash, Scott. 2002. *Critique of Information*. London: SAGE.

Littlejohn, Stephen W. and Karen A. Foss, eds. 2009. *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Löwith, Karl. 1946. 'The Political Implications of Heidegger's Existentialism'. In *The Heidegger Controversy,* edited by Richard Wolin, 167–185. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1986a. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Erster Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 13*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Lukács, Georg. 1986b. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Zweiter Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 14*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Macey, David. 2001. *The Penguin Dictionary of Critical Theory*. London: Penguin.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1932a. *Hegels Ontologie und die Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit. Schriften Band 2*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1932b. *New Sources on the Foundation of Historical Materialism.* In *Heideggerian Marxism*, 86–121. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1941a. *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1941b. 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology'. In *Technology, War and Fascism: Collected papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 1*, ed. Douglas Kellner, 39–65. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society.* Abingdon: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1988/1968. *Negations. Essays in Critical Theory*. London: Free Association Books.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1998. *Technology, War and Fascism. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse. Volume 1*. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 2005. *Heideggerian Marxism*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume I*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1857/1858. *Grundrisse*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl. 1997. *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

McGuigan, Jim and Marie Moran. 2014. 'Raymond Williams and Sociology'. *The Sociological Review* 62 (1): 167–188.

Negri, Antonio. 1991. *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*. New York: Autonomedia.

Pakulski, Jan and Malcolm Waters. 1996. *The Death of Class*. London: Sage.

Payne, Michael, ed. 1997. *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Postone, Moishe. 2008. 'Rethinking *Capital* in the Light of the *Grundrisse*'. In *Karl Marx's Grundrisse,* ed. Marcello Musto, 120–137. London: Routledge.

Postone, Moishe. 2015. 'The Task of Critical Theory Today: Rethinking the Critique of Capitalism and its Futures'. In Harry F. Dahms (ed.) *Globalization, Critique and Social Theory: Diagnoses and Challenges (Current perspectives in Social Theory, Volume 33),* 3–28. Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Rush, Fred. 2004. 'Conceptual Foundations of Early Critical Theory'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, 6–39. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sandkühler, Hans Jörg, ed. 1990. *Europäische Enzyklopädie zu Philosophie und Wissenschaften.* Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

Schweppenhäuser, Gerhard and Frigga Haug. 2012. Kritische Theorie. In *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus, Band 8/1*, eds Wolfgang Fritz Haug and Peter Jehle, 197–223. Hamburg: Argument.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1994. *Counterclockwise*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Tallack, Douglas. 1995. *Critical Theory: A Reader*. New York: Harvvester Wheatsheaf.

Tyson, Lois. 2006. *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. New York: Routledge.

Vercellone, Carlo. 2010. 'The Crisis of the Law of Value and the Becoming-rent of Profit'. In *Crisis in the Global Economy*, eds, Andrea Fumagalli and Sandro Mezzadra, 85–118. Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext(e).

Virno, Paolo. 2004. *A Grammar of the Multitude*. New York: Semiotext(e).

Wiggershaus, Rolf. 1995. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories and Political Significance*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1969. On Reading Marcuse. In *The Cambridge Review: Ninety Years of the Cambridge Review, 1879–1969*, ed. Eric Himberger, William Janeway and Simon Schama, 162–166. Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1983. Lukács: A Man Without Frustration. In *What I Came to Say,* 267–274. London: Hutchinson Radius.

Wolin, Richard, ed. 1993. *The Heidegger Controversy.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Žižek, Slavoj. 2000. 'Georg Lukács as The Philosopher of Leninism'. In *A Defence of History and Class Consciousness: Tailism and the Dialectic*, 151–182. Georg Lukács, London: Verso.

CHAPTER 2

Georg Lukács as a Communications Scholar: Cultural and Digital Labour in the Context of Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being*

Acknowledgement

2.1. Introduction

The task of this chapter is to apply thoughts from Georg Lukács' final book, the *Ontology of Social Being,* for the analysis of cultural and digital labour. Section 2 discusses Lukács' concept of work and communication and relates them to the analysis of cultural and digital work. Section 3 focuses on his analysis of labour and ideology and points out how we can make use of it for the critical understanding of social media ideologies. Section 4 draws some conclusions. This chapter also introduces the *Ontology*'s main ideas on work and culture, which is important because large parts of the book have not been translated from the German original into English.

2.1.1. History and Class Consciousness

Georg Lukács was one of the twentieth century's most well known Marxist philosophers. His book *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics* (Lukács 1923/1971) is among the most influential studies of the proletariat and reified consciousness. *History and Class Consciousness* focuses on the analysis of class-consciousness, ideology, and reification. Labour is a strongly subordinated and rather neglected topic in the book. Language and communication play no role at all in it. In a preface written for the new 1967 edition, Lukács (1923/1971, xvii) acknowledges the neglect of labour in the book: 'It is true that the attempt is made to explain all ideological phenomena by reference to their basis in economics but, despite this, the purview of economics is narrowed down because its basic Marxist category, labour as the mediator of the metabolic interaction between society and nature, is missing'.

Lukács had an ambivalent position towards his own book. In the 1967 preface, he characterised *History and Class Consciousness* as 'ethical idealism' (1923/1971, x), 'revolutionary messianism' (xiv). He writes that it did not begin 'its analysis of economic phenomena […] with a consideration of work' (xx) and that it 'equates alienation with objectification' (xxiv). One should, however, see that these comments do not refute the importance of ideology critique and the understanding of ideology as reified thought in class-based societies. Rather, Lukács expresses the need that ideology critique is part of a larger critical theory of society that he did not elaborate in the 1920s. The project of establishing such a theory was undertaken in his last book, in the *Ontology of Social Being*. It is a theory of production in society, including the production of use-value and value, physical and cultural commodities as well as the production of ideologies. One could say that the *Ontology* is a broader framework that encompasses *History and Class Consciousness*.

Lukács died in 1971. Shortly before his death in 1971, some of his students conducted interviews with him that together with a *New Left Review* interview from 1971 was published as his autobiography (Lukács 1983). In it, Lukács (1983, 77) repeats his criticism of *History and Class Consciousness*, but also says that it 'is even today better and more intelligent than many of the things that bourgeois writers scrawl about Marx' (77). He also says that in the *Ontology*, the 'concept of labour is the hinge of my analysis' (173) and stresses the importance of ontology in Marxist philosophy.

2.1.2. Adorno, Lukács and Ontological Philosophy

The *Ontology of Social Being* was as entire book first published in German in the year 1986. Excerpts from it were published in English in 1978 (Lukács 1978a, 1978b, 1978c). Adorno died in 1969 and Horkheimer in 1973. They therefore had no opportunity to read and comment on Lukács' final book. One can,

however, certainly say that Lukács' approach formulated in this book encompasses ideology critique in the tradition of the Frankfurt School. In 1960/1961, Adorno gave lectures on the overall topic of *Ontology and Dialectics* (*Ontologie und Dialektik*) at the University of Frankfurt. These lectures have posthumously been published in German (Adorno 1960/1961).

Adorno in these lectures undertakes a profound critique of Heidegger's philosophy. He argues that Heidegger is the main representative of an ontological philosophy. Adorno in these lectures opposes dialectical philosophy to ontology (114) and when he speaks of ontology he means Heidegger's philosophy. Adorno criticises that for Heidegger, being dominates the subject. As a consequence, this 'extreme objectivism that more or less neutralises the subject' (200) results in an archaic (239) and mythological (246) philosophy that has 'sympathy with barbarism' (240). Heidegger's philosophy is for Adorno undialectical. He argues that being 'becomes for Heidegger an undialectical essence' (315). Adorno says that dialectical philosophy that stresses nonidentity is not an alternative ontology, but the latter's anti-pole (325). But he also stresses that there is not a strict choice between ontology or dialectical philosophy (10) and that dialectical philosophy is the 'critical self-reflection of ontology' (12–13) and the 'dialectic is in itself mediated through ontology' (13). In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno (2004) formulates the same critique of Heidegger's ontology. He argues that 'dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things' (Adorno 2004, 11).

Given that ontology is a theory of being, Adorno's concern is that formulating an ontology automatically posits being as static and is prone to justifying the bad reality that exists today. So his concern is that ontology neglects reality's dynamic and historical character. In a dialectical ontology, any being is however always tied to its negative other that contradicts it, by which the foundations of change are automatically given. The One is always related to the Other, Being to Nothingness, and the unity of both constitutes becoming. So there can be no being without becoming. Being is only because it becomes. Becoming is being in dialectical motion. Adorno hints at this relation of ontology and dialectic, but unlike Lukács does not speak of a dialectical ontology. Adorno was interested in a dialectical critical theory of society. Lukács called such a theory in his final work a 'dialectical ontology of social being'. We do not know if Adorno would have agreed on such a title, but Lukács and Adorno certainly both share the interest in how to combine the critical theory of society and dialectical philosophy.

2.1.3. Lukács Scholarship: The Unfortunate Neglect of the Ontology of Social Being

The *Ontology of Social Being* is in contrast to *History and Class Consciousness* a critical theory of society and capitalism and is therefore much more concerned

with the relationship between work and culture, as well as that between labour and ideology. It also gives attention to communication and language, which makes it particularly interesting for reflections from a media and communications perspective. In the reception of Lukács' works, there has been a very strong focus on *History and Class Consciousness*, overlooking that he also wrote other important works, such as the *Ontology of Social Being*. This also becomes evident in more recent publications on Lukács.

Andrew Feenberg (2014, viii) argues in his book *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School* that *History and Class Consciousness* is the 'pivotal text of [the] philosophy of praxis'. He therefore focuses the entire book on this work and its relevance and does not mention the *Ontology* once. The book *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence* (Bewes and Hall 2011) is a collection of 13 essays. They contain just one reference to the *Ontology* and 127 to *History and Class Consciousness*. The collected volume *Georg Lukács Reconsidered* (Thompson 2011) consists of 13 essays. They in total make 13 references to the *Ontology* and contain hundreds of references to and quotes from *History and Class Consciousness*. Chris Nineham's (2010) *Capitalism and Class Consciousness: The Ideas of Georg Lukács* focuses on *History and Class Consciousness* and does not mention the *Ontology*.

In the first volume of *Theory of Communicative Action*, Jürgen Habermas (1984) devotes chapter IV to the topic 'From Lukács to Adorno: Rationalization as Reification.' He shows the influence that Lukács had on the Frankfurt School and focuses his analysis on Lukács' concept of reification in *History and Class Consciousness*. Habermas argues that Horkheimer and Adorno's 'critique of instrumental reason understands itself as a critique of reification that takes up Lukács' reception of Weber without accepting the implications of his objectivistic philosophy of history' (Habermas 1984, 366). Habermas' criticism of Horkheimer and Adorno is that they lack a theory of communicative rationality that negates instrumental rationality. In formulating this critique however, because of his pure focus on *History and Class Consciousness* and his neglect of the *Ontology of Social Being,* Habermas does not realise that the importance of communication in society can be grounded in Lukács' works itself, which may be a better way for a critical theory than using concepts of communication that stem from bourgeois approaches such as John L. Austin and John Searle's speech act theories and George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism. Habermas (1984, 365) concludes that Lukács' theory is a return to objective idealism. He, however, ignores in this context that in the *Ontology* Lukács was very much concerned with the relationship of culture and the economy. Habermas' judgement is based solely on a reading of *History and Class Consciousness* and the complete neglect of the *Ontology*.

Ricardo Antunes (2013) compares Habermas' theory of communicative action and Lukács' *Ontology*. He concludes that Habermas 'isolates the lifeworld as a *thing-in-itself,* conferring upon it a non-existent separation from the systemic sphere', whereas for Lukács there is an 'unshakable interrelationship

between the sphere of the subject and the activity of work' (Antunes 2014, 138). Antunes goes one step too far in his reading of the *Ontology* and completely leaves out the analysis of ideology and ideological labour, i.e. labour that produces ideology (see Fuchs 2015, chapter 3). Lukács however discusses, as I will show, this form of production as well as others in the *Ontology,* and thereby integrates *History and Class Consciousness*' stress on ideology.

One should not misinterpret my stress on Lukács' *Ontology.* I do not want to say that *History and Class Consciousness* is unimportant, problematic and outdated and should not be read. To the contrary: in chapter 5 of this book, I show the contemporary relevance of Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* by engaging with how his concept of reification inspired Axel Honneth's critical theory of recognition. We can use both approaches for a critical theory of reified/alienated media in the digital age. So my point is that one should not only read *History and Class Consciousness*, but also Lukács' other works. His philosophy is immensely rich and a thorough engagement with it is very rewarding.

2.1.4. The Ontology of Social Being's *Context*

The *Ontology* was written in the years 1964–1970 and was Lukács' final work (Fehér, Heller, Markus and Vajda, 1976). In his study of the *Ontology,* Nicolas Tertulian argues that Lukács' aim in this work was 'to reconstruct ontology as the fundamental discipline of philosophical reflexion' (Tertulian, 1988, 247) and to work out 'a really universal theory of the categories of existence' (249). It is an extensive book comprising of 1,460 pages in total, separated into two volumes in the German edition. Some chapters of the *Ontology* have been translated into English and published in three parts on a total of 436 pages, which shows that large parts have remained thus far untranslated. The first part of the English edition focuses on Hegel (Lukács, 1978a), the second on Marx (Lukács, 1978b), and the third on labour (Lukács, 1978c). The second German volume (Lukács, 1986b) contains a part called *Das Ideelle und die Ideologie* (*The Realm of Ideas and Ideology*) that consists of three parts: *Das Ideelle in der Ökonomie* (*The Role of the Ideal in the Economy*), *Zur Ontologie des ideellen Moments* (*Toward an Ontology of the Ideal Moment*), and *Das Problem der Ideologie* (*The Problem of Ideology*). It also contains a section on work that has been translated (Lukács, 1978c). Given that there is both a focus on work and ideas and on labour and ideology in one volume, it is clear that the *Ontology* promises insights into the relationship of the economy and culture.

Lukács' doctoral students Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, György Markus, and Mihály Vajda (1986) published their notes on the *Ontology*, in which they formulated dissatisfaction with the work concerning concepts such as nature, objectification, reflection, value, freedom, and progress. They also note that it remained an unfinished work because Lukács, who only partly agreed with his students' criticisms, died before he could carry out any planned revisions. But

overall, he was not convinced by his students' criticisms. Rather 'at the end of his life, Lukács was persuaded that it was in his *Ontology* that he had furnished the essential and definitive form of his thought' (Tertulian, 1988, 248).

The analysis shows that the *Ontology* is largely ignored and has not been read and discussed a lot, both in the German-speaking world and internationally. The reasons for this cannot be ascertained and can only be left to speculation. Lukács left the book unfinished, but it is nonetheless extremely voluminous. It is certainly a book that is difficult to read. The popularity of *History and Class Consciousness* may also play a role in the lack of its reception. And the fact that only parts of the book have been translated into English certainly strongly limits its international presence. It is difficult to be recognised when one stands in the shadow of giants. My point is that the *Ontology* should be seen as having equal importance as *History and Class Consciousness*.

For a cultural-materialist perspective on society, Lukács' final book promises insights into the relationship of work on the one hand and communication and language on the other hand, as becomes evident when for example Titus Stahl (2013) in an encyclopaedia entry about Lukács writes about the *Ontology*:

> From these ontological commitments, it follows that the existence of the social totality depends on the intentionality which guides individual acts of labor and *vice versa* […] Lukács therefore describes social phenomena – as language and institutions – as modifications and 'mediations' of the relations of the labor process. That is, they are media of "indirect" teleological positing because they enable forms of action which do not directly modify nature, but which indirectly aspire to bring other persons to do so.

Language and communication in the *Ontology* are explained as part of the dialectics of society, in which work undergoes dialectical mediations.

> The principal aim of the ontological-genetical method developed by Lukács in his last work is to show how, in beginning from the elementary act of work, social life constitutes itself as a tissue of objectifications of greater and greater complexity, as interhuman relations better and better articulated, thanks precisely to the relation of dialectical tension between the teleological activity of individual subjects and the network of objective causal determinations (Tertulian 1988, 258).

2.2. Work and Communication

2.2.1. Work's Ontology

Lukács starts the second German volume of the *Ontology* with a discussion of work's ontology. He uses the German term Arbeit that has been translated

into English as 'labour'. The term labour goes back to the Latin word laborem that means hard work, pain, and trouble (Fuchs, 2015, 23–24). The German word Arbeit derives from the Germanic term arba, which means slave (ibid.). The English word 'work' and the German term werken go back to the Indo-European term uerg (doing, acting) (ibid.). They have the connotative meaning of creating something that has artistic value. In contemporary language, the terms work and labour are often used interchangeably in English, and the German word Arbeit often stands for both work and labour. It is certainly not Lukács' intention to assume that slavery and toil are features of all societies. In the discussion that follows, I therefore replace his usage of the term labour by 'work' where he speaks of anthropological features of the economy in society.

Lukács defines work as 'a relationship of interchange between man (society) and nature, and moreover with inorganic nature (tools, raw materials, object of labour) as well as organic' (1978c, iv) and 'the positing of a goal and its means' (22), 'the metabolism between man (society) and nature' that is an '"eternal" form that persists through the change in social formations' (39). Work 'involves a process between human activity and nature: its acts are directed towards the transformation of natural objects into use-values' (47). It is the 'intervention into concrete causal relations in order to bring about the realization of the goal' (67).

2.2.2. Work as Teleological Positing

Work is a 'teleological positing' that results in 'the rise of a new objectivity' (3). Work is teleological because in it, a 'conscious creator' (human beings) produces with a purpose, orientation and goal (5). So the human teleology that Lukács considers as being characteristic for work, and therefore for society, is not opposed to causality and is not an external, esoteric force that drives society to a higher goal (such as Hegel's *Weltgeist* or in pre-Socratic Greek philosophy Anaxagoras' nous), but is immanent in society itself, namely in human practice and consciousness.

Lukács' (1978c) examples are predominantly taken from agriculture and hunting. When describing concrete work processes, he speaks for instance of the selection of 'one stone out of a heap of stones' as tool (31), of hunting (47), or the human use of fire (Lukács 1986b, 34). In a materialist philosophy, there is nothing outside of matter and therefore nothing outside of nature. Humans and society are however different from non-human beings in that they can make conscious choices between alternatives and anticipate the potential effects of their behaviour, which enables morality. Work not only takes physical objects found in nature as its input, but also physical and non-physical objects created by humans. The tools of work are not just physical tools, but can also be information-processing technologies such as the computer. The products of work processes are not just physical goods, but also information, non-physical services and social relations. With the development of scientific and technological progress, human work therefore has the

tendency to distance itself from its close grounding in natural objects. One may therefore say that work is not just a process between humans and nature, but one between humans, nature and culture, in which humans create, with the help of technologies, physical, social, and informational use-values out of natural, industrial, and cultural objects.

Lukács (1978c) was aware of this circumstance and therefore argued: 'In the later and more developed forms of social practice, the effect on other people comes more the fore, and ultimately – if only ultimately – this effect aims at the production of use-values' (47). Work's teleological positing has historically become more distanced from nature and has become 'also designed to cause other men to carry out positings of this kind in their turn' (128). This results in 'man's own behaviour, his own subjectivity, becoming the object of a teleological positing' (128).

> The decisive variations arise by the object and medium of realization in the teleological positings becoming ever more social. This does not mean, as we know, that the natural basis disappears, simply that the exclusive orientation to nature that characterizes work as we originally presupposed it is replaced by intentions that are objectively mixed in character, and become ever more strongly social (129).

Lukács here argues that the social itself, such as relations, intentions, experiences and knowledge, in the course of society's development has become more part of the objects, tools and products of work so that work has partly been distanced from its original natural basis, which however does not mean that information work substitutes, but rather complements agricultural, extractive and industrial work. Lukács distinguishes between two types of teleological positings: those that change nature and those that change the social (Lukács, 1986b, 136). The latter of the two would become the more important, the more work and co-operation develop (ibid.). They are expressions of 'mental work'[1] (ibid.).

2.2.3. Society as Complex of Complexes

Society is for Lukács a totality consisting of over-grasping moments, i.e. systems that reach over into each other. It is a 'complex of complexes' (Lukács, 1986b, 155; see also 181) that help in reproducing society (182). Language is one of these complexes. It is a subjective organ and objective medium that enables social reproduction so that the human species can continuously preserve itself by continuous change of subjective and objective moments (169). Language use and communication are for Lukács constitutive moments in the social reproduction of society. He does however, unlike Niklas Luhmann (1995), not assume that communication is a subject in itself that continuously produces further communications in an autopoietic manner, so that social sys-

tems and society in a self-referential manner reproduce themselves (see Fuchs, 2008, chapter 3). The problem with Luhmann's approach is that he considers, in a functionalist manner, humans as outside observers of social systems, as sensors in the environment of social systems (Luhmann, 1995, 410). For Lukács, communication as a form of social reproduction in contrast depends on active human, social, languaging beings inside the systems that they reproduce through interaction with nature and interaction between themselves.

2.2.4. Consciousness

Consciousness plays a crucial role in the 'active and productive being of the positing of causal relationships' (Lukács, 1978c, 31). That work is a conscious activity means that workers constantly make choices between behaviour alternatives, which results in a 'chain of causality' that in contrast to nature is not automatic, but consciously decided (33). The work process is 'a chain of alternatives' (33). If a programmer, for example, codes a piece of software, s/he must consciously decide which algorithm is used next, how it is implemented, which syntax elements are used, etc. in order to achieve the goal that the programme should fulfil. Consciousness enables 'human self-control' (45), 'self-realization', 'self-founded being', and 'social being' (46).

Lukács (1986b, 478) argues that dualist concepts of consciousness and theories that draw a sharp distinction between the physical and the ideational, reflect in an ideological manner society's division of labour that has, since the emergence of slavery, instituted this division in the economy itself. One should, however, not forget that a similar separation is also immanent in patriarchy that institutes a gendered division between physical and social labour and in gerontocracy, which is based on a generational division between labour and collective decision-making. Lukács opposes dualist ontologies of society with his dialectical ontology.

2.2.5. The Economy and Culture

For Lukács (1978c), work is the essential and foundational activity of humans and society. It is the ground of other phenomena such as language (v). Work is the 'model for all social practice, all active social behaviour' (46). Work 'is the underlying and hence the simplest and most elementary form of those complexes whose dynamic interaction is what constitutes the specificity of social practice' (59). There is an 'identity of identity and non-identity' of work and other forms of human practice (59).

Lukács considers teleological positing (the conscious and active production of changes by realising subjective intentions in the objective world) as a common feature of work and communication, i.e. the economy and culture. There is an 'ontological similarity of base and superstructure as they are both based

on teleological positings and their causal effects'[2] (Lukács, 1986b, 424). In the economy, where work creates goods, the intentional goals tend to be much more clearly defined, whereas in culture, where communication influences social behaviour, there is much more scope for what is considered desirable and undesirable, for 'reactions to societal matters of fact, situations, tasks, etc.'[3] (Lukács 1986b, 417). Lukács says that in the economy, the value of a product depends on whether it is 'immediately useful or non-useful, whereas in artistic creation the field and possibilities of value and non-value are extraordinarily widely stretched and hardly determinable in advance' (535).[4]

'Teleological positing' means that ideas are a guiding and goal-setting dimension of work so that culture is immanent in work itself. The human brain defines goals that are conditioned by economic and social needs and for realising them guides human activities. Culture however is not the same as the economy, but is a guiding feature of the economy that created by work goes beyond the economy and takes effect in the form of collective meanings all over society. Culture is simultaneously economic and non-economic.

For Lukács, consciousness is not reality, but a form of objectivity that reproduces reality (1978c, 26). 'Ontologically, social being divides into two heterogeneous moments, […] being and its reflection in consciousness' (26). Human consciousness was 'called into being in work, for work, and by work' (52). There is no photographic copying of reality in consciousness, but reflection is 'conditioned by the posited goals' and 'the social reproduction of life, originally by work' (27). Consciousness and work have at the same time a relationship of 'linkage and autonomy' (52). So consciousness alone is not behaviour and work, but a foundation of both. Consciousness has an important role in society because it 'sets goals', masters the human body, and allows a 'distanced and critical' relationship of the person to him-/herself and to others (109). 'And the origin of this mastery lies undoubtedly in work' (109).

All work and action has an aspect of consciousness. Before engaging in work and action, humans reflect on what they want to achieve and how. Ideas and material changes of the world are therefore not independent, but inherently connected (Lukács, 1986b, 297). Lukács criticises that theorists such as Georgi Plekhanov, Karl Kautsky, Max Adler, and Stalin have separated the economy from the world of ideas in a dualist manner (298–299). He in this discussion points to the fact that human thought is not work itself, but one of its necessary preconditions and parts. Reflection precedes and enables both physical work that creates physical goods and mental work that creates informational use-values in society.

2.2.6. Cultural Work and Ideology

Lukács says that ideology is not the same as cultural work, but can emanate from it. In making this argument, he argues for a true dialectic of the culture

and economy: on the one hand, he sees all culture and ideology produced by work, i.e. there is an economic foundation of cultural work. Culture and ideology also take on an emergent quality that goes beyond the economy so that the meanings cultural work produces take effect all over society. This explains why Lukács speaks of the identity and non-identity of work and culture.

> Mental work is, also as a moment of society's division of labour, by no means identical to ideology. Their connection is therefore very deep: The result of any mental work can turn into ideology in certain social situations, society's division of labour constantly creates situations in which such turns become necessary and permanent (Lukács 1986b, 427).[5]

2.2.7. The Emergence of Language

Lukács argues that communication already exists in higher animals for the purposes of 'danger, food, sexual desire, etc.' (1978c, 100). Human language and communication would arise out of economic necessity when humans are required to say something to each other in order to master the rising complexity of the organisation of production. So for example hunting requires co-operation because it is a complex process, for which co-ordination is necessary. 'Its [co-operation's] mere existence, albeit on a low level, results in the emergence of another key determination of social being from work, the precise communication of humans united in work: language'[6] (Lukács, 1986b, 118). Language enables teleological positings that have the intention to 'encourage other people to conduct a teleological positing that is desired by the predicating subject'[7] (Lukács, 1986b, 119). Language develops with the development of work, co-operation, and the division of work (119).

Communication is based on the fact that the human is an 'answering being'[8] (Lukács, 1986b, 339). An answer, however, presupposes a question. Humans have the capacity to find answers posed by nature and to ask questions about nature, themselves, and society. We can therefore say in expanding Lukács' thought that communication is based on a dialectic of questioning and answering, in which a question produces answers, which produces further questions, and so on.

2.2.8. The Spatio-Temporality of Communication

Words that form a language are abstractions and generalisations of reality (Lukács, 1986b, 346, 419). The description of a specific circumstance is concrete and therefore requires a complex linguistic combination of words (1986b, 346). Language enables the 'distancing of the object from the subject' (1978c, 100) and enables this distancing.

> In this way what is depicted by the verbal sign is separated from the objects it describes, and hence also from the subject uttering it, becoming the mental expression for an entire group of particular phenomena, so that it can be applied in a similar way in completely different contexts and by completely different subjects (100).

Human language allows the repetition and development of production processes in the same or different spaces at different times. Lukács, at a high level of theoretical abstraction, hints at the facts that the development of production technologies allows the spatio-temporal distancing of production, that the development of transport and distribution technologies enables the spatio-temporal distancing of distribution, and that the development of conservation and preservation technologies fosters the distancing of consumption. 'In its further development, work constantly interposes whole series of mediations between man and the immediate goal which he is ultimately concerned to achieve. In this way, work gives rise to a differentiation between immediate and more mediated goal positings' (101–102).

The spatio-temporal distancing of production requires physical and linguistic technologies of production, distribution, and consumption. Communication is an important means of organising work and human activity in space-time and over spatio-temporal distances. 'The mental distancing of objects by language only makes the real distancing that thus arises communicable, making possible its establishment as the common possession of a society' (102). The storage of information enables the organisation of the economy and society over spatio-temporal distances and across generations. Society's development is therefore connected to the development of information technologies that store and distribute information about human social relations. They include, for example, human memory, tradition, myths, art, writing, lists, timetables, the book, libraries, archives, schools, universities, newspapers, the telegraph, the telephone, the radio, the television, cinema, the database, computers, computer-mediated communication, the Internet, records, tapes, CDs, DVDs, Blu-ray discs, digital hard disks, servers, FTP, cloud storage, etc. (see Fuchs, 2003).

Language is a complex in society that mediates both the human metabolism with nature as well as the relations between humans in society (Lukács, 1986b, 18). It helps distancing human subjects from objects and from other subjects and at the same time helps to co-ordinate the production of new objects out of existing objects and the emergence and reproduction of social relations between humans.

2.2.9. Freedom Within Necessity

For Lukács, consciousness enables a form of freedom within necessity (Lukács 1986b, 308), i.e. human choices between different actions based on conditions

that are not self-chosen. Conscious human action opens up the world to chance and makes it to a certain degree undetermined and shapeable by humans. To illustrate this circumstance, Lukács (1986b, 304) quotes in this context Marx (1867, 208–209): 'No one can sell unless someone else purchases. But no one directly needs to purchase because he has just sold'. If someone who has money chooses to buy or to save, what exactly s/he buys in the case of a purchase, and from whom, is not determined, but rather depends on an interaction of complex conditions and choices, the 'mutual dialectical polarity of the ideal and the real'[9] (Lukács, 1986b, 306). Market supply, local accessibility, wages and prices, class struggles, transport structures, etc. condition the possible choices that the potential purchaser makes based on his/her evaluation of these structures. The ideal moves the real, but it can only move 'real possibilities of being-in-itself'[10] (343).

2.2.10. Cultural Work

Based on Lukács' idea that mental work creates culture that is simultaneously economic and transcends the economy, we can design a dialectical model of cultural work (see figure 2.1, see also Fuchs 2015, chapter 2).

Using a stage model allows us to identify and relate different levels of cultural work (see figure 2.1). Cultural work is a term that encompasses organisational levels of work that are simultaneously distinct and dialectically connected: cultural work has an emergent quality, namely information work that creates content and is based on and grounded in physical cultural work, which creates information technologies through extractive and industrial work processes. Physical
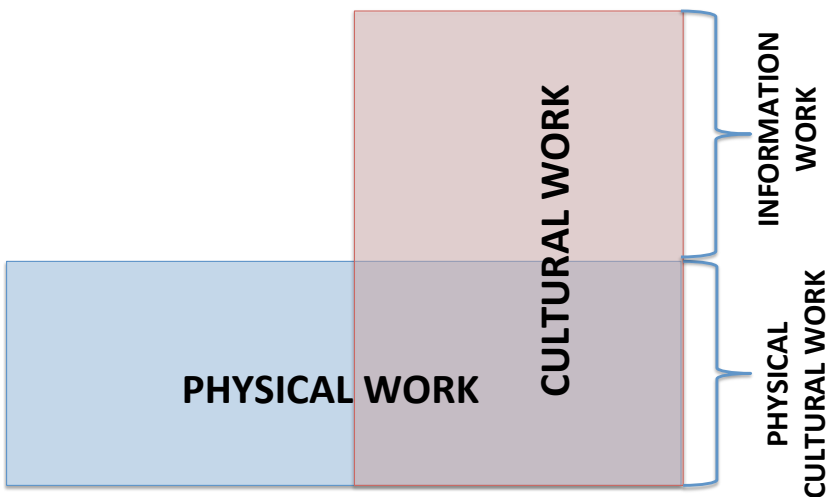

Figure 2.1: A dialectical model of cultural work.

work takes place inside and outside of culture: it creates information technologies and its components (cultural physical work) as well as other products (non-cultural physical work) that do not primarily have symbolic functions in society (such as cars, toothbrushes or cups). Cars, toothbrushes, or cups do not primarily have the role of informing others or enabling communication with others, but rather help humans achieve the tasks of transport, cleanliness, and nutrition. Culture and information work however feedback on these products and create symbolic meanings used in contemporary society by companies for marketing them. Cultural work is a unity of physical cultural work and information work that interact with each other, are connected and at the same time distinct.

All culture involves cultural work and effects of cultural products in society (meaning-making). The production and communication of meanings, social norms and morals are work processes: they create cultural use-values. Culture requires on the one hand human creativity for creating cultural content and on the other hand specific forms and media for storage and communication. The creation of information and communication through language is specific for work conducted in the cultural system: informational and communication work. For having social effects in society, humans with the help of information and communication technologies, such as computers, TV, radio, newspapers, books, recorded films, recorded music, language, etc., organise (i.e. store, process, transport, analyse, transform, create) information and communication. Physical cultural work produces information technologies. Culture encompasses a) physical cultural work that creates cultural technologies (information and communication technologies) and b) information work that creates information and communication.

Think of the example of a piano player. Playing the piano as a human activity is not possible without a piano and without composed music. The activity of playing the piano therefore presupposes the work of the composer and the piano maker. Culture is a manifold production process that involves the work of the piano maker, the composer and the player. In the capitalist culture industry, the commodity form shapes all three forms of cultural production: a piano is a musical instrument sold as a commodity. Composers and musicians tend to be wage-labourers, who are employed by and exploited by large multimedia corporations, especially the 'big three' – Universal, Sony and Warner Music. And also audiences, who listen to music for example on YouTube or on commercial radio, tend to become audience workers when cultural corporations sell audiences and users' attention and usage behaviour data is sold as a commodity to advertising clients (see Fuchs 2014, chapters 4 and 11).

2.2.11. Digital Work

The term digital labour emerged for understanding value-creation on social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and Weibo (see the

contributions in Scholz, 2013). It would however be idealistic to limit the notion of digital labour to the exploitation of users' online activities by commercial platforms that use targeted advertising or to the creation of digital content that is sold as a commodity. The creation of digital content requires a technological infrastructure that is produced and maintained by labour processes (Fuchs, 2014, 2015). Digital labour is all paid and unpaid labour that helps creating digital technologies, content, and data that is sold as a commodity. It includes diverse activities such as slave-labour extracting minerals that form the physical foundation of information technologies, the labour of militarily controlled and highly exploited hardware assemblers who work under conditions of Taylorist industrialism, a highly paid knowledge labour aristocracy, precarious digital service workers as well as imperialistically exploited knowledge workers in developing countries, workers conducting the industrial recycling and management of e-waste, or highly hazardous informal physical e-waste labour (Fuchs, 2014, 2015). Such forms of digital labour form an international division of digital labour that creates the digital media industry's profits (ibid.). Why is it important to have such a unified concept of digital labour? Nick Dyer-Witheford (2014, 175) provides an answer: 'To name the global worker is to make a map; and a map is also a weapon'. So what Nick Dyer-Witheford points out is the political relevance of a critical theory of digital media: it names and analyses the problem and can thereby point citizens, classes and social groups towards what is wrong and what contradictions they face.

Digital work is a specific organisational form of cultural work that creates digital media, content, or data (see figure 2.2, see also Fuchs 2015, chapter 6).
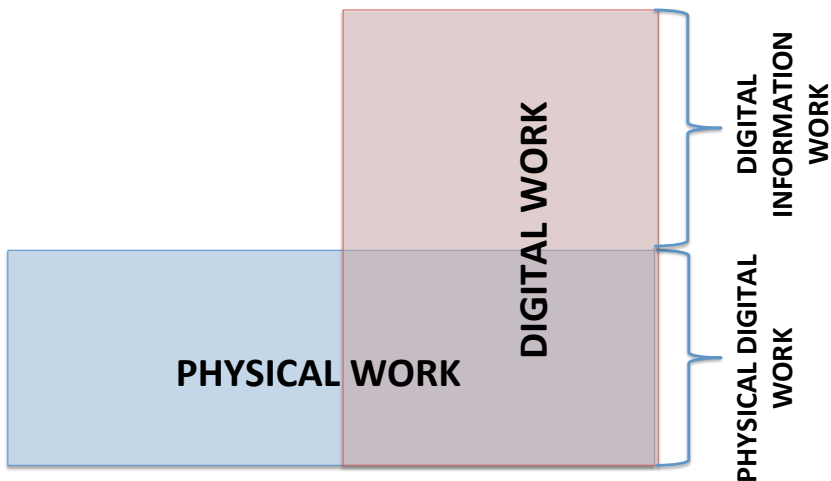

Figure 2.2: A dialectical model of digital work.

2.2.12. Digital Labour

Digital labour is alienated digital work: it is alienated from itself, from the instruments and objects of labour and from the products of labour. Digital labour is digital work that is organised within class relations. Figure 2.3 shows a model of the international division of digital labour. Each production step involves human subjects (S) using technologies/instruments of labour (T) on objects of labour (O) so that a product emerges.

The international division of digital labour, for example, involves Congolese slave workers, who mine minerals that form the physical foundation of mobile phones, computers and laptops. Assemblage workers, such as the highly exploited Foxconn workers in China, assemble the ICT components created out of minerals into whole technologies. Such technologies are put to use both by consumers and workers; low-paid software engineers in countries such as China and India as well as highly paid and highly exploited programmers at Google, Microsoft and other large software companies make use of computers for coding application software, operating systems, etc. Consumers put to use both hardware and software for various purposes. On advertising-driven Internet platforms, these users are also workers, whose usage labour creates a data commodity that advertisement-driven platforms, such as Facebook, Weibo, Twitter or YouTube, sell as commodities to their advertising clients. There is also a whole range of precarious online labour that is conducted on
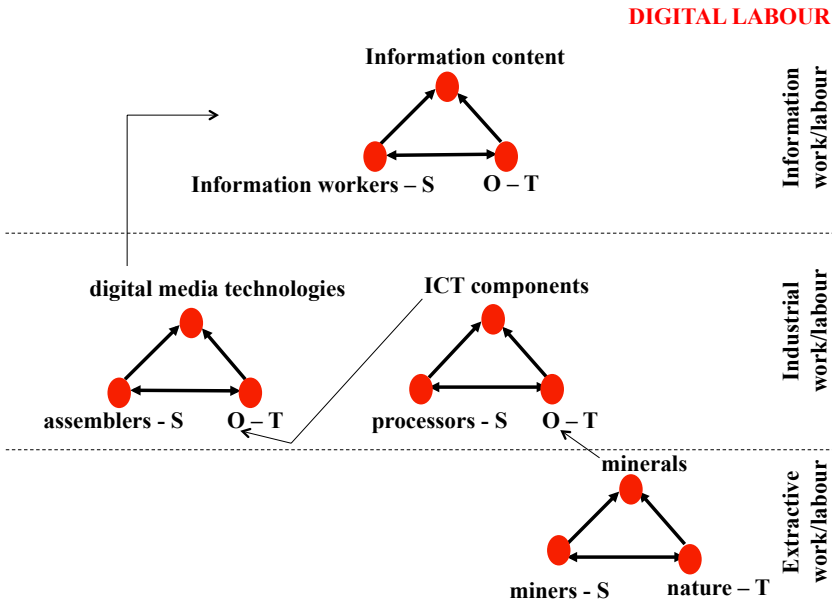

Figure 2.3: The international division of digital labour.

the Internet. An example are the users of freelance platforms, who create cultural products and find their clients online at sites such as Upwork, Amazon Mechanical Turk, PeoplePerHour, or TaskRabbit. The international division of digital labour involves diverse forms of exploited digital labour.

Physical digital labour creates minerals and ICT components that are assembled into digital media technologies. It involves extractive and industrial digital labour. Digital information workers use this technological infrastructure in order to create digital contents and data that are sold as commodities. Physical and informational digital work can take place within various social relations of production, including slavery, freelance labour, wage labour, feminised labour, unpaid labour, etc. In the case that these relations are class relations, we speak of digital labour. In contrast, if we have to do with communist relations of production, in which there are no class relations but common property and common production, we merely speak of digital work. Digital work is a more general term than digital labour. All digital labour is digital work, but not all digital work is digital labour. Table 2.1 shows an overview of relations of production into which digital work can be embedded. It is based on a distinction between different forms of ownership (self-control, partly self-control and partly alien control, full alien control).

Lukács' *Ontology* is a general theory of society that draws attention to the importance of work, language, and communication in general. However, it is also an ontology of class-based society, in which he analyses the role of labour and ideology.

2.3. Labour and Ideology

2.3.1. Ideological Labour

We have seen in the previous section that for Lukács, cultural workers create culture, which means that also ideologies are created by labour, namely ideological

	Owner of labour power	Owner of the means of production	Owner of the products of work
Patriarchy	Patriarch	Patriarch	Family
Slavery	Slave master	Slave master	Slave master
Feudalism	Partly self-control, partly lord	Partly self-control, partly lord	Partly self-control, partly lord
Capitalism	Worker	Capitalist	Capitalist
Communism	Self	All	Partly all, partly individual

Table 2.1: The main forms of the relations of production in various modes of production.

labour. Lukács makes clear that not every cultural work creates ideology, but cultural products can turn into ideology if they serve dominative interests in class-based societies. Critiques of ideology such as Critical Discourse Analysis, often with the help of text and visual analysis, focus on uncovering the structure of ideologies, but neglect the working conditions under which concrete humans and organisations create ideologies, whereas labour studies often focus on the study of working conditions and neglect how ideologies frame labour and capital (see: Fuchs, 2015, chapter 3). Lukács' approach allows us to understand that labour and ideology are inherently connected: there is ideology-producing and -communicating labour – ideological labour – just like there are ideologies of and about labour.

Lukács (1978c) argues that use-value can exist independently from exchange-value as 'a product of work which man is able to make use of in the reproduction of his existence' (v). With the rise of capitalism, use-value has however become the antagonist of exchange-value. 'The more general the exchange-value, the clearer and more precisely socially necessary labour time comes into the limelight as the economic foundation of its respective quantity'[11] (Lukács, 1986b, 124). Lukács says that 'the division of labour mediated and brought about by exchange-value produces the principle of control by time by a better subjective use of it' (1978c, 83). Exchange-value is a contradictory form that in capitalism 'assumes the leading role in human social intercourse' and therefore subsumes use-value, but at the same time 'can only come to prevail by being based on use-value' (87).

2.3.2. Alienation and Ideology

Lukács (1986b, 635) argues that for Marx, reification and the alienation of humans and capitalist labour that results from it are connected to labour-time. Humans are reduced to a cog in the accumulation process that aims at creating as much profit per unit of time as possible: 'Time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcass. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything; hour for hour, day for day' (Marx 1847, 127). The modern form of instrumental reason has its origin in the logic of quantification and the reduction of humans to instruments for quantitative increases of the ruling and owning elites' power. The psychological reasons why humans reproduce ideologies would have to do with fear and hope (Lukács 1986b, 643).

Lukács connects the existence of ideologies as cultural phenomena to the existence of alienated labour in the economy. The reification of labour power necessitates ideologies that justify the existence of alienation. Ideologies attempt to alienate the human mind. They try to instrumentalise consciousness in the interest of dominant powers. Lukács (1986b, 397) is sceptical of Gramsci's theory of ideology, in which ideologies are understood as individual worldviews. For Lukács, ideology in capitalism has its foundation in the masking of the subject by the object, for example the masking of surplus value produced in

social relations as an expenditure of a specific amount of labour-time by monetary profit (Lukács, 1986b, 319–321). Ideology is made up of thoughts, practices, ideas, words, concepts, phrases, sentences, texts, belief systems, meanings, representations, artefacts, institutions, systems or combinations thereof that represent and justify one group's or individual's domination and power by misrepresenting, one-dimensionally presenting or distorting reality in symbolic representations (Fuchs 2015, chapter 3).

Ideology exists for Lukács (1986b) only where there are social struggles, i.e. in societies with antagonistic interests (398). They are 'theoretical or practical vehicles for fighting out societal conflicts'[12] (400). Ideology presupposes 'societal structures, in which different groups and conflicting interests act and strive to impose their interest onto the totality of society as its general interest. To put it concisely: The emergence and diffusion of ideologies appears as the general characteristic of class societies'[13] (Lukács, 1986b, 405).

One should note that Lukács' engagement with ideology in the *Ontology* shows that he did not discard *History and Class Consciousness*, but that he sublated the latter into a more general critical theory of society.

2.3.3. Ideology, Advertising and the Religion of Consumption

Lukács (1986b, 581) points out that commodity fetishism contains elements of religious ideology/alienation: money and commodities appear as quasi-Gods. Religion is sublated in capitalist ideology. Religion is for Lukács the archetype of all ideological alienation (605). Lukács argues that ideologies that the ontology of everyday life is the 'all-sided medium of immediacy'[14] (556) that connects ideologies to the objective world of phenomena. In everyday life communication, humans get in touch with culture and ideologies.

Lukács says that ideology has, in capitalism since the rise of mass consumption in the twentieth century, taken on a transition from the power of not-having to the power of having:

> In workers' everyday life, the power of having does not appear as simple privation, the fact that they are not-having the most important means necessary for the everyday satisfaction of needs influences regular life. This power in contrast appears as direct having, as the race with other humans and groups in the attempt to raise personal prestige by the quantity and quality of having[15] (Lukács, 1986b, 699).

Advertising plays a crucial role in this process:

> The effect on humans is primarily oriented on the belief that the purchase of particular hair tonics, ties, cigarettes, cars, etc., the visit to specific holiday resorts etc. results in one's personality being truly acknowledged

in one's environment. The promotion of commodities as originally in ad promotion is not primary here, but rather the consumer's personal prestige that shall be attained by purchasing. Underlying is a double tendency: on the one hand the intention to influence humans into a specific direction and to form them, on the other hand the intention to breed the particularity of humans, to enforce their perception that this superficial differentiation of particularity that has been purchased on the world market is the sole way of how humans become personalities, i.e. how they can achieve personal recognition[16] (701).

2.3.4. Online Targeted Advertising as Capital Accumulation Model: The Engaging/Connection/Sharing-Ideology

If we look at today's media landscape, we can see that advertising plays a very important role in it (McKinsey, 2014). Lukács' analysis that in the twentieth century advertising has become one of the dominant forms of ideology in capitalism is even more poignant in the twenty-first century. On the Internet, targeted advertising is the dominant business model (Fuchs, 2014, 2015). Its introduction in the first decade of the twenty-first century has been accompanied by new ideologies that try to justify and legitimate capitalist Internet platforms.

Internet companies are a *first* kind of actor that spread Internet ideologies. Here are some examples:

- Facebook says it provides 'the power to share and to make the world more open and connected'.[17]
- YouTube conceives the essence of freedom as the possibility 'to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small'.[18]
- For Twitter, the freedom of social media is 'to connect with people, express yourself and discover what's happening' and 'give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly'.[19]
- Instagram says it is a 'fast, beautiful and fun way to share your life with friends and family'.[20]
- tumblr says it enables you to 'share the things you love'.[21]
- Sina Weibo's self-understanding[22] is that it is a platform designed to 'allow users to connect and share information anywhere, anytime and with anyone on our platform' and provides 'an array of online media and social networking services to our users to create a rich canvas for businesses and brand advertisers to connect and engage with their targeted audiences'.

Not only do social media platforms' marketing and PR departments advance the idea that social media is great because it allows engaging, connecting and

sharing, but also some journalists and many consultants communicate such ideologies. They have business opportunities and capital accumulation in mind whenever they think of the Internet and are a *second* type of actor producing social media ideologies. Kevin Kelly (2009) for example, argued in *Wired* magazine that social media enables sharing, cooperation, collaboration, and collectivism. He celebrates 'the power of sharing, cooperation, collaboration, openness, free pricing, and transparency'. Marketing guru Gary Vaynerchuk (2011) argues that social media enables the emergence of a thank you economy, in which entrepreneurs create 'a culture of caring' (233), empower 'people to be forthright, creative, and generous', and allow 'customers to help you shape your brand or business' (233). Also celebratory cultural studies scholars have used similar language for the analysis of social media. Such scholars are a *third* type of ideologues producing social media ideologies. Henry Jenkins writes for example that 'the Web has become a site of consumer participation' (Jenkins, 2008, 137).

2.3.5. The Commodity Fetishism and Social Media Corporations

Lukács has based his theory of ideology as reification on Marx's concept of commodity fetishism, in which an object or something concrete (such as the commodity or money) masks the subject, the abstract, and social relations. The engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology is a special form of a reifying ideology, a form of inverted commodity fetishism: the users do not immediately experience the commodity as it is not immediately visible and experienced when logging into platforms without payment. This is different from buying a cinema, concert or circus ticket, where money directly mediates cultural experience. The commodification of data happens behind the users' back. The social use-value of social media is immediately experienced and masks the commodity form. On targeted-advertising funded 'free' use platforms, the subject and the social mask the object and the commodity form. Inverted commodity fetishism conditions the emergence of the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology that in a populist manner appeals to users' direct social experience and fetishises the social in order to mask the reality of commodification. The engaging/connecting/sharing ideology foregrounds and constantly stresses categories of non-instrumental, social, communicative reason such as caring, sharing, emotions, empowering, creativity, connecting, or making. This social dimension of online media in the contemporary capitalist Internet, however, serves instrumental reason, namely the accumulation of capital. The universe of use-value and sociality has in the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology become subsumed under the logic of instrumental and technological reason that fosters capital accumulation in the interest of a particularistic capitalist class interest.

2.3.6. Users' Consciousness

How do users react to the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology? There are different possible responses of audiences, users, consumers, and citizens to ideologies. They can accept, resist, or partly accept and resist ideologies. This was the point of Stuart Hall's (1973) encoding/decoding model. The problem of this model is that in a relativist manner, it conveys the impression that all three options have the same likelihood. The likelihood of specific audience responses is complex, having to do with factors such as time, education, skills, personal experiences, political worldviews, etc. In a capitalist society, audience responses therefore tend to be asymmetrically distributed.

Empirical studies indicate that users do not simply reproduce the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology, but rather seem to be at the same time supportive of corporate social media's social use-value dimension and sceptical of its exchange-value dimension and the commodification of personal data (Allmer, Fuchs, Kreilinger and Sevignani 2014). They tend to have little knowledge about how the political economy of social media works and providing them with such information seems to empower them in being able to feel competent to make political and moral assessments of social media (ibid.). Internet users' opinions towards social media are quite ambivalent and not automatically ideological.

One important implication of Lukács' *Ontology* is that ideologies are not free-floating, independent structures, but are produced under specific working conditions by an ideological labour force. Concrete human beings and organisations create and reproduce the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology.

2.3.7. Social Media is Bullshit

B.J. Mendelson argues in his book *Social Media is Bullshit* that myths about the Internet that are based on what Harry G. Frankfurt (2005) calls 'bullshit' spread through an 'asshole-based economy' (Mendelson 2012, 54) that cyber hipster, tech media and marketers, analysts, corporations, mainstream media and users advance (74). Mendelson draws on his own long experience as an Internet consultant and concludes that you can only attain a lot of attention and visibility on social media if you are a powerful organisation investing a lot of money. He argues that advertising consultants tend to create the impression that social media is a great business opportunity for everyone in order to foster their own profit interests by selling the engaging/connecting/sharing ideology. Social media's ideological workers include tech companies' strategists, marketing gurus and consultants, neoliberal journalists, and users who reproduce this ideology as hegemony.

2.4. Conclusion

For Lukács, work understood as the active, conscious teleological positing of changes so that use-values are created in order to achieve goals is the foundation of humans and society. He opposes the dualist separation of the realms of work and ideas. Teleological positing – the conscious and active production of changes by realising subjective intentions in the objective world – is the common feature of the economy and culture. Teleological positing means that ideas are a guiding and goal-setting dimension of work so that culture is immanent in work itself. Lukács argues that mental work creates and communicates ideas as social use-values and is therefore a specific form of teleological positing.

Lukács' dialectical ontology of society can inspire us to think about the relationship between culture and economy. It provides an ontological foundation for conceiving cultural work as consisting of physical and informational cultural work that form a dialectic. Digital work is then a specific form of cultural work that creates digital media technologies, digital content, or digital data. It consists of physical and informational digital works that are interconnected and organised in the form of various social relations. In contemporary global capitalism, digital work takes on the form of an international division of digital labour.

For Lukács, a specific form of cultural work – ideological labour – creates ideologies. In ideology, an object masks a subject. Ideologies are produced and communicated by concrete humans and groups in specific labour processes and under particular working conditions. With the rise of advertising-financed social media platforms, a new form of ideology has emerged that justifies the capitalist Internet by foregrounding the social-use value these media enable in order to mask the commodification of data and the logic of capital accumulation.

For Lukács, class struggle is an essential implication of Marxist theory that aims at overcoming alienation and reification. He argues with Marx that alienation can only be abolished through social struggles, which includes ideological struggles (1986b, 653). Alienation can 'only be sublated by a fundamental economic-political-social revolution of the whole system as general and objective mass phenomenon'[23] (698). The bottom line of the political economy of the contemporary landscape of cultural and digital labour is that we need political struggles for an alternative Internet and alternative media that are redesigned within an alternative political and societal framework.

Lukács' *Ontology* allows us to understand the broader totality of capitalism and how its moments are related. Teleological positing is an ontological concept that shows how the economy and culture are connected. All culture is posited with specific purposes, which shows that it always has an economic dimension, although it is not only economic, but has as meaning effects all over society. Lukács also integrates the notion of reification that he introduced in *History*

and Class Consciousness into the *Ontology*. Teleological positing in class-based society reverses means and ends so that exploitation, domination and ideological control emerge as attempts to instrumentalise humans. The tasks that remain are social struggles that aim to overcome class and domination.

Notes

1   Translation from German: 'geistige[n] Arbeit'.
2   Translation from German: 'ontologischen Gleichartigkeit von Basis und Überbau, daß sie nämlich beide auf teleologischen Setzungen und deren kausalen Folgen beruhen'.
3   Translation from German: 'Spielraum gewünschter (oder unerwünschter) Reaktionen auf gesellschaftliche Tatbestände, Situationen, Aufgaben etc.'
4   Translation from German: 'daß auf je einer konkreten Produktionsstufe der Wert des Produkts der Arbeit sich scharf danach scheidet, ob es unmittelbar brauchbar oder unbrauchbar ist, während im künstlerischen Schaffen das Feld, die Möglichkeit von Wert oder Unwert außerordentlich weit gestreckt, im voraus kaum bestimmbar ist'.
5   Translation from German: 'geistige Arbeit ist, auch als Moment der gesellschaftlichen Arbeitsteilung, keineswegs mit Ideologie identisch. Ihre Verknüpftheit ist aber eben deshalb sehr innig: das Ergebnis jeder geistigen Arbeit kann in bestimmten sozialen Situationen in Ideologie umschlagen, ja die gesellschaftliche Arbeitsteilung bringt ununterbrochen Situationen hervor, in denen dieses Umschlagen notwendig und permanent wird'.
6   Translation from German: 'Ihre bloße Existenz, wenn auch auf noch so niedrigem Niveau, läßt eine weitere entscheidende Bestimmung des gesellschaftlichen Seins aus der Arbeit herauswachsen, die präzise Kommunikation zwischen den zu einer Arbeit vereinten Menschen: die Sprache'.
7   Translation from German: 'die Intention haben, andere Menschen dazu zu veranlassen, eine vom Subjekt der Aussage gewünschte teleologische Setzung ihrerseits zu vollziehen'.
8   Translation from German: 'ein antwortendes Wesen'.
9   Translation from German: 'wechselseitigen dialektischen Polarität des ideellen und des Reellen'.
10   Translation from German: 'realen Möglichkeiten im Ansichseienden'.
11   Translation from German: 'Je allgemeiner sich der Tauschwert verbreitet, desto deutlicher und bestimmter tritt als die ökonomische Fundierung seiner jeweiligen Größe die gesellschaftlich notwendige Arbeitszeit in den Mittelpunkt'.
12   Translation from German: 'theoretisches oder praktisches Vehikel zum Ausfechten gesellschaftlicher Konflikte'.
13   Translation from German: 'Die Hauptfrage ist demnach, daß das Entstehen solcher Ideologien Gesellschaftsstrukturen voraussetzt, in denen

verschiedene Gruppen und entgegengesetzte Interessen wirken und bestrebt sind, diese der Gesamtgesellschaft als deren allgemeines Interesse aufzudrängen. Kurz gefaßt: Entstehen und Verbreitung von Ideologien erscheint als das allgemeine Kennzeichen der Klassengesellschaften'

[14] Translation from German: 'allseitige Medium der Unmittelbarkeit'

[15] Translation from German: 'Im Alltagsleben des Arbeiters zeigt sich die Macht des Habens nicht mehr als ein einfaches Entbehren, als Einfluß des Nichthabens der wichtigsten Mittel zur alltäglich notwendigen Bedürfnisbefriedigung auf das normale Leben, sondern im Gegenteil als die des direkten Habens, als der Wettlauf mit anderen Menschen und Gruppen im Versuch, die persönliche Geltung durch Quantität und Qualität des Habens zu erhöhen'.

[16] Translation from German: 'Die Wirkung auf den Menschen richtet sich also primär darauf, daß er des Glaubens sei, durch Erwerb der betreffenden Haarwässer, Krawatten, Zigaretten, Autos etc., durch Besuch bestimmter Badeorte etc. als echte, von seiner Umgebung anerkannte Persönlichkeit zu gelten. Nicht das Anpreisen der Waren ist also hier das Primäre, wie ursprünglich im annoncierenden Anpreisen, sondern das persönliche Prestige, das durch ihre Erwerbung für den Käufer erreicht werden soll. Dem liegt sozial gesehen eine Doppeltendenz zugrunde: einerseits die Absicht, die Menschen in bestimmter Richtung zu beeinflussen, zu formen (wieder sei an Hitlers These über den femininen Charakter der Massen erinnert), andererseits die, die Partikularität der Menschen hochzuzüchten, in ihnen die Einbildung zu verstärken, gerade diese auf dem Warenmarkt erworbene oberflächliche Differenzierung der Partikularität sei der alleinige Weg des Menschen, Persönlichkeit zu werden, d. h. persönliches Ansehen zu erringen'.

[17] https://www.facebook.com/FacebookUK/info, accessed on April 10, 2014.

[18] http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/en-GB/, accessed on 10 April 2014.

[19] https://about.twitter.com/company, accessed on 10 April 2014.

[20] http://instagram.com, accessed on 10 April 2014.

[21] https://www.tumblr.com/, accessed on 10 April 2014.

[22] http://corp.sina.com.cn/eng/sina_intr_eng.htm, accessed on 9 April 2014.

[23] Translation from German: 'kann diese Entfremdung nur durch eine fundamentale ökonomisch-politisch-soziale Umwälzung des ganzen Systems als allgemeine und objektive Massenerscheinung aufgehoben werden'.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1960/1961. *Ontologie und Dialektik*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2004. *Negative Dialectics*. London: Routledge.

Allmer, Thomas, Christian Fuchs, Verena Kreilinger and Sebastian Sevignani. 2014. 'Social Networking Sites in the Surveillance Society: Critical Perspectives and Empirical Findings'. In *Media, Surveillance and Identity.*

Social Perspectives, ed. André Jansson and Miyase Christensen and André Jansson, 49–70. New York: Peter Lang.

Antunes, Ricardo. 2014. *The Meanings of Work*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books.

Bewes, Timothy and Timothy Hall, eds. 2011. *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence*. London: Continuum International.

Dyer-Witheford, Nick. 2014. 'The Global Worker and the Digital Front'. In *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society*, ed. Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval, 165–178. New York: Routledge.

Feenberg, Andrew. 2014. *The Philosophy of Praxis: Marx, Lukács and the Frankfurt School.* London: Verso.

Fehér, Ferenc, Ágnes Heller, György Markus and Mihály Vajda.1976. 'Notes on Lukács' Ontology'. *Telos* 29: 160–181.

Frankfurt, Harry G. 2005. *On Bullshit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fuchs, Christian. 2003. 'Structuration theory and Self-Organization'. *Systemic Practice and Action Research* 16 (2): 133–167.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hall, Stuart. 1973. 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'. Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Occasional Papers #7. http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP07.pdf

Jenkins, Henry. 2008. *Convergence Culture*. New York: New York University Press.

Kelly, Kevin. 2009. 'The New Socialism: Global Collectivist Society is Coming Online'. *Wired Online*, 22 May 2009, http://archive.wired.com/culture/culturereviews/magazine/17-06/nep_newsocialism?currentPage=all

Luhmann, Niklas. 1995. *Social Systems.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness. Studies in Marxist Dialectics.* Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1978a. *The Ontology of Social Being. 1: Hegel.* London: Merlin.

Lukács, Georg. 1978b. *The Ontology of Social Being. 2: Marx.* London: Merlin.

Lukács, Georg. 1978c. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour.* London: Merlin.

Lukács, Georg. 1983. *Record of a Life: An Autobiography*. London: Verso.

Lukács, Georg. 1986a. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Erster Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 13*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Lukács, Georg. 1986b. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Zweiter Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 14*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Marx, Karl. 1847. 'The Poverty of Philosophy'. In *MECW*, Volume 6, 105–212. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume 1.* London: Penguin.

McKinsey. 2014. *McKinsey Global Media Report 2014.* Accessed 20 February 2015. http://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/dotcom/client_service/ media%20and%20entertainment/pdfs/6232%20_global_media_trends%20 report_2014_industry%20overview_v8_online.ashx.

Mendelson, B.J. 2012. *Social Media is Bullshit.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Nineham, Chris. 2010. *Capitalism and Class Consciousness: The Ideas of Georg Lukács*. London: Counterfire.

Scholz, Trebor, ed. 2013. *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory.* New York: Routledge.

Stahl, Titus. 2013. 'Georg Lukács'. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*: http:// plato.stanford.edu/entries/lukacs/#Ont

Tertulian, Nicolas. 1988. 'Lukács' *Ontology*'. In *Lukács Today: Essays in Marxist Philosophy*, ed. Tom Rockmore, 243–273. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Thompson, Michael J., ed. 2011. *Georg Lukács Reconsidered.* London: Continuum International.

Vaynerchuck, Gary. 2011. *The Thank You Economy*. New York: Harper Business.

Theodor W. Adorno and the Critical Theory of Knowledge

3.1. Introduction

This chapter asks: what insights of Adorno's philosophy can be used for grounding a critical theory of knowledge?

It is a common prejudice that Adorno was a pessimist, saw humans as passively manipulated, considered instrumental society to be without alternative, and thought political change was hopeless. What many want to make us believe is that Adorno's theory of knowledge is a theory of ideological manipulation that creates and reproduces false consciousness. Such prejudice and its repetition can keep theoretically interested readers from exploring the wealth and richness of Adorno's works beyond the *Culture Industry* chapter in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 94–136).

This chapter analyses Adorno's contribution to a critical theory of knowledge by revisiting the assumption that he is a media pessimist (section 2), reconsidering the debate about aesthetics between Lukács and Adorno and generalising the conclusions from art to the theory of knowledge (section 3), and by discussing and further developing Adorno's dialectical concept of knowledge (section 4).

The first task is to show that Adorno was not simply a media pessimist, but that his work is much richer. For doing so, section 2 draws especially on Adorno's articles *Education after Auschwitz* (Adorno 1967), *Chaplin Times Two* (Adorno 1996), and *Prologue to Television* (Adorno 1998, 49–57). For the second task, the discussion of Adorno's critique of Lukács' aesthetics and the generalisation of this criticism to the theory of knowledge, section 3 provides a reading of Adorno's (1997) *Aesthetic Theory* and his essay *Extorted Reconciliation: On Georg Lukács' Realism in our Time* (Adorno 1958). It also makes cross-references to

Jürgen Habermas' (1971) book *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Habermas developed his theory of communication based on and by going beyond Adorno. For the third task, the discussion of the dialectics of knowledge, section 3 especially refers to Adorno's (1963) book *Hegel: Three Studies* and his essays *On Subject and Object* (Adorno 1998, 245–258) and *Ideology* (Adorno 1954).

The reader may ask: why does the discussion of the dialectics of knowledge in this chapter not engage profoundly with Adorno's (1973b, 2008) *Negative Dialectics*? Adorno's three Hegel studies are explicitly devoted to epistemology. The first study (*Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy*) discusses the relationship of subject and object in Hegel's philosophy and the role of reason and (ir)rationality in this relation. The second study (*The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy*) analyses how Hegel saw experience and knowledge. The third one (*Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel*) focuses on the dialectical character of Hegel's writing and how to read Hegel, i.e. how the reader of Hegel creates knowledge about Hegel. *Negative Dialectics* is an interesting work in itself, but *Hegel: Three Studies* is the work that more directly engages with Hegel's dialectical epistemology.

3.2. Adorno – A Media Pessimist?

3.2.1. Adorno and Cultural Studies

In media and cultural studies, we often find short standard dismissals of Adorno in a few paragraphs that lack an in-depth engagement with his works. Here are some example assessments that I collected from cultural studies books and essays by searching for the keyword 'Adorno' in a sample of works.

- The 'Frankfurt School have no room in their scenario for resistant or evasive practices. […] this produces a left-wing elitism that implicitly or explicitly devalues the people with whom it is politically aligned: an uncomfortable position, to say the least. One result of this is the way it has blinkered Marxist theory to the notion of popular pleasure, and particularly to the idea that popular pleasure must necessarily contain traces of resistance: there is no popular pleasure in being ideologically duped or hegemonically victimized. The power of ideology or hegemony simply is not that great' (Fiske 1989, 183).
- 'Adorno condemns mass or popular music as a standardized industrial product (commodity) which determines an infantilized (fetishized) mode of consumption. […] Adorno collapses the distinction between production and consumption, making the consumer's alienation the same as the laborer's. […] For critical theory, the cultural object is pure exchange value, with no use value whatsoever' (Grossberg 1997, 108–109).
- 'I blame Adorno. I mean, you read his work on 'The culture industry', and it's so obvious that he doesn't know anything about popular culture, he's never consumed any popular culture – in fact, it seems like

he's never even spoken to anybody who's ever consumed any popular culture!' (Jenkins 2006).

- For Horkheimer and Adorno, mass culture means 'citizens are turned into a passive mass of consumers […] In this world of mass culture, all is false and inauthentic because it is tainted by the hand of production, commodification and exchange' (du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay and Negus 1997, 87).

- 'Unfortunately, the force of the Frankfurt School's critique was weakened by their apparently elitist dismissal of forms of popular culture' (Longhurst 2013, 75).

- 'Adorno is often (and rightly in my view) accused of not understanding TV's manifold pleasures, and at the same time of taking it too seriously' (During 2005, 115).

- 'Adorno will be presented as a (Marxist) high culture gladiator' (Walton 2007, 48). For him, popular culture 'pacifies the masses and encourages them to confirm to their humiliating conditions. The exploited masses (consumers) are seen as victims of depoliticization and impoverished, materially, intellectually and emotionally' (Walton 2007, 53).

- 'Like the perspective developed by Arnold, Leavisism and some of the American mass culture theorists, the Frankfurt School perspective on popular culture is essentially a discourse from above on the culture of other people (a discourse of "us" and "them")' (Storey 2008, 70).

- 'The Frankfurt School also applied a transmission mode, though messages were intrinsically ideological; media messages always carried the political interests of the elites who generated them. Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse believed, it would seem, that the masses were passive and unidimensional victims of the overbearing power of state and media institutions' (Lewis 2008, 109).

- 'The commodification of culture, then, was a much more *ambivalent* process than was allowed for by Adorno and Horkheimer's pessimism. […] there is a constant sense in Adorno and Horkheimer that the battle has already been lost, that culture has been already subsumed both by capital and by an abstract system of "instrumental reason"' (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 25).

Such passages are likely to keep readers from engaging with Adorno's work, rather than encouraging interest because they label them as being pessimistic, deterministic, and elitist.

3.2.2. Was Adorno a Cultural Pessimist?

Adorno, who is vilified by many cultural studies scholars as the prototypical cultural pessimist and elitist, had a positive vision for a medium like TV. For television (in German, Fernsehen means literally 'to watch into the distance') 'to keep the promise still resonating within the word, it must emancipate itself from

everything within which it – reckless wish-fulfilment – refutes its own principle and betrays the idea of Good Fortune for the smaller fortunes of the department store' (Adorno 1998, 57). Adorno frequently acknowledges the need and potentials of emancipation. In the case of TV, he points out that enabling watching into the distance beyond capitalism is a good fortune. This is indirectly a call for the creation of alternative media that question the status quo.

Adorno did not despise popular culture. He was for example a fan of Charlie Chaplin and pointed out the critical role of the clown in popular culture (Adorno 1996). Adorno admired and was a 'fan' of the clown of all clowns – Charlie Chaplin. 'Presence of mind and omnipresence of mimetic ability also characterize the empirical Chaplin. […] Incessant and spontaneous change: in Chaplin, this is the utopia of an existence that would be free of the burden of being-one's-self' (Adorno 1996, 60). Adorno's fondness of Chaplin, the figure of the clown, and the circus shows that he was not opposed to entertainment as such. He rather despised capitalism and therefore the commodity form.

Even in the *Culture Industry* chapter of the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, the positive elements of popular culture are visible. For example when Adorno writes that 'traces of something better persist in those features of the culture industry by which it resembles the circus' (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002, 114).

3.2.3. Was Adorno an Elitist Theorist?

Was Adorno a cultural elitist who looked down on everyday people and the working class? Horkheimer and Adorno's position was fundamentally shaped by the historical defeat of the German working class in Nazism and its support for Hitler. They asked themselves, how could history go so wrong? Given this experience, they also distrusted the assumption that what the mass of working people in Germany was doing and thinking after Auschwitz was automatically right. They distrusted the idealisation of the working class, stressed the role of ideology in everyday life, and argued for institutions and mechanisms that strengthen critical and reflective thought in society. They, however, never gave up on the idea of human emancipation, although they thought emancipation was quite unlikely in post-Nazi Germany. They saw anti-fascist education as a key political task so that Nazism's history would not repeat itself.

Was Adorno an elitist? In a class-based society, all philosophy and theory is to a certain extent elitist because it is based on a division of labour, where people employed at universities have much more time for intellectual engagement than everyday people. This situation has changed to a significant degree with the rise of precarious intellectual labour under neoliberalism. But certainly university-educated people and university employees have more time and capacities for intellectual engagement than others.

So as a tendency, critical theorists can afford much more time for the analysis of society than the everyday member of the working class. In a class-based

society, critical theory is therefore necessarily privileged and because of its privileged use of time and spaces for critical thought, it is very likely to come up with profound analyses of class-based society's contradictions. One can therefore not blame Adorno or any other critical theorist for the privileged role they have in the analysis of society, but should rather blame class-based society itself. All critical theory is privileged by necessity in a class-based society. The democratisation of the production of critique requires the abolition of class-based society and its replacement with a free association that replaces the division of labour by well-rounded human activities for all so that, as Marx said,

> nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic (Marx and Engels 1845, 53).

That Adorno argued for critical education shows that he was concerned with the question of how critique could be generalised as a participatory mechanism in society that acts as a bulwark against fascism.

3.2.4. Did Adorno Hate Popular Culture? He Hated the Commodity Form

Adorno profoundly opposed the commodity form and was convinced that wherever it is introduced, it damages human life in society. He did not hate popular culture, but hated the commodity form of any form of culture. In respect to music, Adorno (1991, 38) argued for example that 'all contemporary musical life is dominated by the commodity form'. He also wrote that the 'role of music in the social process is exclusively that of a commodity' so that its organisation is 'in the hands of powerful monopolies' (Adorno 1932, 391). What Adorno calls musical fetishism becomes especially evident in the use of different types of music in advertising. Music would today serve 'as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music' (38). Because of 'commodity listening', the 'differences in the reception of official 'classical' music and light music no longer have any real significance' (35).

3.2.5. Adorno's Version of Fan Studies

It is certainly true that Adorno's musical taste focused on twelve-tone music by composers such as Arnold Schönberg, Anton Webern or Alban Berg. Marisol Sandoval argues in this context that one must see that 'Adorno was a fan

of serious music. He enjoyed playing as well as listening to classical music'
(Sandoval 2015, 67). His fascination with fan studies becomes quite evident
in his (1932) essay *On the Social Situation of Music*, in which he expresses his
admiration for and analyses topics such as the music of Arnold Schönberg,
Igor Stravinsky, Kurt Weill, Hanns Eisler and Alban Berg, the writings of Bert
Brecht and Karl Kraus, and Adolf Loos' architecture. To a certain extent his
fandom may have influenced Adorno's theory. So he is in an epistemological
respect not so different from contemporary fan studies, in which scholars tend
to analyse the forms of culture they personally like.

But Adorno's critique is not limited to entertainment or popular music, but
extends to what some term classical or serious music. Just think of the domi-
nant way people consume music today: commercial radio stations are entirely
funded by advertising. Popular and classical musical festivals are exercises in
commercial sponsorship and branding. YouTube is for many a primary source
for listening to and watching music. It interlaces music with advertisements.
Spotify presents a couple of minutes advertisements to all those listeners who
are not premium subscribers. Adorno felt that culture becomes debased when
it is connected to commerce and advertisements. Out of his analysis of music
and culture speaks the desire for a world of culture beyond the commodity
form and beyond advertisement.

3.2.6. Adorno and Alternative Media

Adorno argues for music and culture as non-identity, as something that is
functionless and is consumed independently of the profit logic of corpora-
tions. 'Profit puts the functionless into its service and thereby degrades it
into senselessness and unrelatedness' (Adorno 1973a, 222). Adorno was a
radical anti-capitalist, who was opposed to the capitalist form of music and
culture. He would not oppose YouTube, where in fact one can not just watch
music videos and other films, but also listen to lectures by Adorno. But he
would oppose the commodity character of users' data on this platform,
i.e. the constant feature of advertisements that prohibit the uninterrupted
engagement with culture. Thinking Adorno to the end means that we have
to talk about and struggle for non-commercial, alternative, critical media.

Adorno's critique of the culture industry is a radical critique of the commodity
form. 'From a social perspective, present-day musical activity, production and
consumption can be divided drastically into that which unconditionally recog-
nises its commodity character and, refusing any dialectic intervention, orients
itself according to the demands of the market and that which in principle does
not accept the demands of the market' (Adorno 1932, 395). Adorno's hatred
of the commodity form of the media and culture can be read as an appeal for
the creation and sustenance of non-commercial, non-profit media and culture,

so-called 'alternative media and alternative culture' that are organised outside of corporate monopolies and challenge the 'mainstream'.

Adorno was a public intellectual who effectively used broadcast media for discussing contemporary political issues. He especially gave lectures on the radio and participated in discussions broadcast on radio and television. The six CD box set 'Kultur und Verwaltung: Vorträge und Gespräche' (Culture and Administration: Lectures and Discussions) documents some of these activities. It consists of three Adorno lectures as well as three discussions between Adorno and Arnold Gehlen (on the public sphere, sociology and the human being, modern art) broadcast by Südwestrundfunk (SWR), a southwest regional public service broadcaster in Germany. The five CD box set 'Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' (Working Through the Past) documents radio lectures Adorno gave in the years from 1955 until 1969. Although Adorno was a critic of the capitalist culture industry, this does not mean that he opposed popular cultural forms of expression. To the contrary, he himself made an alternative use of radio and television and was an excellent example of mediated public intellectualism.

3.2.7. The Media and Education after Auschwitz

Adorno (1967) in his essay *Education after Auschwitz* wrote about in the positive role that TV could play in anti-fascist education in Germany after Auschwitz. He argues that the 'premier demand upon all education is that Auschwitz not happen again' (19). 'When I speak of education after Auschwitz, then, I mean two areas: first, children's education, especially in early childhood; then, general enlightenment, which provides an intellectual, cultural, and social climate in which a recurrence would no longer be possible' (22). One of the measures of anti-fascist education that Adorno suggests are 'television programmes […] with consideration of the nerve centres of this particular state of consciousness', i.e. the authoritarian personality (24).

Since 2010 the Maximilian-Kolbe-Werk, a German NGO, has organised international meetings of young journalists and media studies students with survivors of extermination camps such as Auschwitz, Buchenwald, Dachau, and Sachsenhausen. The idea is that young people create interviews, videos, and reports about the survivors and make use of traditional and online media for disseminating these materials. The project describes itself the following way:

> Young journalists meet survivors of the Nazi regime in the Memorial Sites of Auschwitz and Dachau. They visit together the authentic places of Nazi crimes and conduct interviews. They record the testimonies of survivors as their unique legacy. By means of various media techniques and Web 2.0 applications they produce audio, video and text media pieces and publish them using conventional and new media. They are

accompanied by experienced journalists and media educators. In different program units, young people will get the opportunity for personal and professional exchange in the international context. They will approach the following questions: What influence do the media, particularly the Internet, have on the commemorative process? How can young journalists participate in the commemorative discourse today and tomorrow? How can they contribute to the remembrance of the Nazi past and what preventive measures against the influence of right-wing extremists can they meet?[1]

Asked why she participates, one young journalist says for example:

Although I am a journalist, first of all it was actually a very personal motivation. I have since my childhood really asked myself the questions: What is the Holocaust? What have the people there been capable of doing to others? And how could those, who had to suffer these atrocities, live on?[2]

The results have been published online, in newspapers, and have been broadcast on radio and television.[3]

This project involves both young people and survivors and makes use of media for the task of documenting the experiences of those whom the Nazis tried to exterminate. Confronting the public with the horrific reality of extermination is a necessary element of education after Auschwitz. Traditional media and social media platforms are very good means for documenting these experiences and making them available to a broader public. Adorno probably would not be a fan of commercial social media and would have detested targeted online advertising, but he probably would much welcome the use of social media in a project such as the Max-Kolbe-Werk's international meetings. He would probably advise to upload resulting reports, such as videos, on noncommercial platforms because he would find it utterly distasteful if a report of an Auschwitz survivor were interrupted by advertisements on YouTube.

If one goes beyond a superficial and selective reading of Adorno, then one will find his deep belief in the possibility of emancipation and in the role that culture can play in this process. English translations of Horkheimer and Adorno's works are imprecise because the language of the two philosophers is complex and not easily translatable. But besides the problem non-German speakers are facing when reading Horkheimer and Adorno, there seems to be a certain non-willingness in media and cultural studies to engage thoroughly with the Frankfurt School's and Critical Political Economy's origins in order to set up a straw man.

Adorno's criticism of Georg Lukács is alongside his writings on culture an important contribution to the critical theory of knowledge. It will be discussed next.

3.3. Lukács and Adorno: The Theory of Art and Knowledge

Art is a specific form of culture and objectified knowledge. In this section, I will compare Lukács' and Adorno's aesthetic theory and then generalise the results as foundations for dialectically theorising knowledge.

Adorno (1960) argues that not just fascism, but also Stalinism is a system grounded in authoritarian personalities. 'Authoritarian personalities identify themselves with real, existing power per se, prior to any particular contents' (9). It would therefore be wrong to construe authoritarian structures 'from the vantage point of a particular political-economic ideology' (8). Lukács (1954/1980) in *The Destruction of Reason* however sees irrationality immanent only in fascism, capitalism and imperialism, and according to some (including Adorno 1958) disregards the reality that Stalinism was not an alternative, but irrational as well and not altogether different from the logic of capitalism: forms of irrationality were for example the cult of personality, the ideology of hard labour, and the violent destruction of all opposition to and criticism of Stalin with the help of the Gulag and show trials. Stalinism was based on the idea that socialism works in one country that can, by developing productivity, compete with and overtake capitalism, which resulted in a harsh puritanical work ethic enshrined in Article 18 of the 1936 Constitution of the USSR: 'The Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic declares labour to be the duty of all citizens of the Republic, and proclaims the slogan: 'He who does not work, neither shall he eat!"[4]

3.3.1. The Destruction of Reason

At the end of the *Destruction of Reason*, Lukács presents Marxism-Leninism and the peace movement as movements for the restoration of reason, but he is silent on the problems of Stalinism. Lukács in this book as an example of Nazi philosophy discusses Heidegger's theory. He points out a passage, in which Heidegger says that those Germans who had read Hölderlin must have thought differently than the Nazis. Lukács comments that such young men

> were not only in a "situation confronting death" under Hitler, but took a highly active part in murder and torture, pillage and rape. Evidently he considers it superfluous to mention this, for after all the incognito covers everything up: who can tell what a pupil of Heidegger intoxicated by Hölderlin "thought and lived" when he was pushing women and children into the gas chambers at Auschwitz? Nobody can tell, either, what Heidegger himself "thought and lived" when he led the Freiburg students to vote for Hitler. (Lukács 1954/1980, 833)

This passage shows that Lukács' criticism of fascist thought was quite powerful.

In the autobiographic interviews with Lukács, István Eörsi – one of Lukács' students – asks if it is not a defect that the *Destruction of Reason* does 'not criticize in it the type of irrationalism characteristic of Stalinism. I am thinking, for example, of the culture of personality, which is undoubtedly a kind of irrationalism' (Lukács 1983, 103). Lukács answers that Stalinism 'was in fact a type of hyper-rationalism', that 'with Stalin rationalism acquired a form which bordered on the absurd', that Stalin regarded 'tactics as primary' and deduced "'the theoretical generalizations from them', and that Stalin shows that 'when the rational is transcended, the possibility of transformation into the irrational does exist' (104). So Lukács considered Stalinism as a form of irrational rationality, but did not want to criticise it in a book that focuses on the German irrationality that led to Nazism. Lukács formulated the task of the *Destruction of Reason* as the analysis of 'Germany's path to Hitler in the sphere of philosophy' (Lukács 1954/1980, 4).

3.3.2. Lukács on Art

For Lukács (1970), an artwork is not a free-floating idea, but aesthetic content that has a specific form and exists in a specific objective context in society. He assumes a specific relationship between the work of art and objective reality. He argues that socialist art is partisan (29) and that therefore the reflection of objective reality in the work of art takes on particular forms, reflecting 'great social problems' (33), providing

> a picture of reality in which the contradiction between appearance and reality, the particular and the general, the immediate and the conceptual, etc., is so resolved that the two converge into a spontaneous integrity in the direct impression of the work of art and provide a sense of an inseparable integrity (34).

Socialist art would reflect 'correctly and in proper proportion all important factors objectively determining the area of life it represents' (38) and show 'fidelity to reality, the unsparing effort to render reality comprehensively and realistically' (74). It would have to be a 'correct reflection of the totality' (43).

Lukács summarises the basic dogma of socialist realism that he takes for granted: art 'is a particular form by means of which objective reality is reflected' so that it 'becomes of crucial importance for it to grasp that reality as it truly is, and not merely to confine itself to reproducing whatever manifests itself immediately and on the surface' (in: Adorno et al. 1980, 33). 'Great realism' portrays 'man in the whole range of his relations to the real world, above all those which outlast mere fashion' (in: Adorno et al. 1980, 48).

Lukács (1970) labels art that does not fulfil the criterion of socialist realism as 'bourgeois decadence', 'hypocritical, foggy idealism' (32), 'capitalist degeneration'

(34), 'idealistic subjectivism', 'subjective idealism', 'self-complacency', 'parasitic' (42), 'philistinism' (105), 'deformities' (106), or 'sick art' (109). He was critical of '"modernist anti-realism"' (Lukács 1958/1971, 17) that he characterised as 'universal distortion' (33) and the 'negation of art' (46). In literature, he was for example critical of Franz Kafka's and James Joyce's works. He described Kafka's writings as 'decadent modernism' (Lukács 1958/1971, 92) and accused it of 'guilt by association with Hitlerism and the preparations for atomic war' (81).

3.3.3. Lukács and Stalinism

Although Lukács' *Destruction of Reason* is silent on Stalinism and the old Lukács' aesthetic theory glorifies socialist realism that played such an important role in Soviet culture under Stalin, it would be a mistake to characterise Lukács as a Stalinist. In other places he clearly criticises Stalin. While in exile in Moscow, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) accused him of being a spy of the Hungarian police and confined him in the Lubyanka prison in 1941 (Lukács 1983, 115). It is also important to note that Lukács during the Stalinist Rákosi era in Hungary (1949–1956) remained distanced from political appointments and was never a member of the Hungarian Communist Party's Central Committee (116), whereas he became one of six members of the Central Committee at the time of Hungarian uprising of 1956 (129). He was a political supporter of the Hungarian Revolution against the Soviets and became the minister of culture in Imre Nagy's reform-communist government that was in office from 26 October until 4 November 1956, when the Soviet invasion of Hungary ended the revolution.

In his article *Reflections on the Cult of Stalin*, Lukács (1962) criticises Stalin's concept of the dialectic as ideology:

> The Stalinist tendency is always to abolish, wherever possible, all intermediate factors, and to establish an immediate connection between the crudest factual data and the most general theoretical propositions. […] Stalin's unscrupulousness in this matter reached the point of altering the theory itself if necessary. [...] For him, in the name of partiinost, agitation is primary. Its needs determine [...] what science must say and how it must say it. […] In the famous Chapter IV of the Short History, Stalin defines the essence of dialectical and historical materialism. […] Stalin's propagandistic simplifications (often vulgarizations) at once became the unique and absolutely binding norm and the utmost limit of philosophical investigation. If anyone ventured, appealing for instance to Lenin's philosophical notes, to go beyond the definitions of Chapter IV or simply to supplement them, he was courting ideological condemnation and could not publish his researches. […] All science and all literature had to serve exclusively the propagandistic demands formulated above, by Stalin himself.

In his final book *The Ontology of Social Being*, Lukács (1986) repeats this criticism of Stalinism. He for example speaks in it of 'Stalin's brutal manipulation'[5] (722) and that 'Stalin's ideology brought it about to reify Marxism itself' (600).[6] 'It is important to note that Stalin in such cases acted based on purely tactical considerations and used the theoretical analysis of the particular historical situation as pure means of propaganda for his already taken decision' (499).[7]

Lukács (1991) argues that Stalinism was economically reductionist and focused its politics of how to catch up with and overtake Western capitalism on rapid industrialisation. Questions of socialist democracy were ignored. Stalin argued that the 'party must commit itself to build the industrial base of socialism with the greatest speed regardless of the human cost to the population and without certainty that these draconian measures would produce the requisite industrial foundation' (Lukács 1991, 113). Lukács considers the Soviets that emerged in the Paris Commune of 1871 and in the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917 as expressions of grassroots socialist democracy (125–126, 144). Stalin reified the dialectic (130) and ideologically dressed up totalitarian bureaucracy that opposes socialist democracy as Marxism: Stalin destroyed 'every tendency that might act as a precondition for socialist democracy. The Soviet system practically ceased to exist' (133). Stalinism

> brands every dissenting viewpoint as an enemy of the people. Anyone who does not agree with the official, tactically determined party decisions is judged as a subversive, or the direct tool of the agents of imperialism. An effort is made to destroy them with the organized means of the government apparatus. That was the method of the Great Purge Trials. […] The preservation of Stalinism is the greatest barrier to the rise of socialist democratization inside the domains of socialism. It is equally the major barrier to international cooperation and the integrating of all people striving for a renaissance of the genuine method of Marx (169).

All knowledge stands in relations to nature and society because humans act within natural and social environments. Lukács considers only art that is a socialist reflection of political life as true art, whereas Adorno and others see such an understanding as instrumental and stress the importance of abstracted, experimental, and autonomous knowledge in art. Lukács understood the notion of reflection (*Widerspiegelung*) as a realistic mirroring of reality in art. Mirroring is a category that can create the impression that all knowledge strives to be an exact mapping of nature and society.

3.3.4. Adorno on the Truth of Art

In contrast to Lukács, for Theodor W. Adorno (1997) the truth of an artwork lies in an autonomous aesthetic logic that is not subsumed under the logic of domination so that it constitutes a different, non-instrumental logic. Art

> becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as "socially useful", it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it (225–226).

'Insofar as a social function can be predicated for artworks, it is their functionlessness' (227). If an artwork becomes instrumental to and a function of something, then for Adorno it loses its truth. Functionlessness is for Adorno the symbol of freedom beyond capitalism and class. So his search for elements that are functionless and his critique of how the commodity form tries to functionalise almost everything is a dialectical anticipation of a free society and the ascertainment of the need of such a society.

For Adorno, the criteria that Lukács' aesthetics advance are therefore already a form of instrumentalism. He argues that although Lukács tried to broaden the concept of socialist realism, it remained rather dogmatic, rejecting most of modern literature as decadent, sick, or reactionary. 'Art exists within reality, has its function in it, and is also inherently mediated with reality in many ways. But nevertheless, as art, by its very concept it stands in an antithetical relationship to the status quo' (Adorno 1958, 224). Art can display and create illusions and fictitious reality, which for Adorno does not make it bad art. There is an '"aesthetic difference" from existence' (225), a non-immediacy with established facts (227). The 'work of art does not have something immediately real as its subject matter' (232). Lukács' later aesthetic theory would be too close to the catechism of socialist realism, 'the ideologically sanctioned copy theory of knowledge' (236). Comparable to Adorno, Ernst Bloch also criticises Lukács' aesthetics for assuming the existence of a 'closed […] reality' and the equation of experimental art 'with a condition of decadence' (in: Adorno et al. 1980, 22). Bertolt Brecht also commented that dogmatic art critics like Lukács or Alfred Kurella 'want to play the *apparatchik* and exercise control over other people. Everyone of their criticisms contains a threat' (in: Adorno et al. 1980, 97).

3.3.5. Adorno on Jazz

But isn't Adorno's assessment of jazz quite comparable to Lukács' contempt for anti-realistic literature? Some observers think so. So for example Robert W. Witkin (2000, 145) argues: 'At best Adorno's attack on jazz seems to be out of sympathy with informed opinion on the subject; at worst it appears to be reactionary and possibly racist'. Jazz originated in the context of black experiences of slavery and segregation. The argument that some make is that Adorno is racist and argues that jazz is problematic because of its black origins and because it lacks 'whiteness'.

It is a strange form of reverse elitism and top-down judgement when scholars argue that Adorno, who came from a Jewish family and experienced the consequences of anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany when he had to flee, is a racist. Adorno does not make racist arguments about jazz. In his article *On Jazz*, he criticises the commercial character of jazz 'as a mass commodity' (Adorno 1936, 473) that 'wants to improve its marketability and veil its own commodity character' (473). Jamie Owen Daniel (1989/1990, 39–40) writes in an introduction to the English translation of the essay that it is 'not about jazz *as such*, but rather about […] its commercial production and consumption'. One should certainly refuse allegiance to Adorno when he denies that 'jazz has anything to do with genuine black music' (477) and that its arrangement is 'identical to that of a military band' so that it 'can be easily adapted for use by fascism' (485). The Nazis prohibited jazz and any music performed by black people. They considered it to be 'degenerate' art and spoke of 'nigger jazz'.[8] Adorno's assessment is problematic, but not racist.

Also in the essay *On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening* (Adorno 1991, 29–60), Adorno makes clear that his criticism concerns the commodity form of music, art, and culture: 'The listener is converted, along his line of least resistance, into the acquiescent purchaser' (32). He is for example critical of the use of music in advertising:

> For all contemporary musical life is dominated by the commodity form; the last pre-capitalist residues have been eliminated. Music […] serves in America today as an advertisement for commodities which one must acquire in order to be able to hear music. If the advertising function is carefully dimmed in the case of serious music, it always breaks through in the case of light music (37–38).

Adorno was not unaware of the fact that it is not just pop and rock music that can be turned into a commodity. He saw that no form of music is immune to the commodity form. So, for example, the Salzburg Festival is considered as one of the world's primary festivals of classical music. In 2015, the prices for a subscription package for attending a series of 3–5 of the events ranged between €129.60 and €1,231.20.[9] In 2013, the Salzburg Festival's revenues from ticket sales amounted to €28.3 million.[10] Classical music is just like pop and rock music a culture industry, which renders the distinction between classical and popular or entertainment/light music and serious music superfluous. Adorno identified this tendency:

> The differences in the reception of official "classical" music and light music no longer have any real significance. They are only still manipulated for reasons of marketability. The hit song enthusiast must be reassured that his idols are not too elevated for him, just as the visitor to philharmonic concerts is confirmed in his status (Adorno 1991, 35).

If all forms of music and culture can be commodified, then they also must have the potential to resist commodification independent of musical style. Music is a common good in the sense that new music reflects the history of music and is influenced by other music. The logical consequence should be to treat all culture and music as commons instead of as commodity. The Internet partly de-commodifies music and culture by file sharing and partly creates new strategies of commodification (e.g. iTunes, Spotify). All of this takes however place within capitalist society, which creates contradictions between fans, the culture industry, amateur and professional artists, as well as between the content industry that tries to police copyrights and the 'openness' industry (e.g. YouTube) that sells advertisements and therefore welcomes free and open culture as strategy for attracting audiences whose attention is sold as commodities to advertisers.

Heinz Steinert (2003) reminds us that the point of Adorno's theory of the culture industry is not to criticise specific artistic practices, forms, or contents, but the abstract 'principle of commodity-form cultural activity' (10). So we cannot say that Adorno's view of jazz was racist. His essays on jazz were rather concerned about the commercial form of culture in general.

3.3.6. Knowledge and Communication

We can now try to generalise the conclusions from the debate about aesthetics between Lukács and Adorno for knowledge in general. All individual and collective knowledge takes place in the context of both nature and society. These contexts condition, but do not determine the form and content of knowledge. Humans are part of social systems, in which they communicate, i.e. they exchange knowledge and can thereby create new individual knowledge and reproduce existing individual knowledge. Social groups, organisations, social systems, and society at large also create based on individual knowledge and through communication of collective knowledge that represents and describes important features of these systems. In class-based and dominative societies, these knowledge structures also represent class structures and structures of domination, as well as the struggles for defining how and what these systems communicate to the social environment. Knowledge in class-based societies is class knowledge, which does not mean that the knowledge of the dominant class is always false and the one of the dominated class always true (the opposite can be the case), but rather that knowledge in class-based society is shaped by struggles about how to and who can define reality. Individual knowledge, communication, and social knowledge have specific contents, in which human relationships to nature and society are reflected. This reflection is however not a mirroring, but a complex, non-linear relation, whose character depends on the kind of knowledge that is being formed. So for example paintings can be very realistic trying to portray a part of nature and society in a photographic manner or very abstract so that there is no intention to map nature or society,

but where nature and society are only experiential contexts of the artist, who creates abstractions from ideas that are situated in social and natural contexts.

3.3.7. Adorno on the Dialectic of Subject and Object

In his first study on *Hegel's epistemology,* Adorno (1963) discusses the dialectic of subject and object in relation to knowledge. He argues that there is not simply a human subject and an independent outside world as object of thought, but a dialectic of subject and object:

> Hegel's critique strikes at the empty center of the static analysis of knowledge into subject and object […], and the blow he strikes is so deadly because he does not set up an irrational unity of subject and object in opposition to that analysis but instead preserves the distinct moments of the subjective and the objective while grasping them as mediated by one another. The insight that in the realm of the *Geisteswissenschaften,* wherever the object itself is mediated by 'spirit', knowledge becomes fruitful not by excluding the subject but through its utmost exertions, through all its impulses and experiences – this insight […] comes from Hegel's system (Adorno 1963, 7).

Figure 3.1 generalises Adorno's insights and visualises the production of knowledge. All human cognition takes place in the context of a social environment, in which humans communicate, and a natural environment, with which humans stand in a physical metabolism. Cognition is the production of new individual knowledge and the reproduction of individual knowledge. Cognition's objects are nature and society. Individuals do not always have to communicate with other humans in society to form and reproduce thoughts. They can merely observe and thereby gather experiences that form and reproduce knowledge. Individuals also do not have to work in order to cognise, i.e. they do not have to create social use-values out of nature and culture that satisfy general social needs. They can merely act in a social and natural environment without working and thereby form and reproduce knowledge. But of course all work is a dialectical unity of brain and body activity, mental and physical dimensions. Knowledge work in addition creates social knowledge as social use-value, whereas physical work creates physical products.

3.3.8. Adorno on Language and Communication

In his third study of Hegel's epistemology, Adorno (1963) makes an important contribution on how to understand the relationship of communication and the reality that language and communication express:
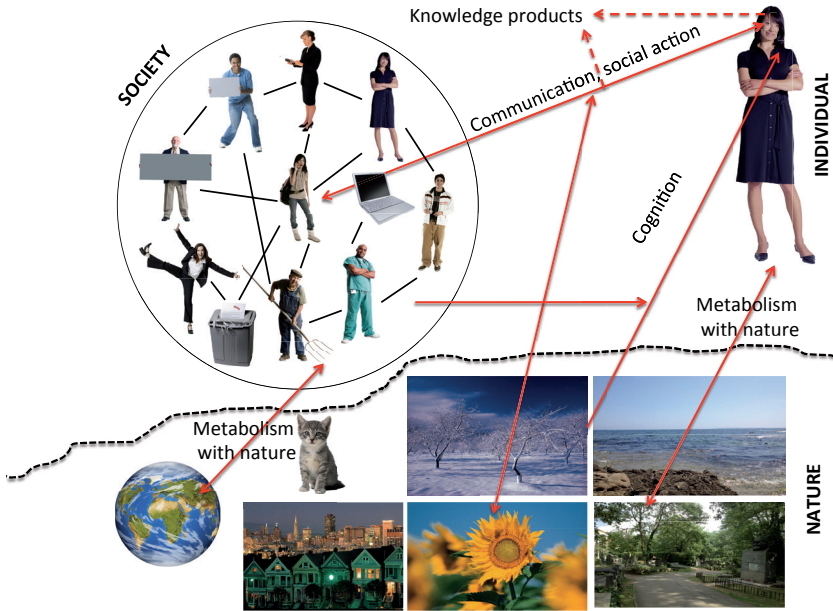
Figure 3.1: The production of knowledge.

> As an expression of the thing itself, language is not fully reducible to communication with others. Nor, however – and Hegel knew this – is it simply independent of communication. Otherwise it would elude all critique, even in its relationship to the matter at hand, and would reduce that relationship to an arbitrary presumption. Language as expression of the thing itself and language as communication are interwoven. The ability to name the matter at hand is developed under the compulsion to communicate it, and that element of coercion is preserved in it; conversely, it could not communicate anything that it did not have as its own intention, undistracted by other considerations. This dialectic plays itself out within the medium of language itself; it is not merely a fall from grace on the part of an inhumane social zeal that watches to make sure that no one thinks anything that cannot be communicated. Even a linguistic approach of the utmost integrity cannot do away with the antagonism between what is in itself and what is for others (105).

In communication, the subject relates to the object via language because language is needed in order to communicate views of the objective world to others. At the same time, the objective world relates to society via the individual languaging being that has an interest in parts of this objective world and appropriates the world linguistically out of personal interest, which enables

the communication with others. Adorno shows that there is a dialectic of the social, the individual, and the objective world in the communication process. Communication is the symbolically expressed social relation that allows the individual A to relate to others O and other individuals O to relate to A and other individuals as their others. They together and individually relate to the objective world that consists of nature and society.

Communication is a form of symbolic interaction, in which humans mutually make meaning of the knowledge others utter. Some, but not all communication processes result in co-ordination and co-operation processes that create knowledge products that satisfy the human need to be informed. Such knowledge products can also be of a more individual nature, for example a novel written by an author. Such a novel is however also a social product because authors form ideas in communication processes with other humans and by reading the works of others. The quality of knowledge products and their specific relations to society and nature depend on the type of knowledge. Adequately understanding knowledge therefore requires a typology of the forms of knowledge.

3.3.9. Fritz Machlup: Types of Knowledge

What types of knowledge are there? Let us have a look at two of the most important approaches, the ones by the economist Fritz Machlup and the critical theorist Jürgen Habermas. Machlup is a very influential social thinker because his 1962 book *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States* was an early formulation of the claim that there is a transition towards a post-industrial knowledge society.

For Machlup, knowledge production is 'any human (or human-induced) activity effectively designed to create, alter, or confirm in a human mind a meaningful apperception, awareness, cognizance, or consciousness of anything whatsoever' (Machlup 1980, 92). He draws a distinction between five classes of knowledge (Machlup 1980, 108; 1962, 21–22):

1) Practical knowledge: Knowledge that is 'useful in the knower's work' (Machlup 1980, 108);
2) Intellectual knowledge: Knowledge that satisfies 'intellectual curiosity, regarded as part of liberal education, humanistic and scientific learning, general culture' (ibid.);
3) Small-talk and pastime knowledge: Knowledge that is 'satisfying the non-intellectual curiosity or his desire for light entertainment and emotional stimulation, including local gossip, news of crimes and accidents, light novels, stories, jokes, games, etc.' (ibid.);
4) Spiritual knowledge: Knowledge that is 'related to his religious knowledge of God and of the ways to the salvation of the soul' (ibid.),

5) Unwanted knowledge: Knowledge that is 'outside of his interests' (ibid.).
6) Practical knowledge is further subdivided into:
    a) professional knowledge
    b) business knowledge
    c) workman's knowledge
    d) political knowledge
    e) household knowledge
    f) and other practical knowledge.

There are several problems of Machlup's theory of knowledge:

- Abstractness: it is abstract and does not stress the class and contested character of knowledge in modern society.
- Arbitrariness: Machlup's typology of knowledge is arbitrary. He does not provide an underlying theoretical criterion for distinguishing these five types.
- Religious fetishism: the category of spiritual knowledge presupposes that God and salvation of the soul exist. He does not see religious knowledge as a specific form of ethical/moral knowledge, but rather reifies it.
- Elitism: Machlup (1962, 25) says that chamber music is intellectual knowledge because it requires attention, serious strain, and concentration, whereas he classifies rock 'n' roll as pastime knowledge (Machlup 1962, 25). He makes an elitist distinction between high culture and low/popular culture that reminds one of conservative cultural theorists such as Matthew Arnold, who were criticised by people like Raymond Williams for their elitist concept of culture. Machlup indirectly expresses that he thinks fans of pop culture are stupid and primitive. 'My decisions may possibly be judged, by my critics, as high-brow or even snobbish' (Machlup 1962, 25).

3.3.10. Matthew Arnold

Matthew Arnold defined culture as cultivation that produces individuals who are 'led, not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection' (1869/2006, 81) and are educated by engaging with 'the best which has been thought and said in the world' (1869/2006, 5). Culture is:

> a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically.

Raymond Williams says that such a concept of culture is oriented on reproducing existing capitalist values and thereby society as it is: the 'culture which is then being defended is not excellence but familiarity, not the knowable but only the known values' (Williams 1980, 8).

3.3.11. Habermas: Three Forms of Knowledge

Jürgen Habermas (1971) distinguishes three forms of knowledge:

> information that expands our power of technical control; interpretations that make possible the orientation of action within common traditions; and analyses that free consciousness from its dependence on hypostatized powers. These viewpoints originate in the interest structure of a species that is linked in its roots to definite means of social organization: work, language, and power. The human species secures its existence in systems of social labor and self-assertion through violence, through tradition-bound social life in ordinary-language communication, and with the aid of ego identities that at every level of individuation reconsolidate the consciousness of the individual in relation to the norms of the group. Accordingly the interests constitutive of knowledge are linked to the functions of an ego that adapts itself to its external conditions through learning processes, is initiated into the communication system of a social life-world by means of self-formative processes, and constructs an identity in the conflict between instinctual aims and social constraints. In turn these achievements become part of the productive forces accumulated by a society, the cultural tradition through which a society interprets itself, and the legitimations that a society accepts or criticizes. My [...] thesis is thus that knowledge-constitutive interests take form in *the medium of work, language,* and power (313).

Habermas's (1971) threefold distinction between technical knowledge, emancipatory knowledge, and practical knowledge reflects his later distinction that he draws in the *Theory of Communicative Action* between the economic system, the political system, and the life-world as the three realms of modern society (Habermas 1984, 1987).

There are, however, also problems in Habermas' theory of knowledge and human interest and his strict separation of work (economy), power (politics) and language (culture, lifeworld):

- The *labour process* does not necessarily have to be a form of the control of nature and humans. In an emancipated society, work turns from labour into well-rounded human activity that is a form of freedom beyond necessity.

- *Language and communication* are not innocent and pure, but are often also media and processes of control and power.
- *Power* and power struggles are not just limited to politics, but also take place in culture and the economy.

The point is then to construct a non-dualist theory of knowledge that does not separate work, communication, and power.

3.4. The Dialectics of Knowledge

3.4.1. Raymond Williams: Cultural Materialism

We can draw on Habermas' distinction that knowledge production is not confined to a single dimension of society, but can take place in all of society's subsystems: the economy, politics, and culture. The economy is the system, in which humans create use-values that satisfy human needs. In the political system, humans make collective decisions on how to shape and regulate society. In the cultural system, they give meanings to the world that help them to define themselves (identity) and to make sense of the world (norms and worldviews relating to others and the world).

Raymond Williams' approach of Cultural Materialism allows us to understand these three realms not as independent, but as simultaneously identical and non-identical, i.e. as a dialectic (see Fuchs 2015, chapter 2): knowledge work creates economic and non-economic social knowledge that satisfies the human need of information. Knowledge is a material dialectical process, in which humans connect their ideas to each other and create new knowledge structures. This production involves processes of work: social knowledge emerges from knowledge work, which is an economic process. All knowledge production is an economic process. Depending on the type and role of knowledge in society, knowledge does not need to be confined to the economy but can extend to society at large, i.e. also to politics and culture. Economic, political, and cultural knowledge have an economic dimension and a potential non-economic dimension.

3.4.2. Adorno on Hegel, Knowledge and Work

Adorno (1963), in his first study of Hegel's epistemology, discusses how Hegel relates knowledge and work and mental and non-mental work. He thereby makes an important contribution to the analysis of how the economy is related to knowledge production. Adorno (1963) stresses that for Hegel, the mind is active and producing (17). 'The reference of the productive moment of spirit back to a universal subject rather than to an individual who labors is what

defines labor as something organized, something social; its own "rationality", the ordering of functions, is a social relationship' (18). In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel would see mind as a form of work (21). 'The path natural consciousness follows to the identity of absolute knowledge is itself work ["labor" in the original translation]. The relationship of spirit to what is given manifests itself on the model of a social process, a process of work ["labor" in the original translation]' (21). Adorno argues that for Hegel the mind is a moment of social work, 'the moment that is separate from physical work ["labor" in the original translation]' (23). But physical work would also depend on nature: Work cannot 'be conceived without the concept of nature, any more than can nature without' work: 'the two are distinct from and mediated by one another at the same time' (23).

Hegel (1807/1977) discusses these aspects of knowledge and work in the preface to his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Philosophical knowledge would be obtained through mental work: 'True thoughts and scientific insight are only to be won through the work ["labour" in the original translation] of the Notion' (Hegel 1807/1977, 43). He argues that knowledge is connected to non-knowledge. Mental work would turn experience into knowledge.

> It is this coming-to-be of *Science as such* or of *knowledge*, that is described in this *Phenomenology* of Spirit. Knowledge in its first phase, or *immediate Spirit*, is the non-spiritual, i.e. *sense-consciousness*. In order to become genuine knowledge, to beget the element of Science which is the pure Notion of Science itself, it must travel a long way and work its passage (Hegel 1807/1977, 15).

For Hegel, mental and physical work stand in a dialectical relationship, they are identical and non-identical, just like there is a dialectic of work and nature. Adorno (1963) argues that the separation of mental and physical labour in class-based societies comes along with a labour ideology that ascribes to labour 'inherent value'. 'The metaphysics of labor and the appropriation of the labor of others are complementary' (24). 'For the absolutization of labor is that of the class relationship: a humankind free of labor would be free of domination' (26). One problem with Hegel would be that in the final instance he 'dissolves labor into a moment of spirit' (24) so that the concept of the absolute spirit reifies bourgeois society's class-based forms of labour.

3.4.3. Power

Power is human actors' capacity to influence the development of the social systems that affect their lives. Power is therefore not limited to the political system, but has economic, political, and cultural dimensions (see table 3.1).

Dimension of society	Definition of power	Structures of power in modern society
Economy	Control of use-values and resources that are produced, distributed and consumed.	Control of money and capital.
Politics	Influence on collective decisions that determine aspects of the lives of humans in certain communities and social systems.	Control of governments, bureaucratic state institutions, parliament, military, police, parties, lobby groups, civil society groups, etc.
Culture	Definition of moral values and meaning that shape what is considered as important, reputable and worthy in society.	Control of structures that define meaning and moral values in society (e.g. universities, religious groups, intellectual circles, opinion making groups, etc.).

Table 3.1: Three forms of power (Source: Fuchs 2014, chapter 2).

3.4.4. Individual and Social Knowledge

Economic, political, and cultural structures are regularities that emerge from co-ordinated social production, enable and constrain individual and social human practices that produce new structures and reproduce existing ones. All social systems and societies are based on a dialectic of structure and agency: Humans produce social structures that enable and constrain human practices that again produce and reproduce social structures. This dialectic of structure and agency is situated in specific economic, political or cultural contexts, in which certain structures are produced and reproduced (Fuchs 2008): Use-values are the key economic structures, rules the key political structures, and collective meanings the key cultural structures. Modern society is a society that is based on the accumulation of money (that mediates the production of use-values) in the economic system, political influence in the political system, and reputation in the cultural system (Fuchs 2008, chapter 3). In modern society, structures take on a duality of general features and roles in accumulation that correspond to a generalisation of the duality of the commodity as use-value and exchange-value that Marx (1867) identified for the modern economy. Modern society is based on a dialectic of general social structures and structures of accumulation: the modern economy is shaped by a dialectic of use-values and monetary capital, the modern political system by a dialectic of rules and influence, and the modern cultural system by a dialectic of collective meaning and reputation (table 3.2). General social structures become subsumed under the logic of accumulation (Fuchs 2008, chapter 3).

Work, political engagement, and cultural activity produce and reproduce use-values, rules, and meanings (table 3.2). The structures produced by such

	Key structures	**Individual knowledge ↔ Social knowledge**	
Economy	use-values, money	skills	↔knowledge products
Politics	rules, influence	political knowledge	↔ collective political worldviews
Culture	meanings, reputation	cultural tastes	↔collective identities

Table 3.2: Individual and social knowledge structures.

social practices are combinations of physical resources and knowledge. All use-values are objectification of activities of the human body and the human brain and they are to specific degrees tangible or intangible. Rules such as laws are intangible social conventions that are written down in texts and enforced by concrete human beings. Collective meanings can be more or less tangible and intangible. A tradition, for example, is mainly intangible, but it is carried out by humans with the help of artefacts. Concrete human beings acting socially in their social environment and physically in the natural environment produce and reproduce general social structures. As part of their practices (work, political engagement, cultural activity), they draw on their individual knowledge and create new social knowledge. The dialectic of individual knowledge and social knowledge products is part of the dialectic of structure and agency that is at the heart of society and all social system (Fuchs 2008, chapter 3). Knowledge structures are dialectically mediated with general social structures (table 3.2).

3.4.5. The Individual and the Species-Being

Adorno (1998) reflects on the dialectics of structure and agency and individual and social knowledge in his article *On Subject and Object*, where he speaks of a dialectic of the individual subject and the human species-being as subject:

> No concept of the subject can have the element of individual humanity […] separated from it in thought; without any reference to it, subject would lose all significance. Conversely, the particular human individual, as soon as one reflects upon it under the guise of the universality of its concept, which does not signify merely something particular being *hic et nunc*, is already transformed into a universal, similar to what was expressed in the idealist concept of the subject; even the expression 'particular person' requires the concept of species simply in order to be meaningful (Adorno 1998, 245).

The dependence of 'cognitive subjects upon space, time, and forms of thought marks their dependence on the species' (Adorno 1998, 252). Adorno comments on the dialectic of the universal and the particular: 'Neither one can

exist without the other, the particular only as determined and this universal, the universal only as the determination of a particular and thus itself particular. Both of them are and are not. This is one of the strongest motives of a nonideal-ist dialectics' (Adorno 1998, 257). So for Adorno, the human being is universal and particular at the same time: it can only be an individual by being a social species-being and only social by also being individual. There is a dialectic of the individual and the social.

Table 3.2 gives an overview of society's three subsystems' key structures and their forms of individual and social knowledge. This typology of knowledge has in contrast to Machlup's, the advantage that it is systematic and not a simple list of various forms of knowledge. It is based on the distinction of three distinct, but interconnected subsystems of society, which is an insight that we take from Habermas' theory.

How is table 3.2 related to figure 3.1? Individuals based on their individual knowledge (skills in the economy, political knowledge, cultural tastes) enter social systems, in which they, through communication processes, create and reproduce individual knowledge. Such communication can also result in the production and reproduction of social knowledge: collective knowledge prod-ucts in the economy, collective political worldviews in the political system, and collective identities in the cultural system. These social knowledge structures enable and constrain the production and reproduction of individual knowl-edge. The dialectic of individual and social knowledge shapes and is shaped by the production and reproduction of use-values in the economy, rules in the political system, and meanings in the cultural system. A specific social system or organisation always has economic, political, and cultural dimensions. One of these dimensions can however be dominant. So, for example, a factory pro-ducing chairs is predominantly an economic organisation, but also has a com-pany identity as a cultural feature, and specific decision structures as a political characteristic.

3.4.6. Dominative Knowledge and Emancipatory Knowledge

Modern society is inherently competitive and based on structures of accumula-tion so that both general social structures and knowledge structures have a sub-sumed character and are instruments for the accumulation of money, political influence, and reputation. Structures of accumulation result in interest conflicts between those who control power and those who are excluded from it. Modern society is therefore both a class and a dominative society. Habermas argues that emancipatory knowledge is constituted in struggles that question dominant powers in the political system. I have argued that power is not just political, but a more general social structure. Emancipatory power struggles question social structures of accumulation and domination that benefit one group at the expense of others. Knowledge is one form of power. Therefore emancipatory

struggles have the power to create alternative, emancipatory knowledge that question dominative knowledge.

Table 3.3 gives an overview of the conflict between dominative, ideological knowledge and emancipatory knowledge. Concrete individuals and groups in social relations produce knowledge. Knowledge structures are not abstract, but grounded in social relations between human actors. Knowledge workers create

Realm of society		Ideological, dominative knowledge	Critical, emancipatory knowledge
Economy		*Capitalist companies*: Knowledge commodities	*Non-capitalist organisations*: Knowledge commons
Politics	Politics: government, parliament	*Dominant or oppositional parties and politicians*: Political ideologies of inequality, domination and repression/violence	*Critical parties, politicians, intellectuals*: political worldviews of equality, participation and peace
	Politics: civil society	*Repressive social movements, NGOs and activists*: political ideologies of inequality, domination and repression/violence	*Emancipatory social movements, NGOs and activists*: Worldviews of equality, participation and peace
	International relations	*Nationalists*: nationalist ideology	*Anti-nationalists*: global unity in diversity
Culture	News media	*Uncritical journalists*: one-dimensional, biased reports	*Critical journalists*: critical, engaging reports
	Arts and entertainment	*Actors, entertainers, directors, artists*: tabloidised, one-dimensional culture	*Actors, entertainers, directors, artists*: engaging, dialectical culture
	Personal and gender relations	*Hellbenders*: hate, sexism	*Altruists*: love, care, solidarity
	Belief systems, ethics, philosophy and religion	*Demagogues*: Conservatism	*Public intellectuals*: Progressivism
	Science and education	*Administrative scholars and teachers*: administrative knowledge	*Critical scholars and teachers*: critical knowledge
	Intercultural relations	*Racists, divisionists*: racism	*Universalists*: intercultural understanding

Table 3.3: Ideological and emancipatory knowledge (Source: Fuchs 2015, chapter 3).

social knowledge products that have economic and non-economic roles inside the economy and in society at large. Table 3.3 shows both the actors creating dominative and emancipatory knowledge and the type of social knowledge they create.

3.4.7. The Dialectics of Knowledge

The production of social knowledge is dialectical in a manifold way: social systems are based on a dialectic of general social structures and knowledge structures and a dialectic of individual knowledge and social knowledge. In dominative social systems, there are interest conflicts about the control of power that also result in a conflict between dominative and emancipatory knowledge. Knowledge in such systems is therefore dialectical in the sense that it is contested in interest conflicts. Struggles for the definition and control of knowledge tend to be asymmetrical in that dominant actors, who control money, influence, and reputation have structural advantages. They can try to mobilise these resources in order to legitimate their dominance and hinder struggles and alternatives. They can exert physical, structural, and ideological violence in order to uphold their dominant position. There is no guarantee that alternative structures and alternative, emancipatory knowledge can emerge or that actors and movements organising such alternatives can exert enough power to become significant counter-hegemonic forces. There is a political economy of resource asymmetry inherent in modern society that poses structural disadvantages for alternative movements, alternative structures, and emancipatory knowledge. This becomes evident in the realm of social media: Facebook dominates the world of social networking sites by attracting billions of users, whereas non-commercial alternatives such as Diaspora or Crabgrass have thus far remained marginal and only attract comparatively few users.

3.4.8. Johan Galtung: Violence

Based on the works of Johan Galtung (1990), violence can be defined as 'avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to life, lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible' (Galtung 1990, 292). Violence can according to Galtung (1990) be divided into three principal forms: direct violence (through physical intervention; an event), structural violence (through state or organizational mandate; a process), and ideological violence (dehumanizing or otherwise exclusionary representations; an invariance). These forms operate through the denial of four basic needs: survival needs (through killing and exploitation), well-being needs (through maiming, sanctions, and exploitation), identity needs (through desocialization, resocialization and segmentation), and freedom needs (through repression, detention, expulsion, marginalization and fragmentation) (Galtung 1990).

3.4.9. Ideology as Cultural Violence

Ideology as specific form of knowledge is according to Galtung a form of violence. Habermas (1971) assumes that there is an inherent connection of knowledge and human interests. He argues that critical knowledge has the potential to understand the variant and invariant dimensions of reality and to use ideology critique for unmasking 'ideologically frozen relations of dependence that can in principle be transformed' (310) so that unreflected consciousness is substituted by reflected knowledge and has a potential to become 'critically mediated knowledge' (310) that can become the foundation of transformations of reality. Ideology furnishes 'our actions with justifying motives in place of the real ones' (311)

  Ideology is a semiotic level of domination and exploitation – it practices the production and spread of information and meanings in the form of ideas, belief systems, artefacts, systems and institutions so that domination and exploitation are justified or naturalised. An ideology is a social knowledge product that represents and justifies one group's or individual's power, domination or exploitation of other groups or individuals by misrepresenting, one-dimensionally presenting or distorting reality in symbolic representations.

  Adorno has described ideology in a Lukácsian sense as 'a consciousness which is objectively necessary and yet at the same time false, as the intertwining of truth and falsehood' (Adorno 1954, 189). Ideology:

> is *justification*. It presupposes the experience of a societal condition which has already become problematic and therefore requires a defense just as much as does the idea of justice itself, which would not exist without such necessity for apologetics and which has as its model the exchange of things which are comparable (Adorno 1954, 189–190).

From the existence of ideology in class-based society follows for the Frankfurt School the necessity of the critique of ideology, which Adorno defines as 'the confrontation of ideology with its own truth' (Adorno 1954, 190). The critique of ideology 'is the negation defined in the Hegelian sense, the confrontation of the spiritual with its realization, and has as its presupposition the distinction of the truth or falsity of the judgment just as much as the requirement for truth in that which is criticized' (Adorno 1954, 191).

3.4.10. Ideological Knowledge, Identity and Non-Identity

Also Adorno's second and third study of Hegel's epistemology make important contributions to the question what ideological knowledge is and how it can be deconstructed. In the second study, he discusses the non-identity of the immediate and the mediated. Adorno (1963) stresses that for Hegel

immediacy is not really immediate. 'One can no more speak of mediation without something immediate than, conversely, one can find something immediate that is not mediated' (59). For Hegel, existence is not what it appears to be, its essence is hidden behind appearances. The 'concept and the thing itself are not one and the same' (70–71). Existence is for Hegel only actual if it becomes true. Hegel's critique of immediacy 'becomes the figure of a comprehensive commitment to a lack of naiveté' (64). Hegel's philosophy would be anti-positivist (65). He 'demonstrated that concept, judgement, and conclusion, unavoidable instruments for ascertaining through consciousness something that exists, always end up contradicting that existing thing; that all individual judgements, all individual concepts, all individual conclusions, are false by the criterion of an emphatic idea of truth' (76). Ideologies in contrast are identity thinking, they aim to deny and delegitimise non-identical moment that can go beyond immediate existence and have potentials for the transformation of society.

This truth however lies for Hegel in the absolute spirit, in which the non-identity of subject and object is sublated into identity:

> The True is the whole. But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development. Of the Absolute it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only in the *end* is it what it truly is; and that precisely in this consists its nature, viz. to be actual, subject, the spontaneous becoming of itself (Hegel 1807/1977, 11).

Adorno (1963) argues that the irrationality of the society founded on exchange, the irrationality of modern rationality that has enabled Auschwitz, shows that Hegel has to be turned from head to toe: 'The whole is the untrue' (87). This falseness of the modern totality would however contain glimpses of hope that the totality can be made reasonable: 'The ray of light that reveals the whole to be untrue in all its moments in none other than utopia, the utopia of the whole truth, which is still to be realized' (88).

In the third study of Hegel's epistemology, Adorno (1963) argues that Hegel rejects positivism also by the dialectical language he uses in his works, in which a concept always reflects an other and is at the same time identical and non-identical with this other:

> Through the explication of the concepts, in other words through what, according to traditional logic and epistemology, is accomplished by analytic judgements, the concept's Other, the nonidentical, becomes evident within the concept itself, something implied in its meaning, without the scope of the concept being infringed upon. The concept is turned this way and that until it becomes clear that it is more than what it is (133).

Hegel would compel the reader to think dialectically and in a non-identical manner. Dialectical thinking in the way that Hegel and Adorno conceive it has the potential to deconstruct instrumentality and ideology by stressing non-identity and the dialectic of identity and non-identity.

Knowledge as ideology is violent and repressive. This violence takes on different forms in the economy, politics, and culture (see table 3.3). In the knowledge economy, ideology operates as the fetishism of commodities that alienates humans from the immediate experience of the subject and the social by veiling the abstract, the subject, and the social behind objects, namely the money and commodities. Knowledge commons that transcend the commodity form of knowledge stand in a contradiction to knowledge commodities.

The digitisation of knowledge has taken this contradiction to a new level and has resulted in complex antagonisms between professional knowledge creators, consumers, citizen and amateur knowledge producers, the traditional media industries that sell content and access, and the openness industry that sells audiences and user data and provides open access to content. In the political world, ideological worldviews try to justify domination, whereas emancipatory worldviews challenge domination and struggle for participatory democracy. In the cultural world, ideological forms of culture are one-dimensional, do not significantly engage people, lack autonomy and therefore often represent partial interests of dominative groups.

3.4.11. Artistic Knowledge

In art, realistic art takes actual persons, societies, or times as their subject matter, whereas in experimental art there is an abstraction from actual reality. Abstract and experimental art is however according to Adorno not ideological, but tries to strengthen audiences' imagination, which makes it anti-ideological. Realist and political art is not automatically ideological, but becomes ideological if it identifies itself with a particular ideology and dominative group. Artworks' relation to social reality is complex and ranges from a continuum with realist art on one end and abstract art on the other. One must also bear in mind that there are different forms of art that foreground different senses in artistic knowledge: the literary arts (texts), the visual arts (visual objects), the performing arts (socially performed artworks), the digital arts, in which texts, the visual, and the social can converge. Art is economically non-autonomous if it is dependent on marketing, branding, advertising, and the commodity form to survive. It is politically non-autonomous if it is commissioned by dominative powers in order to glorify their power. This was for example the case with a lot of artworks in traditional empires, in which art served the purpose of displaying the power of religion and emperors.

3.4.12. Academic Knowledge

In the academic system, there is, as Machlup (1980) stresses, a difference between knowledge in the natural sciences, the humanities and the social sciences. Knowledge of natural sciences is positivist and aims to discover laws that allow mapping and predicting reality. The humanities and cultural sciences (languages, literature, philosophy, religion, ethics, arts) develop critical judgements by interpreting and creating texts. The social sciences focus on human action just like the humanities, but are bound up in a conflict between critical and administrative academic knowledge. They take the humanities and/or the natural sciences as models, which results in conflicts and relations between the qualitative/the quantitative, theory/empirical research, a priori/a posteriori knowledge, reason/experience, etc. Habermas (1971, 303) argues that positivist knowledge dissociates normative values from facts and claims that knowledge is value-free. It is an ideological denial of the inherent connection of knowledge and social conflicts.

Academic knowledge is a systematic and coherent creation of knowledge about nature, humans, or society that is based on previous academic knowledge and tries to obtain insights about dimensions of reality that are thus far unknown, unexplored, or need further exploration. Artistic knowledge is systematic like academic knowledge, but more practical. It appeals to human imagination, creativity, interpretation, and intuition. It is inherently open for interpretation and for the creation of meaning. Science has more fixed meanings, whereas art more directly and as an immanent feature invites judgements of taste on the side of viewers, spectators, audiences, listeners, readers, etc.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter has argued that Adorno's works are an important foundation for a critical theory of knowledge. It maintains that Adorno's theory of knowledge is not, as often claimed in media and cultural studies, a form of media and cultural pessimism that sees humans as passive, manipulated by ideologies, and incapable of resisting a society without alternatives. He saw alternative and critical potentials of the media and popular culture and identified a role for the media in education after Auschwitz. The interested reader will find quite a few radio broadcasts of Adorno's talks and discussions with him online, which shows that he did not despise the media as such, but rather saw their educational potential and made very active use of media, especially radio broadcasts, himself.

Adorno's criticism of Georg Lukács' aesthetic theory shows the dangers of assuming that knowledge is or should be a simple mapping of outside reality. Adorno saw this relationship as complex and dialectical. Based on his insights, foundations of a dialectical model of knowledge were developed that involves dialectics of the subject and the object, agency and structures, the individ-

ual and the social, society and nature, the economic and the non-economic (knowledge work creates social knowledge that not just has economic dimensions, but can play a role in all realms of society), mental and physical work, general social structures and knowledge structures, individual knowledge and social knowledge. Adorno stresses the importance of the dialectic of identity and non-identity in Hegel's work.

The dialectics just mentioned are all dialectics of identity and non-identity that operate in the constitution, reproduction, and transformation of knowledge. Each one of the poles of the dialectics exists only in itself as identity by relating to and grasping over into its other: the one is identical and non-identical with the other. Each one can only be itself by standing in a relation to an other. But the other is not just non-identical with the one because it is itself also a one that is an other for another one and therefore identical with itself and the other.

In modern society, there is a dialectic of general social structures and structures of accumulation. In all class-based societies, we find conflicts of interests that are expressed in general social conflicts that include conflicts between hegemonic and counter-hegemonic knowledge. There is a general conflict between ideological/dominative knowledge and emancipatory knowledge. Often dominant actors have structural advantages in the definition of social knowledge. In class-based societies, it tends to be much harder to diffuse critical, emancipatory knowledge throughout society than ideological, dominative knowledge.

It is more likely that dominant classes and groups have ideological knowledge than emancipatory knowledge. There is however no mapping of class position onto forms of knowledge. Marx and Engels themselves came from bourgeois families, but created critical knowledge. There is also no guarantee that being part of a dominated group results in non-ideological knowledge, as the phenomenon of racism among a specific share of the traditional working class shows. Adorno, in his works, doesn't just foreground the power of ideologies, he also stresses the importance that one can learn from Hegel's anti-positivist, dialectical language and thought how to criticise, deconstruct, and struggle against ideologies.

Adorno's works give us hope that instrumental knowledge that expresses partial interests is not the final word and can be changed by critique, which is the very process of the dialectic and dialectical knowledge. 'Critique of society is critique of knowledge, and vice versa' (Adorno 1998, 250).

Notes

[1] https://70jahrenachauschwitz.wordpress.com/das-projekt/, accessed on 5 March 2015.
[2] Translation from German: 'Ich bin zwar Journalistin, aber als allererstes war das eigentlich eine sehr persönliche Motivation. Ich hab mich seit meiner

Kindheit eigentlich mit der Frage beschäftigt: Was ist der Holocaust? Wozu sind die Menschen dort fähig gewesen? Aber wie konnten die Menschen auch weiterleben, die diese Greueltaten erleiden mussten?' (https://soundcloud.com/mkwprojekt2012/umfrage-unter-den-teilnehmenden-warum-bin-ich-hier, accessed on 5 March 2015).

3   See for example: https://70jahrenachauschwitz.wordpress.com/medienbeitrage-2/

4   http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/18cons01.html

5   Translation from German: 'Stalinschen brutalen Manipulation'.

6   Translation from German: 'die Stalinsche Ideologie es zustande gebracht hat, den Marxismus selbst zu verdinglichen'.

7   Translation from German: 'Wichtig ist, daß in allen solchen Fällen Stalin von rein taktischen Erwägungen ausging und die theoretische Analyse der jeweiligen historischen Lage als bloße Propagandamittel für seinen bereits gefällten Beschluß gebrauchte'.

8   See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Negermusik

9   Data source: http://www.salzburgerfestspiele.at/subscriptions#SERIES+1, accessed on 20 March 2015.

10 Data source: http://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/316345/umfrage/einnahmen-der-salzburger-festspiele/, accessed on 20 March 2015.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1932. 'On the Social Situation of Music'. In *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, 391–436. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1936. 'On Jazz'. In *Essays on Music*, ed. Richard Leppert, 470–495. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1954. 'Ideology'. In *Aspects of Sociology,* ed. Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, 182–205. Boston: Beacon Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1958. 'Extorted Reconciliation'. On Georg Lukács' *Realism in Our Time.* In *Notes to Literature, Volume 1,* 216–240. New York: Columbia University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1960. The Meaning of Working Through the Past'. In *Can One Live after Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 3–18. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1963. *Hegel: Three Studies*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1967. 'Education after Auschwitz'. In *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, 19–33. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1973a. *Dissonanzen. Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1973b. *Negative Dialectics*. London: Routledge.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1991. *The Culture Industry*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1996. 'Chaplin Times Two'. *Yale Journal of Criticism* 9 (1): 57–61.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1997. *Aesthetic Theory.* London: Continuum.

Adorno, Theodor W. 1998. *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2000. *Introduction to Sociology*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Adorno, Theodor W. 2008. *Lectures on Negative Dialectics*. Cambridge: Polity.

Adorno, Theodor W., Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht and Georg Lukács. 1980. *Aesthetics and Politics*. London: Verso.

Arnold, Matthew. 1869/2006. *Culture and Anarchy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Daniel, Jamie Owen. 1989/1990. 'Introduction to Adorno's "On Jazz"'. *Discourse* 12 (1): 39–44.

du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Mackay and Keith Negus. 1997. *Doing Cultural Studies. The Story of the Sony Walkman.* London: Sage.

During, Simon. 2005. *Cultural Studies: A Critical Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Fiske, John. 1989. *Reading the Popular*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media.* New York: Routledge.

Galtung, Johan. 1990. 'Cultural Violence'. *Journal of Peace Research* 27 (3): 291–305.

Grossberg, Lawrence. 1997. *Bringing it All Back Home: Essays on Cultural Studies.* Duke University Press. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1807/1977. *Phenomenology of Spirit.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 2010 [1812–1816]. *The Science of Logic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2013. *The Cultural Industries.* London: Sage. Third edition.

Horkheimer, Max and Theodor W. Adorno. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. 'Behind the scenes: Beautiful Things in Popular Culture (Part one)'. http://henryjenkins.org/2006/09/behind_the_scenes_beautiful_th.html (accessed on 4 March 2015).

Lewis, Jeff. 2008. *Cultural Studies: The Basics*. London: Sage. Second edition.

Longhurst, Brian et al. 2013. *Introducing Cultural Studies*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Lukács, Georg. 1954/1980. *The Destruction of Reason*. London: Merlin Press.

Lukács, Georg. 1962. 'Reflections on the Cult of Stalin', https://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/1962/stalin.htm

Lukács, Georg. 1970. '*Writer and Critic'. And Other Essays*. Lincoln, NE: iUniverse.

Lukács, Georg. 1958/1971. *Realism in Our Time. Literature and the Class Struggle.* New York: Harper & Row.

Lukács, Georg. 1983. *Record of a Life. An Autobiography.* London: Verso.

Lukács, Georg. 1986. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Zweiter Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 14*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Lukács, Georg. 1991. *The Process of Democratization*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Machlup, Fritz. 1962. *The Production and Distribution of Knowledge in the United States*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Machlup, Fritz. 1980. *Knowledge: Its Creation, Distribution, and Economic Significance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1845. *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus.

Sandoval, Marisol. 2015. 'Participation (un)limited. Social Media and the Prospects of a Common Culture'. In *The Routledge Companion to Global Popular Culture*, ed. Toby Miller, 66–76. New York: Routlege.

Steinert, Heinz. 2003. *Culture Industry.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Storey, John. 2008. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*. Harlow: Pearson Longman. Fifth edition.

Walton, David. 2007. *Introducing Cultural Studies: Learning Through Practice.* London: Sage.

Williams, Raymond. 1960. *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*. New York: Anchor Books.

Williams, Raymond. 1980. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso.

Witkin, Robert W. 2000. 'Why Did Adorno "Hate" Jazz?' *Sociological Theory* 18 (1): 145–170.

CHAPTER 4

Herbert Marcuse and Social Media

Acknowledgement

4.1. Introduction

Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce (2014, 1) argue that 'Herbert Marcuse synthesized Hegelian, Marxian and other currents of modern philosophy and modern philosophy in an attempt to reconstruct the Marxian theory in accordance with changes in the trajectory of modern culture, politics, and society'. Peter Marcuse (2014, 433) writes that his father's achievement was that he analysed 'political conflicts, economic conflicts, and cultural conflicts – and, quite centrally and profoundly, how these conflicts relate to each other'. Given the breadth and depth of Marcuse's Marxist theory of society, it is rewarding to ask how it can help us to understand aspects of contemporary economy, politics and culture and their interconnections and how we can re-actualise Marcuse's approach for this purpose. My own contribution has in this respect been to

---

study inspired by Marcuse, Marx, Hegel and others the world of the Internet and digital media.

4.1.1. Philosophy and Sociology of Technology

During my time as a PhD student at the Vienna University of Technology in Austria, I started teaching philosophy and sociology of technology to informatics students in 2000. I had read Marx and made his analysis of technology in capitalism a centrepiece of my lectures. I however wanted to complement Marx by a critical analysis of the role of technology in the twentieth century. Like most students interested in Frankfurt School Critical Theory in the German-speaking world, I had read Horkheimer, Adorno and Habermas. But I found their approaches did not sufficiently engage with the relationship of technology and society. I had at this time only read a couple of Herbert Marcuse's essays. In the German-speaking world, students interested in critical theory are not so much encouraged to engage with Marcuse and many scholars have the (false) idea that Marcuse only copied Horkheimer and Adorno's culture industry-chapter and did not write much more than *One-Dimensional Man*. Facing the task of teaching Frankfurt School Critical Theory of technology, I discovered the importance of Marcuse's works.

I used parts of *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse 1964b) and Marcuse's (1941b) essay *Some Social Implications of Modern Technology* for teaching. Fascinated by Marcuse's insights, I read more and more of his books and articles and thereby obtained a fuller picture of the breadth and depth of his critical theory. I was especially impressed by *Reason and Revolution* (Marcuse 1941a) because it opened up an interpretation of Hegel's dialectical logic that was grounded in a dialectic of subjectivity/objectivity and chance/necessity and helped me to understand the importance of avoiding the twin traps of idealist subjectivism that neglects structural conditions of action and vulgar materialism that sees the world as being determined by natural laws.

I wrote three books about the contemporaneity of Marcuse's works:

- *Krise und Kritik in der Informationsgesellschaft. Arbeiten über Herbert Marcuse, kapitalistische Entwicklung und Selbstorganisation* (*Crisis and Criticism of the Information Society. Works on Herbert Marcuse, Capitalist Development and Self-Organisation,* Fuchs 2002).
- *Emanzipation! Technik und Politik bei Herbert Marcuse* (*Emancipaton! Technology and Politics in the Works of Herbert Marcuse*, Fuchs 2005a).
- *Herbert Marcuse interkulturell gelesen* (*Herbert Marcuse: An Intercultural Interpretation*, Fuchs 2005b).

These three works have not been much read because they have not been translated into English and there is much more interest in Adorno, Horkheimer and

Habermas than Marcuse in the German-speaking world. Having established some conceptual foundations of a critical theory of technology, I moved on and started working on the foundations of a critical theory and a critique of the political economy of the Internet and the media, which resulted in books such as *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age* (Fuchs 2008), *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies* (Fuchs 2011), *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (Fuchs 2014a), *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism* (Fuchs 2014b), *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (Fuchs 2014c), *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media* (Fuchs 2015), *Reading Marx in the Information Age: A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on "Capital Volume I"* (Fuchs 2016), as well as collected volumes such as *Internet and Surveillance. The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media* (Fuchs, Boersma, Albrechtslund and Sandoval 2012), *Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today* (Fuchs and Mosco 2012, see also: Fuchs and Mosco 2016a, 2016b), *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society* (Fuchs and Sandoval 2014), *Philosophers of the World Unite! Theorising Digital Labour and Virtual Work: Definitions, Forms and Transformations* (Sandoval, Fuchs, Prodnik, Sevignani and Allmer 2014), *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* (Trottier and Fuchs 2014), *Reconsidering Value and Labour in the Digital Age* (Fisher and Fuchs 2015).

In the work on all of these books, Marcuse, Marx and Hegel's concepts were tools of critical thought that helped me to understand the antagonisms of the media and communication in twenty-first-century capitalism. In addition to Marcuse, Marx and Hegel, I have especially made use of Dallas W. Smythe and Raymond Williams' works for grounding foundations of a critical theory of the Internet and social media. In all these years, Marcuse was always there in my works and thinking and has been a crucial influence.

4.1.2. Social Media

In this chapter, I reflect on how some of Marcuse's theoretical thought can help us to critically understand what many today term 'social media'. 'Social media' are Internet-based platforms such as blogs (e.g. Blogspot, Wordpress, Tumblr), social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, VK, Renren), user-generated content sharing sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, Youku), microblogs (e.g. Twitter, Weibo) and wikis (e.g. Wikipedia) (Fuchs 2014c). It is evident that all media are to a certain extent social because they reflect and transmogrify society in complex ways. The actual change that communication systems such as Facebook reflect is that the Internet has, since 2005, become more of a system of co-operative work and community formation than it was before (Fuchs 2014c). These media are social because they enable and are means of sharing, communication, community and collaboration. At the same time they

are deeply embedded in capitalism's commodity logic and therefore reflect individual private property, individualism and structures of exploitation and domination. Capitalist class relations that individualise these social media's sociality limit the sociality of social media as means of informational production. This chapter focuses on some, but by far not all dimensions of Marcuse's thoughts for reflecting on social media: the computer (section 2), dialectics (section 3), work and labour (section 4), ideology (section 5), and the dialectical logic of essence (section 6).

4.2. Herbert Marcuse and the Computer

4.2.1. The Computer as a Tool of Control, Domination and Exploitation

Herbert Marcuse lived in a time that saw the rise of the computer and its increasing impacts on the economy, politics, culture and everyday life. Marcuse again and again reflected on the positive potentials and negative realities of the computer. Here are some examples.

Marcuse on the one hand stressed the role of the computer as a tool of control, domination and exploitation.

> The formal rationality of capitalism celebrates its triumph in electronic computers, which calculate everything, no matter what the purpose, and which are put to use as mighty instruments of political manipulation, reliably calculating the chances of profit and loss, including the chance of the annihilation of the whole, with the consent of the likewise calculated and obedient population (Marcuse 1965, 224–225).

4.2.2. The Computer's Dialectic

He (on the other hand) identified liberating potentials of the computer writing that Marx:

> saw the possibility of reducing alienated labor already in capitalism, namely as a consequence of technical progress or, as we would say today, increasing automation, mechanization, computerization, whatever you want to call it. That, however, is only the anticipation, or the first traces, of the liberation of the human being from full-time alienated labor (Marcuse 1978, 220).

So Marcuse saw the dialectic of modern technology (Marcuse 1941b, 1964b) also at play in computer technology:

> An electronic computer can serve equally a capitalist or socialist admin-
> istration. […] in Marxian theory itself […] the social mode of produc-
> tion, not technics is the basic historical factor. However, when technics
> becomes the universal form of material production, it circumscribes
> an entire culture; it projects a historical totality – a "world" (Marcuse
> 1964b, 157–158).

Marcuse, like Marx, considered the antagonism between class relations and
productive forces to be at the heart of modern technologies such as the com-
puter: the computer socialises the means of production and communication
and is therefore a foundation of a better society. Its capitalist application turns
it, however, into a tool for warfare, control, surveillance, advertising's manipu-
lation of needs, the creation of unemployment and new forms of precarious
labour, etc. Marcuse did not think that one must simply abolish capitalism and
can then use the same technologies in a socialist society. Rather, he felt that
a qualitative change of society would have to come along with a qualitative
change of technology:

> The technological transformation is at the same time political transforma-
> tion, but the political change would turn into qualitative social change only
> to the degree to which it would alter the direction of technical progress –
> that is, develop a new technology. For the established technology has
> become an instrument of destructive politics (Marcuse 1964b, 232).
>   The technology which the industrial societies have inherited and
> developed, and which rules our lives, is in its very roots a technology of
> domination. Consummation of technical progress therefore implies the
> determinate negation of this technology. […] The idea of qualitatively
> different forms of technological rationality belongs to a new historical
> project. (Marcuse 1962, 57).

4.2.3. The Computer and Freedom

Marcuse argued that modern technology must in a truly free society be dialec-
tically sublated (aufgehoben) – i.e. at the same time eliminated, preserved and
lifted to a new qualitative level of existence:

> If the completion of the technological project involves a break with
> the prevailing technological rationality, the break in turn depends on
> the continued existence of the technical base itself. For it is this base
> which has rendered possible the satisfaction of needs and the reduction
> of toil – it remains the very base of all forms of human freedom. The
> qualitative change rather lies in the reconstruction of this base – that is,
> in its development with a view of different ends (Marcuse 1964b, 236).

Marcuse expresses the dialectical sublation of technology and society also as a reconstruction that helps healing society's wounds: 'Perhaps technology is a wound that can only be healed by the weapons that caused it: not the destruction of technology but its re-construction for the reconciliation of nature and society' (Marcuse 1979a, 224).

This means that a truly free society has to abolish repressive uses of the computer, e.g. as automated killing technology operating drones and warplanes, and to transform specific repressive designs of computer technologies. Social media technologies such as Facebook and Twitter are based on complex terms of use that enable the commodification of personal data and the exploitation of users' digital labour (Fuchs 2011, 2014a, 2014c, 2015). Commons-based social media in contrast also support and do not abolish social networking. They require a redesign of social media in such a way that they are privacy-enhancing, advertising-free, user-controlled, not-for-profit, and allow the users a say in formulating the terms of use. Social media are thereby dialectically sublated: they lose their dominative character and simultaneously retain, realise and expand their liberating potentials.

Herbert Marcuse died in 1979 at the age of 81. He did not live long enough to see the rise of the World Wide Web (WWW). When discussing the computer, he therefore predominantly spoke about automation, which reflected a major issue of his times, namely the question – if the computer in production brings about a more repressive or a more liberated economy. Marcuse's answer was dialectical: he saw the liberating, democratic and common potentials of the computer that were limited by the repressive realities of capitalism and class. Today computer technology has become a networked and mobile means of information, communication and collaboration (Fuchs 2008). Marcuse could of course not analyse mobile phones, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. His critical thought and concepts are however still well suited to be one of the methodological foundations for a critical theory of the Internet, digital and social media.

4.3. Herbert Marcuse, Hegelian Dialectics and Social Media

4.3.1. Soviet Marxism's Passive Dialectics

Stalinist, Maoist and negative dialectics underestimate the role of human subjects in dialectical processes (Fuchs 2011, chapter 2). They reduce dialectics to a structuralist-functionalist scheme that dominates the will of humans who, it is argued by dogmatic dialecticians, cannot shape the dialectic. 'Soviet Marxism subjugates the subjective to the objective factors in a manner which transforms the dialectical into a mechanistic process' (Marcuse 1955a, 89; see also Marcuse 1958). In order to avoid a deterministic dialectic, a conception is needed that is based on the dialectic of subject and object, human actors and social

structures. Such a conception can be found implicitly in the philosophical writings of Marx and was in the twentieth century explicitly formulated against deterministic interpretations of Marx by Marcuse. Marcuse opposed passive dialectics by active dialectics – dialectics as the art of 'not getting captured by the contradictions, but to translate them possibly into directed moving forces' (Haug 2007, 12).

4.3.2. Objective Dialectics

Marcuse pointed out that for Marx capitalist crisis is a negating moment of economic structures, by which capitalism develops itself. Crisis is for him an aspect of objective dialectics:

> Capitalist society is a union of contradictions. It gets freedom through exploitation, wealth through impoverishment, advances in production through restriction of consumption. The very structure of capitalism is a dialectical one: every form and institution of the economic process begets its determinate negation, and the crisis is the extreme form in which the contradictions are expressed (Marcuse 1941a, 311–312).

Marcuse considered private property and alienated labour as objective contradictions of capitalism:

> Every fact is more than a mere fact; it is a negation and restriction of real possibilities. Wage labor is a fact, but at the same time it is a restraint on free work that might satisfy human needs. Private property is a fact, but at the same time it is a negation of man's collective appropriation of nature. […] The negativity of capitalist society lies in its alienation of labor (Marcuse 1941a, 282).

4.3.3. Subjective Dialectics

Marcuse wanted to avoid deterministic dialectics and to bring about a transition from a structural-functionalist dialectic towards a human-centred dialectic. Therefore he argued that capitalism is dialectical because of its objective antagonistic structures and that the negation of this negativity can only be achieved by human praxis.

> The negativity and its negation are two different phases of the same historical process, straddled by man's historical action. The 'new' state is the truth of the old, but that truth does not steadily and automatically grow out of the earlier state; it can be set free only by an autonomous act

on the part of men, that will cancel the whole of the existing negative state (Marcuse 1941a, 315).

Necessity happens

> only through societal praxis. [...] In the Marxian dialectic, thought, subjectivity, remains the decisive factor of the dialectical process. [...] The result [of the development of society] depends on the conditions of possibilities for struggle and the consciousness that develops thereby. This includes that its bearers have understood their slavery and its causes, that they want their own liberation and see ways of how to achieve this. [...] The necessity of socialism depends on the societal situation of the proletariat and the development of class consciousness (Marcuse 1966, 224ff).

The antagonisms of capitalism necessarily create crises and are founded on class relations. The sublation of capitalism and the realisation of human essence can only be achieved based on necessity and the possibilities conditioned by necessity and created by the free activity of humans that try to transform possibilities into concrete reality. The dialectic of society is shaped by a dialectic of freedom and necessity.

> Not the slightest natural necessity or automatic inevitability guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism. […] The revolution requires the maturity of many forces, but the greatest among them is the subjective force, namely, the revolutionary class itself. The realization of freedom and reason requires the free rationality of those who achieve it. Marxian theory is, then, incompatible with fatalistic determinism (Marcuse 1941a, 318–319).

4.3.4. Determinate Negation

Hegel pointed out with his concept of the determinate negation that the negative is at the same time positive, that contradictions do not dissolve into nothingness, but into the negation of its particular content. Negation is 'the negation of a specific subject matter' (Hegel 1812, §62). The new contains the old and more, therefore it is richer in content (Hegel 1812, §62). In order to stress the importance of human subjects in the dialectic of society, Marcuse argued that determined negation is 'determinate choice' (Marcuse 1964b, 221). Marcuse did not, as incorrectly argued by Hans Heinz Holz (2005, 109, 499), refuse the notion of determinate negation, but rather embedded this concept into subject-object-dialectics. Also Wolfgang Fritz Haug (1995, 690) mistakes Marcuse when claiming that the latter assumed that the ideology of capitalism surpassed the determinate negation historically. In the passage that Haug criticises – the

epilogue to *Reason and Revolution* – Marcuse does not, as claimed by Haug, say that determinate negation is impossible today, but rather that repressive ideology enables capitalism 'to absorb its negativity' (Marcuse 1941a, 437) and that at the same time the 'total mobilization of society against the ultimate liberation of the individual […] indicates how real is the possibility of this liberation' (Marcuse 1941a, 439). The determinate negation of capitalism would be objectively possible, but would be forestalled subjectively, which would be a reality, but no necessity.

Marcuse later worked out this dialectical hypothesis in more depth in *One-Dimensional Man* (Marcuse 1964b). It is far from any deterministic logic. The historical reality of fascism and the Second World War curbed Marcuse's belief that revolution would take place soon, but he was never a pessimist or defeatist. In the late 1960s, the emergence of the student movement convinced Marcuse that there are not only potentials for liberation in late-capitalist society, but actual political forces that aim at and work for liberation.

For Marcuse, only specific contradictions that relate to material and mental resources and the degree of freedom in a societal situation are determined. These are objective aspects of dialectics, based on which alternative possibilities for development result. Humans make their own history based on given conditions. Freedom is comprehended and apprehended necessity. Humans can shape society under given conditions if they have understood necessity, the possibilities that are inherent in society.

> [The] determinate negation of capitalism occurs if and when the proletariat has become conscious of itself and of the conditions and processes which make up its society. […] None of the given alternatives is by itself determinate negation unless and until it is consciously seized in order to break the power of intolerable conditions and attain the more rational, more logical conditions rendered possible by the prevailing ones
> (Marcuse 1964b, 222–223).

4.3.5. The Dialectic of the Objective Dialectic and the Subjective Dialectic

Conscious human activity within existing conditions is as a subjective factor an important aspect of society's dialectic. Marcuse understood that the concept of human practice is needed for conceiving dialectics in a non-deterministic form and that thereby the notion of freedom can be situated in dialectical philosophy. It is a wrong claim that there is a tendency in Marcuse's works to 'dissolve the objective contradiction into subjective disagreement' and that he neglects immanent contradictions of capitalism (Schiller 1993, 115–116). For Marcuse, objective contradictions condition, constrain, and enable subjective action, and objective reality is the result of human practices' realisation of possibilities that

are constitutive features of objective reality. Dialectics are for Marcuse based on the dialectics of subject/object and freedom/necessity. Dialectics are the unity of the subjective dialectic and the objective dialectic. By having elaborated such a meta-dialectic, Marcuse was able to work against the ideas and political practice of deterministic dialectics. Ideology, structural and direct violence can forestall determinate negation, which means that society tends to become totalitarian and contradictions are suppressed. But no matter how hopeless a situation may seem, there is always still the possibility for determinate negation. If negating forces are forestalled, it becomes the task of political praxis to restore the conditions for change.

4.3.6. Hegelian Dialectics and Communications

A critical theory of the media, communication, culture, technology, and the Internet requires a dialectical-philosophical foundation and therefore a renewed engagement not just with Marx, Marcuse and Lukács, but also Hegel (Fuchs 2014e). Hegel understands the dialectic in the *Science of Logic* as a process, in which a posited reflection-in-itself externalises itself into a negative other so that there is what Hegel calls external reflection. The determining reflection is 'the unity of *positing* and *external* reflection' (Hegel 2010, 351). The sublation of the contradiction between one thing and another thing determines the emergence of what Hegel terms '*Gesetzsein*' (Hegel 1813–1816/1969, 32) – the '*posited*' (Hegel 2010, 351). Positedness is a reflection-in-and-for-itself:

> It is *positedness* – negation which has however deflected the reference to another into itself, and negation which, equal to itself, is the unity of itself and its other, and only through this is an *essentiality*. It is, therefore, positedness, negation, but as reflection into itself it is at the same time the sublatedness of this positedness, infinite reference to itself.' (Hegel 2010, 353).

But for Hegel, the sublation that is positedness repels itself in an absolute recoil so that it posits its own presuppositions and starts the dialectical process all over again (Fuchs 2014e). For Hegel, the world is dialectical and therefore dynamic and unfinished.

Marcuse, in his own magnum opus *Reason and Revolution*, showed how to best dialectically interpret Hegel's dialectical laws of reflection in order to posit the dialectic of reflection-in-itself, reflection-in-another, and positedness as the dialectic of the subjective dialectic and the objective dialectic, in which the 'negativity and its negation are two different phases of the same historical process, straddled by man's historical action' (Marcuse 1941a, 315).

In a communication process, no matter whether it takes place online or offline, an individual posits his/her own identity by relating himself/herself in and through a symbolic interaction process to another person, who in return posits his/her identity by communicatively responding. So identity as the individual reflection-in-itself is only possible as the communicative reflection-into-another. This communicative negation is negated in situations, where the communicative process is sublated, either by a rupture that causes the social relationship's breakdown (e.g. a quarrel between friends that ends the relationship, death, etc.) or the emergence of a positive new quality (e.g. an occasional acquaintance turns into a friendship). Such a sublation in a social relation is a communicative reflection-in-and-for-itself. It however does not stop, but only exists in and through further communication between humans so that the sublation of a social relation to a new quality in an absolute recoil goes back to the start and is posited as a new dialectic of the communicative reflection-in-itself and the reflection-into-another, etc. The result of communication in an absolute recoil becomes the starting point for further communication. Communication posits its own presuppositions so that the communicative social relation between humans develops in and through communication.

The dialectic is not a teleological process because humans make their own history based on the conditions they are posited in and that they posit. The only teleology in society is that humans have the capacity to set their own goals, which is conditioned, i.e. enabled and constrained, by the sum total of the social relations they are part of. In modern society, these conditioning relations are class and power relations. The Internet in capitalism is an antagonistic dialectical system, in which the individual, property, capital, the commodity, and the market are reflected into the social, the commons, labour, the gift, and the community that in a recoil reflect themselves into their others so that there is an antagonistic recoil of mutual positing of opposites. The resulting antagonisms constitute the Internet's actuality, development, and potentiality that face power asymmetries. Given these asymmetries, only politics of radical reformism can make a socialist sublation more likely. The common and the capitalist Internet are both realities with asymmetric powers that are contained in each other as the capitalism of the commons-based Internet and the commonism of the capitalist Internet.

4.3.7. Six Dialectics

Marcuse understood Hegelian dialectics as a) the dialectic of the subject and the object, b) the dialectic of the individual and society, c) the dialectic of the subjective and the objective dialectic of capitalism, d) the dialectic of chance and necessity, e) the dialectic of essence and appearance, f) the dialectic of essence and existence. These dialectics can also be found in the realm of contemporary social media.

a) The Dialectic of the Subject and the Object

Human beings as subjects use social media technologies for creating, sharing and communicating information online and for engaging in collaborative work and the formation of communities. Through these subjective practices, they create and recreate an objective world: they objectify information that is stored on computers, servers, cloud storage devices, etc. and that is communicated to others. It thereby brings about new meanings and joint understandings and misunderstandings of the world. These objective changes of the world condition, i.e. enable and constrain, further human practices that are organised offline, online and in converging social spaces. Social media are based on a dialectic of human practices and the social structures that these practices create and recreate so that structures condition practices and practices produce structures.

b) The Dialectic of the Individual and Society

In capitalism, individual use-value, i.e. the satisfaction of human needs, can mainly be achieved by purchasing commodities, which necessitates exchange-value, money and the selling of one's labour power. Individual satisfaction of needs can only be achieved by entering social relations of exchange and exploitation. Capitalism's antagonism between use-value and exchange-value is an antagonism between individual needs and the social class relations. On corporate social media, the relationship of the individual and the social is highly antagonistic: social media exist only through social relationships that enable sharing, communication, collaboration, and community. But these social relations are today at the heart of the realisation of neoliberal performance principles that render social media platforms perfect tools for individual self-presentation, individualistic competition, and the individual accumulation of reputation and contacts. It is no accident that 'social' media are called YouTube, MySpace and Facebook and not OurTube, CollectiveSpace and Groupbook. It is all about 'you' as an individual and not 'us' as a collective. The individualistic private property character of social media – the fact that user data is sold as a commodity to advertisers – is hidden behind social media's social appearance: you do not pay for accessing Twitter, Facebook, Google or YouTube. The obtained use-value seems to be the immediate social experience these platforms enable. The commodity character of personal data does not become immediately apparent because there is no exchange of money for use-values that the user experiences. The commodity fetishism thereby becomes inverted (Fuchs 2014a, chapter 11): the social seems the immediate positive experience on social media, whereas the individualistic logic of money and the commodity remains hidden from the users.

c) The Dialectic of the Subjective and the Objective Dialectic of Capitalism

Social media is embedded into the dialectic of capitalism's objective and subjective dialectics. It reflects capitalism's objective contradictions. One of these antagonisms is the one between real and fictitious value. Financialisation can easily result in the divergence of stock market values and profits. Such a divergence was at the heart of the 2000 crisis of the 'new economy'. Financialisation is a response to contradictions of capitalism that result in capitalists' attempts to achieve spatial (global outsourcing) and temporal (financialisation) fixes to problems associated with overaccumulation, overproduction, underconsumption, falling profit rates, profit squeezes, and class struggles (Harvey 2003, 89; Harvey 2005, 115). The ideological hype of the emergence of a 'Web 2.0' and 'social media' that communicated the existence of a radially new Internet was primarily aimed at restoring confidence of venture capital to invest in the Internet economy. The rise of Google, Facebook, Twitter, Weibo and related targeted advertising-based platforms created a new round of financialisation of the Internet economy with its own objective contradiction: in a situation of global capitalist crisis corporate social media attract advertising investments because companies think targeted advertising is more secure and efficient than conventional advertising (Fuchs 2014c). Financial investors share these hopes and believe in social media's growing profits and dividends, which spurs their investments of financial capital in social media corporations. The click-through-rate (the share of ads that users click on in the total number of presented ads) is however on average just 0.1 per cent (Fuchs 2014c), which means that on average only one out of 1,000 targeted ads yields actual profits. And even in these cases it is uncertain if users will buy commodities on the pages the targeted ads direct them to. The social media economy involves high levels of uncertainty and risk. A social media finance bubble is continuously building itself up. If a specific bankruptcy or other event triggers a downfall of the stock market value of an important social media company, the bubble could suddenly explode because investors may lose confidence in the business model and this may quickly spread and intensify. Financial crises involve complex dialectics of objective contradictions and subjective behaviour.

d) The Dialectic of Chance and Necessity

Capitalism's objective contradictions with necessity bring about crises. The exact causes and times of crises are however contingent and therefore not predetermined. This means for the capitalist Internet economy that its next crisis will come, but that the point of time and users' reactions to it are not predetermined. Marcuse's notion of determined negation as determinate choice is of particular importance in this respect: The next crisis of the Internet economy

will come and may result in new qualities of the Internet. We do, however, not know how these changes will look like. They depend on the choices that users collectively make in the situation of crisis. The future of the Internet is dependent on the outcomes of class struggles. If users let themselves be fooled by the ideologies advanced by marketing gurus, capitalists, the business press, neoliberal politicians, and scholars celebrating every new capitalist hype, then no alternatives to the capitalist Internet may be in sight in and after the next crisis of the Internet. If they, however, struggle for an alternative, non-commercial, non-capitalist, non-profit, commons-based and therefore truly social Internet, then alternatives may become possible.

These examples suffice to show the relevance of Marcuse's Hegel interpretation for a critical-dialectical understanding of the contemporary Internet. I will discuss dimensions e) the dialectic of essence and appearance and f) the dialectic of essence and existence in more detail in sections 5 (ideology) and 6 (essence).

4.4. Herbert Marcuse and Digital Labour on Social Media

4.4.1. Three Dimensions of Work

Marcuse (1933, 123) argues that the modern economic concept of labour as wage labour has influenced the general understanding of work and has resulted in 'the narrowing of the concept'. He distinguishes between a general form of labour (work) that is an essential and foundational category that describes productive human activities in all societies and the economic concept of labour typical for modern societies.

Work has for Marcuse three dimensions: Arbeiten (working as a process), das Gearbeitete (the object of work) and das zu-Arbeitende (the goal of work). Marcuse argues that work has three important characteristics: duration, permanence and burden. The essential duration of work means that it is never finished, work is an 'enduring being-at and being-in-work' (ibid., 129). Work is permanent because an object as the result of production is 'worked into the "world"' (ibid., 130). That work involves a burden does not necessarily mean for Marcuse that it is toil, but the abstinence from individual pleasure: in work 'man is always taken away from his self-being and toward something else: he is always with an other and for an other' (ibid.). Marcuse stresses that work is not just producing a world of goods, but also organises the 'economics as life' (ibid., 134). The 'first and final purpose' of work is to 'bring about the being of Dasein itself, in order to 'secure' its duration and permanence' (ibid., 135).

Marcuse points out the duality of human activity in capitalism that is founded on an antagonism of use-value and exchange-value so that human needs can only be satisfied via the mediation through the commodity form and class

relations. Human activity is therefore in capitalism simultaneously concrete and abstract – work and labour.

4.4.2. Work and Labour

Marcuse stresses the importance of distinguishing between work and labour in capitalism. Work is a social activity that transforms human and social nature (culture) in such a way that new qualities emerge that can satisfy human needs. Human needs don't just involve food, housing and clothing, but for example also social reproduction through communication, learning and education. Work therefore involves the production of physical use-values (such as food, housing, clothes) and non-physical use-values (such as social relations, communication, happiness) that satisfy human life. In the last instance this means that it is wrong to dualistically separate work and communication as well as the economy and culture. In contrast, a cultural materialistic position assumes that communication is a specific form of work that satisfies the social need of relating to others, being informed, communicating, and forming communities (Fuchs 2015).

Based on these assumptions it becomes evident that social media are tools of digital work – human social activities that enable information, communication, collaboration, and community. In capitalism, however, social media invert their own social essence: Google and Facebook are not predominantly means of communication, but the world's largest advertising agencies. Social media's dimension of exchange-value and abstract labour dominates over its dimension of use-value and concrete work. In this context, Dallas Smythe's (1977) notions of audience commodification and audience labour gain new importance: The users of corporate social media create content, connections, profiles, and behaviour data in order to achieve the social use-values of information, communication and community. Corporate social media commodify this data by selling it to advertisers, who in return can present advertisements targeted to the interest of individual users. Wherever there is a commodity, there is labour producing this commodity and a class relation that organises the exploitation of labour. Therefore corporate social media usage is a form of surplus-value creating and exploited digital labour that yields profits for social media capitalists (Fuchs 2014a, 2014c, 2015).

4.4.3. Labour and Play

Capitalism connects labour and play in a destructive dialectic. Traditionally, play in the form of enjoyment, sex, and entertainment was in capitalism only part of spare time, which was unproductive and separate from labour in time. Sigmund Freud (1961) argued that the structure of drives is character-

ised by a dialectic of Eros (drive for life, sexuality, lust) and Thanatos (drive for death, destruction, aggression). Humans would strive for the permanent realisation of Eros (pleasure principle), but culture would only become possible by a temporal negation and suspension of Eros and the transformation of erotic energy into culture and labour. Labour would be a productive form of desexualisation – the repression of sexual drives. Freud speaks in this context of the reality principle or sublimation. The reality principle sublates the pleasure principle; human culture sublates human nature and becomes man's second nature.

Marcuse (1955b) connected Freud's theory of drives to Marx's theory of capitalism. He argued that alienated labour, domination, and capital accumulation have turned the reality principle into a repressive reality principle – the performance principle: Alienated labour constitutes a surplus-repression of Eros. The repression of the pleasure principle takes on a quantity that exceeds the culturally necessary suppression. Marcuse connects Marx's notions of necessary labour and surplus labour/value to the Freudian drive structure of humans. He argues that necessary labour on the level of drives corresponds to necessary suppression and surplus labour to surplus-repression. This means that in order to exist, a society needs a certain amount of necessary labour (measured in hours of work) and hence a certain corresponding amount of suppression of the pleasure principle (also measured in hours). The exploitation of surplus-value (labour that is performed for free and generates profit) means that not only are workers forced to work for free for capital to a certain extent, but also that the pleasure principle must be additionally suppressed beyond what is necessary for human existence.

> "Behind the reality principle lies the fundamental fact of Ananke or scarcity (*Lebensnot*), which means that the struggle for existence takes place in a world too poor for the satisfaction of human needs without constant restraint, renunciation, delay. In other words, whatever satisfaction is possible necessitates work, more or less painful arrangements and undertakings for the procurement of the means for satisfying needs. For the duration of work, which occupies practically the entire existence of the mature individual, pleasure is 'suspended' and pain prevails" (Marcuse 1955b, 35).

In societies that are based on the principle of domination, the reality principle takes on the form of the performance principle. Domination 'is exercised by a particular group or individual in order to sustain and enhance itself in a privileged situation' (Marcuse 1955b, 36). The performance principle is connected to surplus-repression, a term that describes 'the restrictions necessitated by social domination' (Marcuse 1955b, 35). Domination introduces 'additional controls over and above those indispensable for civilized human association' (Marcuse 1955b, 37).

Marcuse (1955b) argues that the performance principle means that Thanatos governs humans and society and that alienation unleashes aggressive drives within humans (repressive desublimation) that result in an overall violent and aggressive society. Due to the high productivity reached in late-modern society, a historical alternative would be possible: the elimination of the repressive reality principle, the reduction of necessary working time to a minimum and the maximisation of free time, an eroticisation of society and the body, the shaping of society and humans by Eros, the emergence of libidinous social relations. Such a development would be a historical possibility – but one incompatible with capitalism and patriarchy.

4.4.4. Boltanski and Chiapello: The New Spirit of Capitalism

Luc Boltanski and Éve Chiapello (2007) argue that the rise of participatory management means the emergence of a new spirit of capitalism that subsumes the anti-authoritarian values of the political revolt of 1968 and the subsequently emerging New Left such as autonomy, spontaneity, mobility, creativity, networking, visions, openness, plurality, informality, authenticity, emancipation, etc. The topics of the movement would now be put into the service of those forces that it wanted to destroy. The outcome would have been 'the construction of the new, so-called "network" capitalism' (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007, 429) so that artistic critique that calls for authenticity, creativity, freedom and autonomy in contrast to social critique that calls for equality and overcoming class (37–38) today 'indirectly serves capitalism and is one of the instruments of its ability to endure' (490). Play labour is a new ideology of capitalism: objectively alienated labour is presented as creativity, freedom and autonomy that is fun for workers. The idea that workers should have fun and love their objective alienation has become a new ideological strategy of capital and management theory. 'Facebook labour' is an expression of play labour ideology as element of the new spirit of capitalism.

4.4.5. The Society of Self-Control

Gilles Deleuze (1995) has pointed out that in contemporary capitalism, disciplines are transformed in such a way that humans increasingly discipline themselves without direct external violence. He terms this situation the 'society of (self-)control'. It can for example be observed in the strategies of participatory management. This method promotes the use of incentives and the integration of play into labour. It argues that work should be fun, workers should permanently develop new ideas, realise their creativity, enjoy free time within the factory, etc. The boundaries between work time and spare time, labour and play, become fuzzy. Work tends to acquire qualities of play, and entertainment in

spare time tends to become labour-like. Working time and spare time become inseparable.

The factory extends its boundaries into society and becomes what Mario Tronti (1966) has termed a social factory:

> The more capitalist development proceeds, i.e. the more the production of relative surplus value asserts and extends itself, the more the cycle production – distribution – exchange – consumption closes itself inevitably, the societal relation between capitalist production and bourgeois society, between factory and society, between society and the state become more and more organic. At the highest level of capitalist development the societal relation becomes a moment of the relations of production, and the whole of society becomes cause and expression of production, i.e. the whole society lives as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination to the whole of society. […] When the factory raises itself to the master of the whole of society – the entire societal production becomes industrial production – then the specific characteristics of the factory get lost inside of the general characteristics of society (Tronti 1966, 30–31, translation from German).

At the same time as work time and spare time get blurred in the social factory, work-related stress intensifies and property relations remain unchanged.

Facebook's exploitation of Internet users is an aspect of this transformation. It signifies that private Internet usage, which is motivated by play, entertainment, fun, and joy – aspects of Eros – has become subsumed under capital and has become a sphere of the exploitation of labour. It produces surplus-value for capital and is exploited by the latter so that Internet corporations accumulate profit. Play and labour are today to a specific degree indistinguishable. Eros has become largely subsumed under the repressive reality principle. Play is largely commodified, free time and spaces not exploited by capital become diminished. Play is today productive, surplus-value generating labour that is exploited by capital. All human activities, and therefore also all play, tend under the contemporary conditions to become subsumed under and exploited by capital. Play as an expression of Eros is thereby destroyed, human freedom and human capacities are crippled. On Facebook, play and labour converge into play labour that is exploited for capital accumulation. Facebook therefore stands for the total commodification and exploitation of time – all human time tends to become surplus-value generating time that is exploited by capital.

Table 4.1 summarises the application of Marcuse's theory of play, labour and pleasure to Facebook and social media.

Essence of human desires:	Reality principle in societies with scarcity	Repressive reality principle in classical capitalism	Repressive reality principle in capitalism in the age of Facebook
Immediate satisfaction	Delayed satisfaction	Delayed satisfaction	Immediate online satisfaction
Pleasure	Restraint of pleasure	Leisure time: pleasure, work time: restraint of pleasure, surplus repression of pleasure	Collapse of leisure time and work time, leisure time becomes work time and work time leisure time, all time tends to become exploited, online leisure time becomes surplus value-generating, wage labour time = surplus repression of pleasure, play labour time = surplus value generating pleasure time
Joy (play)	Toil (work)	Leisure time: joy (play), work time: toil (work)	Play labour: joy and play as toil and work, toil and work as joy and play
Receptiveness	Productiveness	Leisure time: receptiveness, work time: productiveness	Collapse of the distinction between leisure time/work time and receptiveness/productiveness, total commodification of human time
Absence of repression of pleasure	Repression of pleasure	Leisure time: absence of repression of pleasure, work time: repression of pleasure	Play labour time: surplus value generation appears to be pleasure-like, but serves the logic of repression (the lack of ownership of capital)

Table 4.1: Pleasures in four modes of society (human essence, society with scarcity, classical capitalism, capitalism in the age of Facebook), based on a table from: Marcuse 1955b, 12.

4.4.6. Facebook and Play Labour

Work stands in a dialectical relation with play: in play, humans have the freedom to do with the objects of play whatever one wants to do: 'In a single toss of a ball, the player achieves an infinitely greater triumph of human freedom over the objective world than in the most massive accomplishment of technical labor' (Marcuse 1933, 128). Play has 'no duration or permanence. It happens

essentially in "intervals", "between" the times of other doings that continually dominate human Dasein' (Marcuse 1933, 128). In societies, where work is toil, play would be dialectically related to work in such a way that it is an escape from it:

> Play is self-distraction, self-relaxation, self-recuperation *for the purpose* of a new concentration, tension, etc. Thus play is in its totality necessarily related to an other from which it comes and at which it is aimed, and this other is already preconceived as *labor* through the characteristics of regimentation, tension, toil, etc. (Marcuse 1933, 128).

Work is a durable and permanent process that produces objects in the world that satisfy human needs. Play in contrast takes place unregularly and does not involve the necessity to create use-values that satisfy human needs. Play has the freedom to do with objects whatever one likes to. This can involve creating new objects, but also destroying existing objects or engaging in unproductive activity that is purely joyful and does not create anything new. This means that in playing with a ball one can develop a new form of game, destroy the ball or just toss it around for fun.

In play labour (playbour), the relationship between play and labour has changed: whereas labour is permanent and play irregular, Facebook playbour does not take place at specific times either during 'free time' or 'work time', it rather can take place any time during wage labour time, at home or on the move (via mobile devices). Play labour is irregular in the sense that it takes place at irregular times and intervals, but it is permanent because users tend to return and update their profiles and repeat their activities. Whereas labour creates new objects that have a permanency in the world and satisfy human needs and play has the freedom to do with object whatever one pleases to, the Facebook user has the freedom to design his/her profile however s/he wants to. But Facebook sets strict limits such as the available input fields, what kind of images, videos and comments are allowed to be uploaded, etc. Every browsing behaviour and activity on Facebook is made permanent in the form of data that are stored, processed, analysed and commodified for the purpose of targeted advertising. Whereas play is relaxation and distraction from the unfreedom and hardships of labour and at the same time recreation of labour power, playbour explodes the relative temporal and spatial separateness of play and labour: Facebook usage is relaxation, joy and fun and at the same time, like labour creates economic value that results or can result in monetary profits. It is recreation that generates value, consumption that is productive, play that is labour.

Play is a free activity without duration and permanence, whereas labour is unfree activity with duration and permanence. Play labour has the semblance of freedom, but is unfree in that it creates wealth and profits that are controlled

not by the creators, but by others. It is regular in its irregularity, creating permanence of data storage and usage in its impermanence of usage (irregular times, no need to create something new or useful, etc.). It is fun and joy that is not like play mainly an end-in-itself or like labouring an end-for-others. It is rather as fun an end-in-itself, as social activity an end-for-others and as value-creating activity an end-for-capital, i.e. a particularistic end-for-others that monetarily benefits private property owners at the expense of play workers.

4.4.7. Liquefaction

Paid labour in the culture industry is also becoming more like play today. The playground-like Google offices that at a first glance hide the inhumane reality of working long hours are the best example. Among others, Gill (2002) as well as Hesmondhalgh and Baker (2011) show the ambivalence of much creative industry work that is precarious, but cherished, because of the fun, contacts, reputation, creativity, self-fulfilment, and self-determination that it tends to involve. The difficulty is that labour feels like play and that exploitation and fun thereby become inseparable. Play and labour are today in certain cases indistinguishable.

The liquefaction of boundaries between labour/play, working time/leisure time, production/consumption, the office and the factory/the home, the public/the private is one of the tendencies of contemporary capitalism. It is however not the only or main feature of modernity as claimed by Bauman (2000/2012) who speaks of liquid modernity. Liquefaction is rather combined with other developments of modernity such as neoliberalism, individualisation, globalisation, financialisation, the commodification of everything, informatisation etc. that are constitutive for the continuity of capitalism through creating discontinuities.

4.5. Herbert Marcuse, Ideology and Social Media

4.5.1. Technological Rationality

Herbert Marcuse used the term 'technological rationality' for describing the phenomenon of instrumental reason. He wanted to express that ideology and manipulation try to make human consciousness and human behaviour function like an automatic machine that has only a limited set of available response behaviours. Technological rationality contains 'elements of thought which adjust the rules of thought to the rules of control and domination' (Marcuse 1964b, 138). Technological rationality denies that reality could be other than it is today. It neglects alternative potentials for development. It aims at 'liquidating the oppositional and transcending elements' (Marcuse 1964b, 56). Techno-

logical rationality causes a one-dimensional thinking, in which 'ideas, aspirations, and objectives that, by their content, transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe' (Marcuse 1964b, 12).

Technological/instrumental rationality in capitalism has a dual character. For Marx, the commodity and capital accumulation are based on the exploitation of labour power, it is the production and appropriation of surplus-value. Class-based society turns humans into instruments that in capital serve the dominant class' need of capital accumulation. At the same time, the commodity has a specific aesthetic and subjective appearance: the labour involved in its production disappears behind the commodity and money form. One can only see a thing devoid of social relations. The social is hidden behind the commodity form that appears natural and endless. Ideology operates the same way: it naturalises domination and exploitation by presenting them as best option, essential, natural, and without alternatives.

4.5.2. Capitalist Media and Technological Rationality

Capitalist media are modes of reification and therefore expressions of instrumental/technological rationality in a dual sense. First, they reduce humans to the status of consumers of advertisements and commodities. Second, culture is in capitalism to a large degree connected to the commodity form: there are cultural commodities produced by cultural wage-workers that are bought by consumers and audience commodities that the media consumers become themselves by being sold as an audience to capitalist media's advertising clients. Third, in order to reproduce its existence, capitalism has to present itself as the best possible (or only possible) system and makes use of the media in order to try to keep this message (in all its differentiated forms) hegemonic. The first and the second dimension constitute the economic dimension of instrumental reason, the third dimension the ideological form of instrumental reason. Capitalist media are necessary means of advertising and commodification and spaces of ideology. Advertisement and cultural commodification make humans an instrument for economic profit accumulation. Ideology aims at instilling the belief in the system of capital and commodities into human subjectivity. The goal is that human thoughts and actions do not go beyond capitalism, do not question and revolt against this system and thereby play the role of instruments for the perpetuation of capitalism. It is of course an important question to what extent ideology is successful and to what degree it is questioned and resisted, but the crucial aspect about ideology is that it encompasses strategies and attempts to make human subjects instrumental in the reproduction of domination and exploitation.

4.5.3. One-Dimensional and Dialectical Thought

One-dimensional thought and reductionism are characteristic for domina-tive societies that want to legitimatise the domination of one group or class over another and employ simplifications of reality for doing so. Critical theory opposes ideology, fetishism, reification, false consciousness, instrumental rea-son, technological rationality, and one-dimensional consciousness by the con-cept of dialectical thinking. Dialectical thinking sees reality as complex, a devel-oping process, full of potentials for change, and as contradictory. It assumes that for each pole of reality there is a second pole that opposes (negates) the first pole and points towards a different reality. Dialectical thought is therefore 'two-dimensional' (Marcuse 1964b, 85). It operates with 'transcendent, criti-cal notions' (Marcuse 1964b, 85): 'The dialectical concepts transcend the given social reality in the direction of another historical structure which is present as a tendency in the given reality' (Marcuse 1937a, 86).

4.5.4. The Engaging/Connecting/Sharing-Ideology

At the level of ideology, social media-capitalists, -gurus and -demagogues try to destroy and forestall the complexity, multi-dimensionality and dialecticity of communication and society by presenting only potential advantages and being silent about social media's aspects of domination, exploitation, control, surveil-lance, repression, manipulation and neoliberal individualism. Social media ide-ologies present capitalist online platforms as something purely advantageous. They advance the engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology. Here are some exam-ples (Fuchs 2015, chapter 7):

- Facebook says it provides 'the power to share and to make the world more open and connected'.[1]
- Google argues its goal is the organisation of 'the world's information' in order to 'make it universally accessible and useful' and 'make money with-out doing evil'.[2]
- YouTube conceives the essence of freedom as possibility 'to connect, inform and inspire others across the globe and acts as a distribution platform for original content creators and advertisers large and small'.[3]
- For Twitter, the freedom of social media is 'to connect with people, express yourself and discover what's happening' and 'give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly'.[4]
- Instagram says it is a 'fast, beautiful and fun way to share your life with friends and family'.[5]
- Pinterest describes itself as enabling 'collecting and organising things you love'.[6]

- LinkedIn claims it helps to 'connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful'.[7]
- tumblr says it enables you to 'share the things you love'.[8]
- VK sees itself as 'a web resource that helps you stay in touch with your old and new friends'.[9]
- Baidu's says it mission is 'providing the best way for people to find what they're looking for online', 'We provide our users with many channels to find and share information'.[10]
- Sina Weibo says it is designed to 'allow users to connect and share information anywhere, anytime and with anyone on our platform' and provides 'an array of online media and social networking services to our user to create a rich canvas for businesses and brand advertisers to connect and engage with their targeted audiences'.[11]
- Renren's self-understanding is that it 'enables users to connect and communicate with each other, share information, create user generated content, play online games, watch videos and enjoy a wide range of other features and services. We believe real name relationships create a stronger and more enduring social graph that is essential in the mobile internet world and difficult to replicate. […] Our vision is to re-define the social networking experience and revolutionize the way people in China connect, communicate, entertain and shop. To achieve this, we are focused on providing a highly engaging and interactive platform through technology that promotes connectivity, communication and sharing. The mobile internet is making the world more connected, and Renren stands at the forefront of this evolution'.[12]
- Tencent's (QQ, WeChat) mission is 'to enhance the quality of human life through Internet services'.[13] WeChat is a 'value-added Internet, mobile and telecom services and online advertising under the strategic goal of providing users with "one-stop online lifestyle services"' that provides users the possibility to 'connect with friends across platforms'.[14]

4.5.5. Inverted Commodity Fetishism

Social media ideology inverts commodity fetishism. In inverted commodity fetishism (Fuchs 2014a), the users do not immediately experience the commodity form because they do not pay money for accessing a commodity. Rather they get access without payment to social media platforms that are not commodities. The commodity form takes place without an exchange that users are involved in: the platforms sell usage data to advertising clients, who in return for paying money get targeted access to users' profiles that become advert spaces. It is rather difficult for users to think of corporate social media use as labour or exploitation because inverted commodity fetishism creates a social experience and social use-value for them and tries to ideologically hide the role of the commodity.

Social media corporations, advertising and management gurus and uncritical social media scholars that celebrate capitalist platforms associate with social media that it enables everyone to get and share information, to communicate, engage, produce and distribute content, connect with others. A further claim is that producing, connecting, sharing, communicating, engaging via social media enhances humans' quality of life and society's quality and transparency. In the analysed statements, there is an underlying assumption that social media makes society necessarily more open, transparent, and connected, whereas aspects of closure and power are not considered. If they are considered, they are only framed in such a way that social media empowers users. Social media ideology reflects Henry Jenkins' concept of participatory culture that assumes that social media enables a culture 'in which fans and other consumers are invited to actively participate in the creation and circulation of new content' (Jenkins 2008, 331) and in which there is 'strong support for creating and sharing creations with others' (Jenkins et al. 2009, 5).

The problem of this approach is the simplistic understanding of participation as content-creation and sharing that ignores the political connotation of participation as participatory democracy, a system, in which all people own and control and together manage the systems that affect their lives (Fuchs 2014c, chapter 3). The engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology is an ideology because it only views social media positively and is inherently technological-deterministic. It assumes that social media technologies as such have positive effects and disregards the power structures and asymmetries into which it is embedded.

This engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology is however not just typical for Western corporate social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, Tumblr or Instagram, but is also shared and communicated by Chinese corporate social media companies such as Baidu, Sina Weibo, Renren and Tencent. This circumstance indicates that both Chinese and Western Internet capitalism use quite comparable neoliberal ideologies for legitimising themselves. Social media ideology is a form of one-dimensional thought both in the East and the West: It is silent about exploitation and disadvantages that users may have from capitalism's and the capitalist state's control of the Internet. Eastern and Western social media capitalists not just share the engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology, but also the same capital accumulation model that is based on targeted advertising and the exploitation of users' digital labour (Fuchs 2015, chapter 7).

4.5.6. Repressive Tolerance in the Social Media Age

Marcuse argued that tolerance is repressive and administered pseudo-tolerance and intolerance when there are 'indoctrinated individuals who parrot' (Marcuse 1969, 90) so that alternative voices are not present and when monopolies and ideologies dominate the media and the public sphere. 'But with the con-

centration of economic and political power and the integration of opposites in a society which uses technology as an instrument of domination, effective dissent is blocked where it could freely emerge: in the formation of opinion, in information and communication, in speech and assembly' (Marcuse 1969, 95). The consequence of all of this is that 'tolerance mainly serves the protection and preservation of a repressive society' (Marcuse 1969, 111).

Social media in capitalist society has taken repressive tolerance to a new level. The engaging/connecting/sharing-ideology often associated with social media presents these forms of communication as pure freedom, in which everyone can participate without constraints, where everyone can speak and be visible, heard and seen. Thereby the image of a tolerant, free and pluralist society is conveyed. Capitalist social media's tolerance is, however, a form of repressive tolerance. Social media ideology tries to hide the repressive character of censorship and power asymmetry that is at play.

The difference between broadcasting and social media is that in the first kind of medium there are centres that control the dissemination of information. In social media, every consumer of information can be a producer who creates and disseminates information. It is, however, mere semblance and ideological appearance that the emergence of prosumption democratises the media because the ownership of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube is not collective and there are hierarchies of reputation, visibility and voice on these media (Fuchs 2014a).

Rank	User	Role	Followers
1	Katy Perry	Singer	79,085,600
2	Justin Bieber	Singer	71,382,728
3	Barack Obama	Politician	67,082,573
4	Taylor Swift	Singer	66,696,238
5	YouTube	Web platform	56,969,330
6	Lady Gaga	Singer	53,248,260
7	Rihanna	Singer	53,113,377
8	Ellen DeGeneres	Entertainer	51,033,240
9	Justin Timberlake	Singer	50,151,574
10	Twitter	Web platform	48,403,275

Table 4.2: The users with the largest number of followers on Twitter (data source: http://twitaholic.com, accessed on December 16, 2015).

Rank	Page	Role	Likes
1	Facebook for Every Phone	App	511,033,965
2	Facebook	WWW platform	169,699,777
3	Cristiano Ronaldo	Footballer	108,291,324
4	Shakira	Singer	103,836,997
5	Vin Diesel	Actor	96,412,163
6	Coca-Cola	Drink	94,779,402
7	Eminem	Singer	92,286,038
8	FC Barcelona	Football team	88,833,993
9	Real Madrid C.F.	Football team	85,870,787
10	Leo Messi	Footballer	81,587,230

Table 4.3: The Facebook pages with the largest number of likes (data source: http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-pages/, accessed on 16 December 2015).

4.5.7. Twitter's and Facebook's Repressive Tolerance

Is Twitter really a tolerant, free and pluralist medium that allows you 'to connect with people, express yourself and discover what's happening' and gives 'everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly'[15]? How many followers do you have on Twitter? A few hundred? Or if you are really very active, maybe you have 2,000 followers? 2,000? Not bad, that's just 84 411 368 fewer followers than Katy Perry![16] So who has the largest number of followers? Celebrities and online platforms operated by the world's largest advertising and online companies Google and Facebook (table 4.2).

Do you have a Facebook page that users can like? How many likes does it have? Maybe 5,000 if it your page is really doing well? That's just 511,028,965 fewer 'likes' than the page 'Facebook for Every Phone' has. What are the most 'liked' pages on Facebook (see table 4.3)? Apps and Internet technologies operated by the world's largest Internet and advertising companies Google and Facebook, sports, celebrities, and a soft drink company.

Does Facebook really give you the 'the power to share and to make the world more open and connected'?[17] The reality is that these are empty promises and that hierarchies of ownership and reputation create asymmetries of voice and visibility. As a consequence, some are more connected, visible, read and heard, re-tweeted, re-posted than others, which in turn cement and advances status hierarchies. The tolerance, freedom and plurality that social media promise in capitalism turn out to form an ideology. Tolerance, freedom and plurality are repressive in a social media world that operates within a capitalist society.

4.5.8. The Contradiction between Social Media's Essence and Appearance

Social media ideology constitutes an antagonism between social media's essence and appearance: the very essence and task of the media is to bring people together, capitalist reality is however that social media's sociality fosters new forms of exploitation, commodification, individualism, and private property. Social media ideology makes social media appear as something purely positive, it splits off the negative reality of domination and exploitation from social media. It makes social media one-dimensional and is a form of reductionist technological rationality that justifies the instrumentalisation of humans' activities for capitalist purposes by disguising exploitation as sociality, fun and play.

4.6. Herbert Marcuse, the Logic of Essence and Social Media

4.6.1. The Concept of Essence

Marcuse (1941a) has argued that the Nazis' notion of essence that sees the Jews' nature as being parasitic, greedy, and money-oriented is based on particularism and is therefore opposed to the Hegelian and Marxian notion of essence that assumes the existence of universal qualities of humans and society. For Hegel, essence is not a particularistic, but a universalistic concept. He argues: 'The Absolute is the Essence' (Hegel 1830, §112). 'Essence is the ground of existence. The ground is the unity of identity and difference […] It is essence put explicitly as a totality' (Hegel 1830, §121).

In Marx's philosophical writings, Hegelian essence is interpreted as sociality and co-operation. 'The individual is the social being' (Marx 1844, 105). 'By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals' (Marx and Engels 1846, 50). The implication of this assumption is that co-operation is something that all humans share, that capitalism alienates co-operative potentials, and that societal conditions should be created that allow all humans to participate, to have equally realised rights, and to live in equity. It is this stress on universal equity that led to the Nazis' hostility towards Hegel and Marx. So, for example, in the main work by Alfred Rosenberg (1930), the Nazis' primary ideologist, Hegel was opposed because for him the state was a universal concept. Rosenberg argued that Hegel and Marx's writings were foreign to the notion of blood ('blutfremd') (Rosenberg 1930, 525), whereas he celebrated Nietzsche as someone who destroyed all values and stood for the breeding of a higher race ('rassische Hochzucht') (Rosenberg 1930, 525). Herbert Marcuse summarised the Nazi's opposition towards Hegel's universalism:

The state as reason – that is, as a rational whole, governed by universally valid laws, calculable and lucid in its operation, professing to protect the essential interest of every individual without discrimination – this form of state is precisely what National Socialism cannot tolerate (Marcuse 1941a, 413).

4.6.2. Sociality and Co-operation as Human Essence

An alternative to postmodern relativism and fascist naturalism is to assume, as Herbert Marcuse did, that there are universal human characteristics such as sociality, co-operation, or the desire for wealth, happiness, freedom, reason, and that conditions should be created that allow the universal realisation of these qualities, that societies that do not guarantee the realization of these human potentials are false societies, and that consciousness that wants to perpetuate such false societal conditions is false consciousness. Such a form of universalism is not totalitarian, but should be read as a form of humanism that struggles for universal equity. Only the assumption that there is something positive that all humans have in common allows the envisioning of a state where all humans are guaranteed equal fundamental rights. Such essential conditions are not given and envisioned automatically, they have historical character and under given economic, political, cultural, and technological conditions they can be reached to a certain degree. Humans have the ability to struggle and to act consciously in transformative ways. Therefore each societal epoch is shaped by the question if humans will or will not act to create and realise the epoch's inherent and dynamically developing potentials or not. They shape and potentially enhance the space of possibilities and at the same time act or do not act to realise these created possibilities. The moments of human essence are substantial, if they are achieved or not and to which extent they can be realized and how they develop is completely historical, which means that it is based on human agency. In Marx's works:

> the negativity of reality becomes a historical condition which cannot be hypostatized as a metaphysical state of affairs. […] The given state of affairs is negative and can be rendered positive only by liberating the possibilities immanent in it. […] Truth, in short, is not a realm apart from historical reality, nor a region of eternally valid ideas. […] Not the slightest natural necessity or automatic inevitability guarantees the transition from capitalism to socialism. […] The revolution requires the maturity of many forces, but the greatest among them is the subjective force, namely, the revolutionary class itself. The realization of freedom and reason requires the free rationality of those who achieve it. Marxian theory is, then, incompatible with fatalistic determinism (Marcuse 1941a, 314–315, 318–319).

4.6.3. Society's Essence

Marcuse anticipated the critique of postmodern relativism when he argued in 1936 for a Marxist notion of essence: 'A theory that wants to eradicate from science the concept of essence succumbs to helpless relativism, thus promoting the very powers whose reactionary thought it wants to combat' (Marcuse 1937a, 45). It makes practical political sense to argue that there is a truth immanent in society that is not automatically realised and that this truth is given in the need and possibility of a good life for all. Oppression takes on different forms and contexts and that oppressed individuals and groups frequently stand in contradictory relations to each other. Truth is subdivided into partial truths that are interconnected. Oppressed groups and individuals share common interests because they are all confronted by the same global system of oppression, at the same time they also have differing sub-interests because oppression is contextualised in many forms. What is needed is a differentiated unity, a form of politics that is based on unity in diversity.

For Hegel, the essence of things means that they have fundamental characteristics and qualities as such that frequently are different from their appearance. Truth for Hegel is the direct correspondence of essence and existence, only true existence is real and reasonable. In Marxism, Herbert Marcuse is one of the authors who has taken up Hegel's notion of essence and stresses that essence is connected to possibilities and that a true society is one that realises the possibilities that are enabled by structural aspects such as technological forces, economic productivity, political power relations, world-views, etc. Essence in society is connected with what humans could be (Marcuse 1937a). Ernst Bloch (1959) utilises in this context the ontological category of 'not yet' in order to signify concrete potentials that can be realised, but have not yet been attained. Marcuse has given the following definition of the essence of man and society:

> Connecting at its roots the problem of essence to social practice restructures the concept of essence in its relation to all other concepts by orienting it toward the essence of *man*. […] Here the concept of what could be, of inherent possibilities, acquires a precise meaning. What man can be in a given historical situation is determinable with regard to the following factors: the measure of control of natural and social productive factors, the level of the organization of labor, the development of needs in relation to possibilities for their fulfilment (especially the relation of what is necessary for the reproduction of life to the 'free' needs for gratification and happiness, for the 'good and the beautiful'), the availability, as material to be appropriated, of a wealth of cultural values in all areas of life (Marcuse 1937a, 71).

What humans can be in a given situation can be described when taking the following factors into account:

the measure of control of natural and social productive forces, the level of the organization of labor, the development of needs with respect to possibilities for their fulfilment (especially the relation of what is necessary for the reproduction of life to the 'free' needs for gratification and happiness, for the 'good and the beautiful'), the availability, as material to be appropriated, of a wealth of cultural values in all areas of life (Marcuse 1937a, 72).

The ethico-political is connected to questions of what can and should be because society *can* be based on the existing preconditions and reduce pain, misery, and injustice (Marcuse 1964b, 106), use existing resources and capacities in ways that satisfy human needs in the best possible way, and minimise hard labour (Marcuse 1964b, 112).

4.6.4. Human Essence and Communications

Media are tools for communication and therefore promise to realise human essence. Capitalist media however subsume this communicative use-value under the logic of exchange-value so that the commodification of content, audiences, users, and access turns them into means for capital accumulation and the diffusion of ideologies. Media thereby become individual private property that enhances the wealth of the few by exploiting the labour of the many and reach the masses with ideas often representing particularistic interests and realities. Capitalist social media such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube promise a new level of sociality, but at the same time literally commodify sociality, they impose the logic of private property and commodities on online communications.

   Non-commercial commons-based and public service online media, such as Wikipedia, non-commercial free software and creative commons projects, sharing platforms that operate on a gift logic, alternative online news media, peer to peer sites, etc. question and transcend the logic of the online commodity and are expressions of human essence and the Internet's essence. The antagonism between the online commons and the online commodity form is complex because it not just involves users and capitalists, but also artists, whose income partly depends on the profits of media companies who exploit them so that the online freeconomy doesn't just challenge capitalist profits, but also online wage labour. Radical reforms are the only potential solution to this antagonism, namely radical reforms that make public funds available to alternative projects so that they can employ workers and afford resources. It is a mistake to take an immanent defensive political position that opposes transcendental projects with the argument that they destroy jobs of cultural workers. We need reforms

and platforms that strengthen the alternative realities on the Internet so that the latter can increasingly realise its own essence.

4.6.5. The Ethics of Co-operation

For Marcuse, ethics is connected with questions of what can and should be because society can reduce pain, misery, and injustice (Marcuse 1964a, 106) and use existing resources and capacities in ways that satisfy human needs in the best possible way and minimise hard labour (Marcuse 1964a, 112). A false condition of society or of a social system would mean that its actuality and its potentiality differ. Marcuse stresses that in capitalism oppressed humans are alienated because they do not possess the means of production and the fruits thereby produced. He says that alienation means that humans and society are alienated from their essence. The sublation of the alienation of labour and man by establishing a realm of freedom means the realisation of the human and social essence. One can read the works of Marx as a deconstruction of ideology, the identification of potentials that strengthen the realisation of human freedom, and the suggestion that humans should act in ways that realise potentials that increase the co-operative character of society.

Here both chance and necessity are important: existing structures, social relations and forces of production in economy, polity, and culture, determine certain potentials of societal development (necessity). Human beings in social practices realise potentials by creating actuality (chance). Freedom here is freedom to create novelty that is conditioned (enabled and constrained) by societal reality. Marx's works can be interpreted as ethics of liberation and co-operation in so far as they suggest that humans should act in ways that bring society closer to the latter's co-operative essence. Marx's stress on socialisation (Vergesellschaftung) shows that he saw co-operation as an essential societal phenomenon and considered the realm of freedom as the realisation society's co-operative essence. This is what Marx means when he for example speaks of 'the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e., social mode of existence' (Marx 1844, 103), the 'complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being' (Marx 1844, 102), 'the positive transcendence of private property as human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man' (Marx 1844, 102). For Marx, co-operation is an objective principle that results in a categorical imperative that in contrast to Kant stresses the need for an integrative democracy and to overthrow all relations of domination and exploitation.

Such a reading of Marxian works implies the ethics of co-operation. Co-operation is a type of social relationship for achieving social integration that is different from competition. Co-operation is a specific type of communication and social relationship, in which actors achieve a shared understanding of social phenomena, make concerted use of resources so that new systemic

qualities emerge, engage in mutual learning, all actors benefit, and feel at home and comfortable in the social system that they jointly construct. Co-operation in this sense is (or at least can be visualised as being) the *highest principle of morality*. It is the foundation of an objective dimension of ethics, co-operative ethics. All human beings strive for happiness, social security, self-determination, self-realization, inclusion in social systems so that they can participate in decision processes, co-designing their social systems. Competition means that certain individuals and groups benefit at the expense of others, there is an unequal access to structures of social systems. This is the dominant organisational structure of modern society. Modern society hence is an excluding society.

Co-operation as it is understood here includes people in social systems. It lets them participate in decisions and establishes a more just distribution of and access to resources. Hence co-operation is a way of achieving and realising basic human needs. Competition in contrast is a way of achieving and realising basic human needs only for certain groups and by excluding others. Co-operation forms thus the essence of human society, whereas competition alienates humans from their essence. For Hegel, essence means

> things really are not what they immediately show themselves. There is something more to be done than merely rove from one quality to another, and merely to advance from qualitative to quantitative, and vice versa: there is a permanence in things, and that permanence is in the first instance their Essence (Hegel 1830, §112).

Essence is 'the sum total of all realities' (Hegel 1812, §810). 'The truth of being is essence', essence is the 'background [that] constitutes the truth of being' (Hegel 1830, §807).

One can imagine a society that functions without competition. A society without competition is still a society. One can, however, not imagine a society that functions without a certain degree of co-operation and social activity. A society without co-operation is not a society. It is rather a state of permanent warfare, egoism, and mutual destruction that sooner or later destroys all human existence. If co-operation is the essence of society, then a truly human society is a co-operative society. Full co-operation is just another formulation for participatory democracy. Co-operation as the highest principle of morality is grounded in society and social activity itself. It can be rationally explained within society. For doing so, there is no need for referring to a highest transcendental absolute principle such as God that cannot be justified within society. Co-operative ethics is a critique of lines of thought and arguments that want to advance exclusion and heteronomy in society. It is inherently critical and subjects commonly accepted ideas, conventions, traditions, prejudices, and myths to critical questioning. It questions mainstream opinions and voices alternatives to them in order to avoid one-dimensional

thinking and strengthen complex, dialectical, multi-dimensional think-ing. Co-operation is the immanent essence of all societies. It is grounding human existence. Competitive class-based societies estrange society from its very essence. To transcend estrangement and the false state of society means to constitute transcendental political projects that struggle for the abolition of domination so that the immanent essence of society can be realised. This transcendence is grounded in society itself, in the co-operation process of humans. It is an immanent transcendence.

4.6.6. Immanent Transcendence

The notion of immanent transcendence as the dialectic of essence and existence is based on Hegel's notion of truth and actuality as correspondence of essence and existence. 'Actuality is the unity, become immediate, of essence with exist-ence, or of inward with outward' (Hegel 1830, §142). Not all existence (Sein) is actual (Wirklichkeit). Only existence that is reasonable corresponds to its essence and therefore has become true and is therefore actual. Marx saw the lack of control of the means of production, the labour process, and the results of labour by the immediate producers as an alienation of society and humans from their essence.

> Estranged labour turns thus man's species-being, both nature and his spir-itual species property, into a being alien to him, into a means to his indi-vidual existence. It estranges man's own body from him, as it does external nature and his spiritual essence, his human being (Marx 1844, 76).

Marcuse (1932) was one of the first critical scholars who had in the twentieth century seen the logic of essence as foundation of immanent transcendence:

> The fact from which the critique and the interpretation set out was the alienation and estrangement of the human essence as expressed in the alienation and estrangement of labor, and hence the situation of man in the historical facticity of capitalism. This fact appears as the total inver-sion and concealment of what the critique had defined as the essence of man and human labor. [...] Regarding the situation and praxis from the standpoint of the history of man's essence makes the acutely practical nature of the critique even more trenchant and sharp: the fact that capi-talist society calls into question not only economic facts and objects but the entire 'existence' of man and 'human reality' is for Marx the decisive justification for the proletarian revolution as total and radical revolu-tion, unconditionally excluding any partial upheaval or 'evolution.' The justification does not lie outside or behind the concepts of alienation

and estrangement – the justification is rather precisely this alienation and estrangement itself (Marcuse 1932, 104, 91).

Crawford Brough Macpherson's (1973) theory of participatory democracy is also based on the Marxian notion of essence. He considers the essence of humans as developmental power, i.e. 'the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgement and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for religious experience' (Macpherson 1973, 4). Participatory democracy would be the realisation of human essence, which would presuppose the sublation of private property and the technological maximisation of free time.

4.6.7. Social Media's Essence and Existence

Capitalist social media are founded on an antagonism between essence and existence: they promise to advance human sociality – sharing, communication, collaboration and community – but by doing so in a particular form they advance the exploitation of human labour, the domination of the capitalist class, capital accumulation that spurs inequality in society (Piketty 2014, Fuchs 2014f), and a particularistic one-dimensional ideology that only stresses social media's potentials and neglects its negative realities. Social media's capitalist existence thereby comes into contradiction with the very social essence that it promises. At the same time social media is not pure exploitation, domination and ideology. It advances the contradiction between the class relations and the social relations of communication as means of production. Facebook, Google and Twitter have potentials to enhance human life's sociality by providing new, more intense and extended forms of sharing, communication, collaboration and community. These potentials are however limited by social media's capitalist and class character. Truly social media require a non-capitalist framework *as well as* a qualitative redesign. Social media are an expression of how capitalism produces germs of commonism that turn into its own opposite and stabilises and deepen capitalist exploitation and domination. Social media's essence can therefore only be realised by a user revolution that struggles for truly social media.

4.7. Conclusion

Herbert Marcuse has grounded a critical theory that is dialectical, practical, humanistic, and oriented on structural contradictions. Such a theory focuses on contradiction through class struggle. It takes ideology – just like the potentials for ideology's sublation – seriously. It connects the dialectics of capitalism to the dialectics of communication and technology.

This chapter has tried to show that although Herbert Marcuse's works pre-dated Facebook, Twitter, Google and similar online platforms, his critical theory can today provide an epistemology, method and political impetus for understanding and changing capitalist social media's antagonisms, class structures and ideologies.

The reality of social media in capitalism shows the 'the tension between potentiality and actuality, between what man and things could be and what they are in fact' (Marcuse 1937a, 69). Social media points towards, and forms together with other technologies, a material foundation of a democratic socialist society, in which the means of physical and informational production are collectively controlled. Social media's reality contradicts this potential and the human essence of co-operation by fostering new forms of exploitation and ideology.

Critical theory is *ethical*. It has a 'concern with human happiness' (Marcuse 1937b, 135). It is a *critique of domination and exploitation*. It holds that 'man can be more than a manipulable subject in the production process of class society' (Marcuse 1937b, 153). Corporate social media fosters human play, sociality, fun and happiness in appearance only because it at the same time hides the reality of exploitation. It inverts the commodity fetishism so that the commodity logic is hidden behind social benefits that foster the exploitation of digital labour. At the same time, the use-value dimension of social media points towards commonist forms of ownership, control, democracy and communication and has anticipatory character. These commonist potentials are however limited by the capitalist reality of social media.

> If, for instance, it is said that concepts such as wages, the value of labor, and entrepreneurial profit are only categories of manifestations behind which are hidden the 'essential relations' of the second set of concepts, it is also true that these essential relations represent the truth of the manifestations only insofar as the concepts which comprehend them already contain their own negation and transcendence – the image of a social organization without surplus value. All materialist conceptions contain an accusation and an imperative. When the imperative has been fulfilled, when practice has created men's new social organization, the new essence of man appears in reality (Marcuse 1937a, 86).

The concept of social media is a manifestation of class-based society. It hides its own potential and ideologically presents the reality of the exploitation of digital labour as truth, play, fun, democracy, wealth, revolution, rebellion, and participation. Social media as a concept however also points towards its own unrealised essence – a truly social and co-operative society that can never be attained under capitalist rule and in a class-based society. The capitalist reality of social media contradicts its own essence.

Herbert Marcuse's critical theory was a dialectical theory in many respects. One of these dimensions was his focus on political praxis as dialectical struggle for democratic socialism and against capitalism. In the world of social media this means that we have not yet attained social media, but that there are potentials in the media and society today for achieving truly social media. Reading Herbert Marcuse today reminds us that truly social media and a true society are still possible and can be attained in and through social struggles.

Capitalist social media is one of the latest proofs of the continuation of exploitation and fetishism. It shows how much an alternative society is urgently needed. Just like always in capitalism and especially in the situation of capitalist crisis, we must today think about how to overcome heteronomy and replace it by a true democracy. Social media and society are not-yet truly social. For doing so, they need to overcome the particularisms that limit human life.

Herbert Marcuse's theory is not just political in that it provided a political-economic analysis of the repressive organisation of economy, politics and culture. It is also political because it deeply cares about political subjects and struggles and the way revolutionary subjectivity is articulated, constrained, repressed and withheld. Marcuse analysed and politically related especially to the working class movement, the student movement, feminism, the environmental movement, and the civil rights movement. At the end of his life, Marcuse summarised his assessment of political movements of his time by writing that movements 'such as the worker opposition, citizens' initiatives, communes, student protests, are authentic forms of rebellion determined by the particular social situation, counterblows against the centralization and totalization of the apparatus of domination' (Marcuse 1979b, 414). Adding the 'anti-authoritarian movement, the ecology movement, and the women's movement', he argued, that they are 'the manifestation (still very unorganized and diffuse) of an instinctual structure, the ground of a transformed consciousness which is shaking the domination of the performance principle and of alienated productivity' (Marcuse 1979b, 411).

The capitalist crisis that started in 2008 conditioned new struggles and expressions of political subjectivity. These included especially far left, fascist and religious fundamentalist movements all over the world. In Europe, fascist and far right groups and parties have been growing in many countries, whereas the strengthening of the Left has had particular significance in southern Europe (e.g. Greece, Portugal, Spain) and has expressed itself in other parts of Europe in the form of anti-austerity, Occupy and student movements. A decisive political task is to weaken the far right forces and to strengthen the Left in order to fill the void that the convergence of social democracy and conservatives that is accompanied by a strengthening of the far right has created.

An often-discussed question has in this context been what role social media and the Internet play in new forms of political struggles all over the world (for

overviews see Fuchs 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). The positions range from techno-euphoric celebrations that see new struggles such as the Arab Spring as revolutions 2.0 and Facebook or Twitter revolutions to outright neglect and denial of any media-dimension of contemporary protests ('Protests take place on the streets and occupations on the square, not on the Internet'). A more nuanced dialectical position that can be backed up by empirical research (Fuchs 2014c) is that digital and social media are in contradictory dialectical ways connected to political movements: there is a contradiction between movements' use of commercial and non-commercial social media and a dialectic of online and offline communication, in which activists who are on the streets and in the squares use face-to-face communication and online media in mutually enhancing ways for protest information, communication and mobilisation (Fuchs 2014c). Commercial social media pose new potentials for protest mobilisation as well as new risks such as corporate and state surveillance and control of movements. The point is that we understand the contradictions these media entail and that we find institutionalised ways of support for alternative, critical, non-commercial and non-profit media with money, work, personnel, infrastructure, time and space. The task is to create critical, alternative media as counter-institutions, which requires 'working against the established institutions, while working in them' (Marcuse 1972, 55). This means specifically in the realm of social media that we need our own alternatives to Google, Facebook and Twitter that are controlled and run by users. Achieving this aim requires political and institutional reforms, support by left-wing parties, groups and governments, and media reforms. Radical reforms of the media system are urgently needed for this purpose (see Fuchs 2014d).

Notes

[1] https://www.facebook.com/FacebookUK/info, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[2] https://www.google.de/intl/en/about/company/philosophy/, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[3] http://www.youtube.com/yt/about/en-GB/, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[4] https://about.twitter.com/company, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[5] http://instagram.com, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[6] http://uk.about.pinterest.com/, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[7] http://www.linkedin.com/about-us, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[8] https://www.tumblr.com/, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[9] http://vk.com/terms, accessed on 10 April 2014.
[10] http://ir.baidu.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=188488&p=irol-homeprofile, accessed on 9 April 2014.
[11] http://corp.sina.com.cn/eng/sina_intr_eng.htm, accessed on 9 April 2014.
[12] http://ir.renren-inc.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=244796&p=irol-irhome, accessed on 9 April 2014.

13 http://www.tencent.com/en-us/at/abouttencent.shtml, accessed on 9 April 2014.
14 http://www.wechat.com/en/, accessed on 9 April 2014.
15 https://about.twitter.com/company, accessed on 10 April 2014.
16 Data source: http://www.socialbakers.com/statistics/twitter/profiles/, accessed on 15 March 2014.
17 https://www.facebook.com/FacebookUK/info, accessed on 10 April 2014.

References

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000/2012. *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bloch, Ernst. 1959. *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Frankfurt/Main. Suhrkamp.

Boltanski, Luc, and Éve Chiapello. 2007. *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. London: Verso.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. 'Postscript on the Societies of Control'. In *Negotiations*, 177–182. New York: Columbia University Press.

Fisher, Eran and Christian Fuchs, eds. 2015. *Reconsidering value and labour in the digital age*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freud, Sigmund. 1961. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. New York: Norton.

Fuchs, Christian. 2002. *Krise und Kritik in der Informationsgesellschaft. Arbeiten über Herbert Marcuse, kapitalistische Entwicklung und Selbstorganisation*. Norderstedt: Libri BOD.

Fuchs, Christian. 2005a. *Emanzipation! Technik und Politik bei Herbert Marcuse.* Aachen: Shaker.

Fuchs, Christian. 2005b. *Herbert Marcuse interkulturell gelesen. Interkulturelle Bibliothek Band 15*. Nordhausen: Bautz.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies.* London: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014a. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014b. *OccupyMedia! The Occupy movement and social media in crisis capitalism.* Winchester: Zero Books.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014c. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction.* London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014d. 'Social Media and the Public Sphere [Inaugural Lecture]'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (1): 57–101.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014e. 'The Dialectic: Not just the Absolute Recoil, but the World's Living Fire that Extinguishes and Kindles itself. Reflections on Slavoj Žižek's version of Dialectical Philosophy in "Absolute Recoil: Towards a New Foundation of Dialectical Materialism"'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (2): 848–875.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014f. 'Thomas Piketty's book "Capital in the Twenty-first Century", Karl Marx and the Political Economy of the Internet'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (1): 413–430.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age. A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on "Capital Volume I".* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund and Marisol Sandoval, eds. 2012. *Internet and Surveillance. The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media.* New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2012. 'Marx is Back – The Importance of Marxist Theory and Research for Critical Communication Studies Today'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 10 (2): 127–632.

Fuchs, Christian and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2016a. *Marx and the Political Economy of the Media*. Studies in Critical Social Sciences, Volume 79. Leiden: Brill.

Fuchs, Christian and Vincent Mosco, eds. 2016b. *Marx in the Age of Digital Capitalism*. Studies in Critical Social Sciences, Volume 80. Leiden: Brill.

Fuchs, Christian and Marisol Sandoval, eds. 2014. *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society.* New York: Routledge.

Gill, Rosalind. 2002. 'Cool, Creative and Egalitarian? Exploring Gender in Project-based New Media Work in Europe'. *Information, Communication & Society* 5 (1): 70–89.

Harvey, David. 2003. *The New Imperialism.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Harvey, David. 2005. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 2007. 'Zur Dialektik des Antikapitalismus'. *Das Argument* 269: 11–34.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1812. *Science of Logic.* London: Routledge.

Haug, Wolfgang Fritz. 1995. 'Dialektik'. In *Historisch-Kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus. Band 2*, 658–694. Hamburg: Argument.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1813–1816/1969. *Wissenschaft der Logik II. Werke 6* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1830. *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences: The Logic*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 2010. *The Encyclopaedia Logic*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Hesmondhalgh, David, and Sarah Baker. 2011. *Creative Labour: Media Work in Three Cultural Industries*. London: Routledge.

Holz, Hans Heinz. 2005. *Weltentwurf und Reflexion: Versuch einer Grundlegung der Dialektik.* Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler.

Jenkins, Henry. 2008. *Convergence Culture.* New York: New York University Press.

Jenkins, Henry, Ravi Purushotma, Margaret Weigel, Katie Clinton and Alice J. Robison. 2009. *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*. Chicago, IL: MacArthur Foundation.

Kellner, Douglas and Clayton Pierce. 2004. 'Introduction: Marcuse's Adventures in Marxism'. In *Marxism, Revolution and Utopia. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 6*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 1–68. London: Routledge.

Macpherson, Crawford Brough. 1973. *Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1932. *New Sources on the Foundation of Historical Materialism.* In *Heideggerian Marxism*, 86–121. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1933. 'On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labor in Economics'. In *Heideggerian Marxism*, ed. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit, 122–150. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1937a. 'The Concept of Essence'. In *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 43–87. London: Free Association.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1937b. 'Philosophy and Critical Theory'. In *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 134–158. London: Free Association.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1941a. *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*. New York: Humanity Books.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1941b. 'Some Social Implications of Modern Technology'. In *Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume one: Technology, War and Fascism*, 41–65. New York: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1955a. 'Dialectic and Logic Since the War'. In *Marxism, Revolution and Utopia. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 6*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 35–57. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1955b. *Eros and Civilization*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1958. *Soviet Marxism.* New York: Columbia University Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1962. 'The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society'. In *Towards a Critical Theory of Society. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 2*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 82–93. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964a. Ethik und Revolution. In *Schriften, Volume 8*, 100–114. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1964b. *One-Dimensional Man*. *Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1965. 'Industrialization and Capitalism in the Work of Max Weber'. In *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, 201–226. London: Allen Lane.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1966. Zur Geschichte der Dialektik. In *Schriften Band 8*, 200–226. Frankfurt am Main Main: Suhrkamp.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1969. 'Repressive Tolerance'. In *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*, ed. Robert Paul Wolff, Barrington Moore Jr. and Herbert Marcuse, 81–123. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1972. *Counterrevolution and Revolt*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1978. 'On the Aesthetic Dimension: A Conversation between Herbert Marcuse and Larry Hartwick'. In *Art and Liberation. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse*, *Volume* 4, ed. Douglas Kellner, 218–224. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1979a. 'Children of Prometheus: 25 Theses on Technology and Society'. In *Philosophy, Psychoanalysis and Emancipation. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 5,* ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 222–225. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1979b. 'Protosocialism and Late Capitalism: Toward a Theoretical Synthesis Based on Bahro's Analysis'. In *Marxism, Revolution and Utopia. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 6*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 395–415. London: Routledge.

Marcuse, Peter. 2014. 'Afterword'. In *Marxism, Revolution and Utopia. Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 6*, ed. Douglas Kellner and Clayton Pierce, 432–434. London: Routledge.

Marx, Karl. 1844. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Mineola, NY: Dover.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1846. *The German Ideology*. New York: International Publishers.

Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

Rosenberg, Alfred. 1930. *Der Mythus des zwanzigsten Jahrhunderts.* München: Hoheneichen.

Sandoval, Marisol, Christian Fuchs, Jernej A. Prodnik, Sebastian Sevignani and Thomas Allmer, eds. 2014. 'Philosophers of the World Unite! Theorising Digital Labour and Virtual Work: Definitions, Forms and Transformations'. *tripleC: Communiciation, Capitalism & Critique* 12 (2): 464–801.

Schiller, Hans-Ernst. 1993. 'Gehemmte Entwicklung. Über Sprache und Dialektik bei Herbert Marcuse'. In *An unsichtbarer Kette*, 98–125. Lüneburg: Klampen.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1977. 'Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism'. *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory* 1 (3): 1–27.

Tronti, Mario. 1966. *Arbeiter und Kapital*, Frankfurt: Verlag Neue Kritik.

Trottier, Daniel and Christian Fuchs, eds. 2014. *Social Media, Politics and the State. Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.* New York: Routledge.

The Internet, Social Media and Axel Honneth's Interpretation of Georg Lukács' Theory of Reification and Alienation

5.1. Introduction

This chapter asks: what are the potentials of the concept of alienation/reification for a critical theory of society today? Can we hold on to Lukács' grounding of the notion of alienation in Hegel's dialectic of essence and existence in the contemporary world or do we have to drop such foundations? How can we understand alienation in the realm of the media?

The basic epistemological assumption underlying this chapter and other of my works (Fuchs 2008, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015) is that Internet research is predominantly a positivist science that lacks grounding in social theory and tends not to reflect on the Internet's larger presuppositions in society. For grounding a social theory and a critical theory of the Internet, we therefore need to profoundly engage with and re-interpret contemporary critical theory approaches in order to reformulate them in such a way that basic concepts can be applied to the realm of digital media that shape and are shaped by contemporary society.

For providing answers to the questions this chapter asks, I first briefly revisit Lukács' theory of reification and alienation that he set out in *History and Class Consciousness* (section 2). How to formulate the concept of alienation today has been vividly discussed in contemporary German critical theory. Hartmut Rosa, Rahel Jaeggi and Axel Honneth have made important contributions to this debate. I engage with their notions of alienation in sections 2 and 3. Hartmut Rosa has been professor of sociology at Friedrich Schiller University Jena since 2005. His main interest is the critical theory of modern society's acceleration. Rahel Jaeggi was a PhD student of Axel Honneth at the University of Frankfurt.

Her dissertation focused on the theory of alienation. She has been professor of philosophy at Humboldt University of Berlin since 2009. Axel Honneth was a research assistant to Jürgen Habermas at the University of Frankfurt's Institute of Social Research in the years 1983–1989[1] and obtained his habilitation with a work on the theory of recognition at the same university in 1990. Honneth became the director of the University of Frankfurt's Institute of Social Research in 2001 and is Professor of Philosophy.

The Frankfurt School's first generation, thinkers such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse, was directly influenced by Lukács' concept of reification. This notion had impact on Horkheimer and Adorno's concept of instrumental reason and Marcuse's notion of technological rationality. Habermas as the main representative of the Frankfurt School's second generation reinterpreted Lukács' notion in his theory of communicative action as the colonisation of the lifeworld. Honneth is the key thinker in the Frankfurt School's third generation, whereas Jaeggi and Rosa can be considered to be fourth generation critical theorists. The question arises how the third and fourth generation, the theoretical heirs of Adorno, Horkheimer and Habermas, understand alienation. I deal with this question in sections 2 and 3.

In section 4, I try to outline some foundations of a dialectical, materialist and Hegelian concept of alienation that is based on Honneth's approach, but simultaneously quite substantially departs from it. In section 5, I use this approach for reflecting on alienation and the Internet with the help of the example of corporate social media.

5.2. Lukács' Theory of Reification and Alienation

5.2.1. Objectification and Alienation

Georg Lukács (1971) argues in the preface to the 1967 edition of *History and Class Consciousness* that he wrote the book before publication of Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* and that the latter changed his view of this reification and alienation. It would be necessary to discern between objectification and alienation. The first would be part of any production process in any society: 'If we bear in mind that every externalization of an object in practice (and hence, too, in work) is an objectification, that every human expression including speech objectifies human thoughts and feelings, then it is clear the we are dealing with a universal mode of commerce between men' (Lukács 1971, xxiv).

The use of the term 'commerce' is unfortunate in the English translation. The German original says 'Verkehr[s] der Menschen miteinander' (Lukács 1967, 26), which can best be translated as 'forms of intercourse among humans', a term that has often been used in the English translation of Marx's term 'Verkehrsform'. Translating 'Verkehr' as 'commerce' creates the impression that Lukács reifies market societies, although his very thinking is anti-reifying.

Alienation is for Lukács based on Marx's chapter on commodity fetishism in *Capital Volume 1*, a form of objectification that takes on dominative and class character:

> Only when the objectified forms in society acquire functions that bring the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man's nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation and, as an inexorable consequence, of all the subjective marks of an internal alienation (Lukács 1971, xxiv).

The commodity structure conceals 'every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people' so that 'a relation between people takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a "phantom objectivity"' (Lukács 1971, 83). In the modern rationalisation of the labour process, there is a 'mathematical analysis of work-processes' so that qualities are reduced to quantities that '*can be calculated*' (88). The measurement of labour time is decisive in this context. 'The transformation of the commodity relation into a thing of "ghostly objectivity" cannot therefore content itself with the reduction of all object for the gratification of human needs to commodities. It stamps its imprint upon the whole consciousness of man' (100). 'Reification requires that a society should learn to satisfy all its needs in terms of commodity exchange' (91), which includes 'the separation of the producer from his means of production' (91), etc. Reification tries to eliminate qualities, dialectical logic, and non-instrumental action from the economy and society as a whole.

Authors in the newer generation of German critical theory, such as Axel Honneth, Rahel Jaeggi and Hartmut Rosa, have revived Marx's concept of alienation. Jaeggi and Rosa argue that there is no essence to which one needs to returns to and that is predetermined, but that in appropriation one creates the self and the world. They have problems with Lukács' objectivist understanding of Marx and a notion of alienation that is grounded in Hegel's dialectic of essence and existence. Honneth, in contrast, takes an approach more inspired by Hegel and Lukács that assumes that there is an essence of the human and social world that is important for a moral philosophy.

5.2.2. Hartmut Rosa and Rahel Jaeggi on Alienation

For Hartmut Rosa (2012, 300–323), acceleration results in contemporary modernity in a five-fold alienation from space, things, our own actions, time (e.g. lack of time), and social relations. The social theorist would not have to identify 'true needs', but to analyse disappointments of human expectations. 'According to my analysis, we are not alienated from our true inner essence, but from our ability to appropriate the world in its spatial, temporal, social, practical and objective dimensions'[2] (Rosa 2012, 322, translation from German).

For Rahel Jaeggi (2005, 14), alienation means a form of appropriation of society, an ethical perspective of how to change the world, whereas Kant's concept of autonomy neglects social institutions and their pathologies as well as the harms they cause. She argues that the critique of alienation is connected to the question of how we want to live (Jaeggi 2005, 14). The alienation concept has an objective and a subjective meaning (41): the loss of power and the loss of sense/meaning. Alienation is for her not a lack of relations, but a relationship to something, albeit 'a relationship of unrelatedness'³ (19, 43, translation from German). For Jaeggi, there are two main problems of the concept of alienation: a) the objective definition of what is good independent from human self-definitions, b) the notion of reconciliation with an original essence. The notion of alienation as estrangement from an essence was according to Jaeggi first formulated by Rousseau and then also by Hegel, Marx, Lukács, Heidegger, and the Frankfurt School. The problem would be that a prescription of what is good for humans would be an objectivistic-perfectionistic paternalism (47).

Jaeggi wants to have a *qualified subjective* notion of alienation that gives up metaphysics and the notions of essence and reconciliation. Alienation for her has to do with *the conditions of successful relations to oneself and the world* (51) and Ernst Tugendhat's question: can we control ourselves in what we want? (52). Such an approach would take human wants seriously, but also have the possibility to question them (58–59). Alienation means for Jaeggi obstructions of the realisation of what one wants (53). It obstructs the positive freedom to determine oneself. 'Alienation is prevented appropriation of the world and the self'⁴ (Jaeggi 2005, 183). It means that one cannot relate to and appropriate one's own preconditions (185). Self-alienation is a lack of *power* of and *presence* in what one does, lack of *identification* with one's own actions and wants or lacking participation in one's own life.

Jaeggi understands appropriation as something active that changes the thing that is appropriated (56–57) and creates the self (184). One's wishes, interests and actions take place in the world. Therefore self-appropriation would also be appropriation of the world (Jaeggi 2005, 184). Appropriation is a process with open results (185). The self is relational (197), so self-appropriation is a change of social relations so that one is empowered in social relations. Self-appropriation means that we can articulate ourselves in the world and in our social relations (198) and that one becomes and is *present* in one's own actions, *controls* one's life, *appropriates* social roles, can *identify* with one's wants, and is *involved* in the world (187). The self that is appropriated does not already exist as essence, but is created in the process of self-appropriation (Jaeggi 2005, 184) and invented in this process (self-invention).

5.2.3. Limits of Revised Concepts of Alienation

Rosa and Jaeggi share the critique of Hegel's, Marx's and Lukács' notions of alienation. They therefore cannot qualify objective social conditions as true or false independent of human consciousness, which makes it difficult to make

moral judgements in situations when protest is forestalled and the slaves love their masters. Rosa and Jaeggi argue for de-Hegelianising and de-Lukácianising the notion of alienation, which takes out the potential of universalism and makes alienation a cultural contextual, relative, purely immanent and non-universal concept that lacks transcendental and universal potentials. Honneth (2007a) argues that Foucault, under the influence of Nietzsche, brought about a shift in social philosophy that displays 'a distaste for universalism' (39), but whose problem is that 'normative criteria remain on the whole […] obscure and […] overshadowed by epistemological perspectivism' (40). The task for a critical theory would be to ground principles that allow 'to assess certain developments in social life as pathologies in a context-transcending way' (42) so that 'institutions and practices can be taken as 'pathological' for the very reason that, upon unbiased reflection, they contradict the conditions of the good life' (60).

Rosa and Jaeggi's approaches bring up the question: how should one understand the notion of strangeness in estrangement and Fremdheit in entfremden? What is the origin or essence that one is estranged from in class-based societies? Alienation implies that one has externalised something, e.g. activity, to whose control one has a moral right. Externalisation in alienated social relations is lost control because objectification is combined with asymmetric power relations that result in a loss of ownership of property, political influence, and cultural significance in the economic, political, and cultural system that in all societies are created by humans in common, but in class-based societies controlled by elites. One does not have to give up the notion of essence for a theory of alienation because it can be interpreted as an immanent feature of all societies that has transcendental importance. Reconciliation means to take control of what humans have produced, but cannot control in class-based societies. In a classless society, not elites, but the creators themselves, control objects. The logic of essence goes to the ground of humanity and society in order to show what capitalism and domination rob from humans so that they can no longer be fully social and as humans are social beings not fully social.

Rosa and Jaeggi fail to provide foundations for a universal, critical and dialectical theory of morality. I will try to show next that Axel Honneth's reinterpretation of Lukács is not without problems, but shares basic insights with the Hegelian approach so that it can be connected to a materialist and dialectical moral theory.

5.3. Axel Honneth's Interpretation of Lukács' Concept of Reification in the Critical Theory of Recognition

5.3.1. Honneth's Theory of Recognition

Honneth bases his theory on the assumption that humans are psychological beings that strive for 'self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem' (Honneth 1992, 196) and suffer if they are disrespected. He subdivides recognition into

three forms: love, equality, and achievement. Honneth (1996) grounds this approach in the works of Hegel and George Herbert Mead. He argues that both Hegel and Mead advanced stage theories of recognition, in which there are three forms of recognition that build on each other. For Hegel these are the recognition of the need for love provided in the family, the recognition of human autonomy in civil society and the legal system, and the recognition of individual particularity by the state and in ethical life and processes of solidarity (Honneth 1996, 25). The absence of such forms or recognition would be the foundation of struggles for recognition.

For Mead, the three crucial forms of recognition are love, legal rights, and solidarity (Honneth 1996, 94). Honneth (1996, 129) reformulates Hegel and Mead's approaches and argues that emotional support provided by the family and friends, cognitive respect by legal rights, and social esteem given by solidary communities of value are the three modes of recognition in society.

> Taken together, the three forms of recognition – love, rights, and esteem – constitute the social conditions under which human subjects can develop a positive attitude towards themselves. For it is only due to the cumulative acquisition of basic self-confidence, of self-respect, and of self-esteem – provided, one after another, by the experience of those three forms of recognition – that a person can come to see himself or herself, unconditionally, as both an autonomous and an individuated being and to identify with his or her goals and desires (169).

Social recognition would be the 'presupposition of all communicative action' (Honneth 2007a, 71). Disrespect would mean a lack of recognition. In relation to the three dimensions of social activity, disrespect would mean abuse and rape, exclusion and the denial or rights, denigration and insult (Honneth 1996, 129).

Honneth (1996, 94) argues that the distinction of three realms of society can be found in many social theories, not just in Hegel and Mead's works. Therefore 'a division of social life into three spheres of interaction has a high degree of plausibility' (94). Honneth however argues that it 'is evidently quite natural to distinguish forms of social integration according to whether they occur via emotional bonds, the granting of rights, or a shared orientation to values' (94).

5.3.2. Marx and Recognition

Honneth (1996) argues that Marx discusses the struggle for recognition in a 'narrowed version' (146) that focuses on the alienation caused by the proletariat's lack of control over the means of production. 'Marx narrows Hegel's mode of the "struggle for recognition" in the direction of an aesthetic of production' (148). By 'reducing the goals of class struggle to only those demands that are directly connected to the organization of social labour, he made it easy

to abstract from all the political concerns stemming from the violation of moral claims as such' (149). Certainly there are not just class struggles, but also other political struggles in heteronomous societies. But Honneth disregards the fact that all structures, including decision-making structures and morals, are the outcome of social co-production processes, which gives a special relevance to the notion of production that Marx foregrounds in his theory and that Honneth rather neglects in favour of the concept of recognition.

So Honneth claims that Marx has an economic reductionist theory of society, but the dimensions of work and the economy are rather missing in his own theory of recognition. His book from 1996 does not make evident how his distinction between emotions/rights/esteem relates to the realm of the production and control of use-values that satisfy human needs, i.e. the realm of work, which renders his approach prone to the accusation that it is a form of philosophical idealism that disregards society's materiality.

5.3.3. Honneth and Habermas' Distinction between System and Lifeworld

Although Honneth (1996) does not make it explicitly evident in *The Struggle for Recognition*, his approach seems to presuppose Habermas' distinction between system integration and social integration. Habermas bases his categories of the system and the lifeworld on this differentiation.

> I have proposed that we distinguish between *social integration and system integration:* the former attaches to action orientations, while the latter reaches right through them. In one case the action system is integrated through consensus, whether normatively guaranteed or communicatively achieved; in the other case it is integrated through the non-normative steering of individual decisions not subjectively coordinated (Habermas 1987, 150).

Although Habermas can account for the reification of communication as the colonisation of the lifeworld, he separates the systems of the economy and politics from the realm of communication, arguing that communication is pure, non-instrumental, and emancipatory. Communication is however part of systems of accumulation and domination. There is a whole field of studies termed 'strategic communication' – defined as the 'purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfill its mission' (Hallahan et al. 2007, 3), which includes the four clusters of corporate communication, marketing/advertising/public relations, business communication skills, and organisational communication. Strategic communication focuses on how to use communication in order to accumulate monetary capital, which shows that communication is also a tool and instrument for system integration, rendering the distinction between social and system inte-

gration meaningless. For Habermas, colonisation is a process, in which money and power substitute and replace communicative action. But in reality, communication often mediates the accumulation of money and power and thereby has itself an instrumental character.

So if one assumes that Honneth leaves out aspects of the economy because he sees it as part of systems integration and only wants to cover social integration, then this separation fails theoretically. If however he thinks of social integration as covering all aspects of society, then the economy and work are the blind spots of his theory. In both cases, his approach does not adequately account for the production of social life and the role of economic processes in it.

5.3.4. Recognition, the Economy and Work

Whereas Honneth focuses in *The Struggle for Recognition* (Honneth 1996) on recognition as love provided by the family, rights provided by the legal system, and esteem provided by communities of value and tends to ignore a direct discussion of the economy, work and exploitation, he gives more attention to these issues in his book *The I in We* (Honneth 2014). He argues that liberal theories of justice tend to be individualistic by assuming that distribution of resources must account for 'ensuring individual autonomy' (39) and individual freedom so that everyone enjoys enough private property and 'the use or enjoyment of goods' (38). Distributive justice is reduced to possessive individualism.

For Honneth, autonomy is in contrast relational and intersubjective (41) and can only be achieved by individuals recognising each other. 'Individuals achieve self-determination by learning, within relations of reciprocal recognition, to view their needs, beliefs and abilities as worthy of articulation and pursuit in the public sphere' (46). 'It does not suffice to conceive of autonomy as arising solely from intersubjective respect for subjects' decision-making competence; rather, subjects need to be appreciated from their particular needs and individual deeds' (48).

> Alongside legal relationships, we must also include familial relationships and societal relations of work within our theory of justice. […] Just as in the egalitarian legal relations under the democratic rule of law, individuals are also obligated within the family and the exchange of services to recognize each other as free and equal (49).

A reconstructive theory of justice would need three normative principles: deliberative equality, justice of needs, and justice of achievement (49). In the realm of work, recognition would mean an '"organic" form of solidarity' because workers' 'reciprocal recognition of their respective contributions to the common good gives them a sense of being connected to each other' (69). Work

relations would not just have to be concerned with the systemic organisation of the economy, but also with social integration in the form of solidarity as mutual recognition (71–72).

Comparing the two books published in 1996 and 2014, one sees that Honneth continues to see the family and the legal system as two important realms of society, but in the second book defines the third realm no longer as communities of value, but the realm of work, i.e. the economy. Whereas in the first book, Honneth tends to speak of love, rights and esteem as the three realms of recognition, in the second one he speaks of needs, equality and achievements of work. Although in the second book he gives more attention to the economy, the question remains how the economy, politics, and everyday life are related to each other in a theory of society and justice.

Honneth (2014, 57–58) argues that the concept of labour – and thereby the true analysis of the economy – has almost disappeared from the social sciences because efforts to emancipate labour appear to have lost their credibility. Although he does not mention it explicitly, it is clear that the breakdown of 'actually existing socialism' in Eastern Europe has caused a crisis of the idea of a classless society. But at the same time, 'the hardships, fears and hopes of those immediately affected by societal working conditions revolve around this notion more than ever' (57). Neoliberalism would have resulted in the 'economization of social contexts' and new paradoxes (176). There would be a de-differentiation of private and professional life, entrepreneurs and employees ('entreployees', 179), instrumental and non-instrumental action, the private and the public, the formal and the informal (179–181). It 'becomes increasingly difficult for subjects to distinguish between instrumental and non-instrumental aspects of intersubjective relationships' (180). '[N]etwork capitalism is colonizing spheres of action that were previously distant from utility' (180). The colonisation of (almost) everything by capitalist logic calls modernity's relative separation of spheres into question.

Also in his debate with Nancy Fraser on the relationship of redistribution and recognition, Honneth argues for a '"moral" monism' (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 254), in which three spheres of society represent three forms of demands for recognition. Moral recognition is for Honneth the unifying principle of society. Love, law and achievement would be the three forms of recognition in modern society (138). The achievements created by a 'productive citizen's labour emerged in capitalist society as a 'third sphere of recognition alongside love and the new legal principle in the developing capitalist society' (141). The spheres of intimacy, the legal system and working life would bring about three forms of recognition: '"Love" (the central idea of intimate relationships), the equality principle (the norm of legal relations), and the achievement principle (the standard of social hierarchy) represent normative perspectives with reference to which subjects can reasonably argue that existing forms of recognition are inadequate or insufficient and need to be expanded' (143).

5.3.5. Honneth, Lukács, Tomasello

Axel Honneth (2008) does – in contrast to other contemporary social theorists – not drop, but (in the book *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea*) re-interpret Lukács' concepts of alienation and reification for a contemporary critical theory of society. He bases his approach on Michael Tomasello (2008)'s development psychology. Tomasello presents research based on development psychology and socialisation findings that recognition precedes cognition: children learn to take over the perspective of another, which enables thinking and communication. In the '9 month revolution', the child starts perceiving an attachment figure whose perspective s/he takes over. S/he develops an emotional relation to this person and starts relating to the world and objects by observing how the attachment figure relates to objects. The child imitates the attachment figure's behaviour. Children thereby depersonalise themselves and become social.

> At around 9 months of age, infants begin displaying a whole new suite of social behaviors, based both on their ability to understand others as intentional and rational agents like the self and on their ability to participate with others in interactions involving joint goals, intentions, and attention (shared intentionality) (Tomasello 2008, 139).

Developmental psychology confirms for Honneth that recognition by and of others and empathetic engagement precedes cognition: 'the acknowledgement of the other constitutes a non-epistemic prerequisite for linguistic understanding' (Honneth 2008, 50). Honneth says that Georg Lukács, Martin Heidegger, John Dewey, and Stanley Cavell made this point philosophically. Related to it would also be Georg Herbert Mead's concept of seeing ourselves through the eyes of the other and Adorno's notion of the libindial cathexis of a concrete other through which children develop by imitating others.

5.3.6. Three Forms of Critique

Honneth (2007b, 57–69) distinguishes between a constructive, transcendental critique; a reconstructive, immanent critique; and a Foucauldian genealogical critique. Critical theory would combine all three forms. In the debate with Fraser, he characterises this combination as immanent transcendence. Transcendence

> must be attached to a form of practice or experience which is on the one hand indispensable for social reproduction, and on the other hand – owing to its normative surplus – points beyond all given form of social organization. […] "transcendence" should be a property of "immanence" itself, so that the facticity of social relations always contains a dimension of transcending claims (Fraser and Honneth 2003, 244).

Recognition and sociality is for Honneth the immanent quality of society that allows moral judgements that can have a transcendental political meaning, i.e. constitute a political categorical imperative that society as it is, is unfair and unjust and should be politically changed.

For Honneth, reification is 'forgetfulness of recognition' (Honneth 2008, 56): we forget that our knowledge, being and cognition are based on recognition and empathetic engagement. If this knowledge is lost, then others are viewed as things (57). Honneth distinguished three forms of reification: reification in our relationship to others, nature/world, and ourselves. So for him there are intersubjective, objective, and subjective forms of alienation.

Judith Butler argues that whereas Lukács' approach is subject-oriented, Honneth's is action-theoretical and interactionist (in: Honneth 2008, 98). Both would however retain 'an Arcadian myth' of a 'before' (108). She argues that both 'love and aggression' would be 'coextensive with human being' (109). The problem with this assumption becomes evident, when considering the consequences of it. It there are two equally important substances of humans – love and aggression – then they must both equally matter in child development. This assumption applies that parents have treat their kid both with love and aggression in order that the child develops, which indirectly justifies violence against children. In contrast, Tomasello stresses the importance of love, care, and communication as primary and essential in child development. Children cannot develop without love, care, and communication. However, they develop even better if they do not experience hate, violence, and isolation. This is just another formulation for saying that love, care, and communication form human and society's social essence.

5.4. Towards a Materialist Theory of Morality as Theory of Co-operation and Social Co-Production

The bottom line of Honneth's social theory is that humans are social and moral beings and that this essence has ethical implications for what we should consider the good life. The economic, the political, and the intimate are seen as manifestations of human social and moral being. Although Honneth identifies a unifying social principle – morality – he sees the three realms of society as relatively independent on the one hand and reduces them to morality on the other hand. There is not doubt that sociality is a crucial dimension of society's materiality: human beings cannot exist in isolation, but only in social relations. Humans are capable of distinguishing what is good and bad and so make assessments of the qualities of their social and natural environments that guide their actions. Morality is however just one feature of the human. Another crucial aspect is that humans are self-conscious beings that actively create, recreate and transform the social and natural world. They are producing and working beings.

5.4.1. Lukács: Teleological Positing

Georg Lukács has in his *Ontology of Social Being* therefore characterised human activity as 'teleological positing' that results in 'the rise of a new objectivity' (Lukács 1978, 3). Human production is teleological because in it a 'conscious creator' (human beings) produces with a purpose, orientation and goal (5).

Such goals are not necessarily instrumental and aimed at domination. For example peace, love, care and understanding are also goals. Human activity presupposes that humans reflect on how, why and what they want to produce in the world. Lukács considers teleological positing (the conscious and active production of changes by realising subjective intentions in the objective world) as a common feature of work and communication, i.e. the economy and culture. There is an 'ontological similarity of base and superstructure as they are both based on teleological positings and their causal effects'[5] (Lukács 1986, 424). In the economy, where work creates goods, the intentional goals tend to be much more clearly defined, whereas in culture, where communication influences social behaviour, there is much more scope for what is considered desirable and undesirable, for 'reactions to societal matters of fact, situations, tasks, etc.'[6] (Lukács 1986, 417). Lukács says that in the economy, the value of a product depends on whether it is 'immediately useful or non-useful, whereas in artistic creation the field and possibilities of value and non-value are extraordinarily widely stretched and hardly determinable in advance'[7] (535).

Conscious and active production is an inherently social activity in society. Lukács' notion of teleological positing allows overcoming the separation of work and ideas. Teleological positing is a production of physical, social, and informational use-values that satisfy human needs. We can take from Honneth the insight that many social theories agree that there are three realms of society and combine it with Lukács' insight that production as social process of teleological positing creates the unity of these spheres. Honneth's moral idealism that sees the importance of sociality can thereby be turned into a materialist ethics and social theory. Humans produce use-values that satisfy human needs in the economy, collective decisions in the political system, and meanings/definitions of the world (including moral judgments and identities) in the cultural system. Use-values, collective decisions, and definitions are the fundamental objects posited by human social activities in the three realms of society. The three realms of the economy, politics and culture are however not independent: economic activities posit use-values, collective decisions and definitions however also use-values satisfying the needs of organisation and understanding.

5.4.2. Political and Cultural Production

Political and cultural production are economic and non-economic at the same time: both require political and cultural workers that create together with others

political and cultural objects. These objects do however not just have an economic role, but as rules and definitions shape society outside of the economy too. Politics and culture have an economic foundation and emergent, non-economic qualities (Fuchs 2015, chapters 2 and 3).

What are the implications of this approach for moral theory? How can we ground ethics in such a materialist and dialectical theory of society? Hegel argues that the world is often not what it appears to be, but that its truth lies hidden behind immediate existence. The essence is a 'background' that 'constitutes the truth of being' (Hegel 1812/1833, 337). For Hegel, not everything that exists is actual. Actuality is rather an existence that corresponds to its essence, the truth of a phenomenon: 'Actuality is the unity, become immediate, of essence and existence, or of what is inner and what is outer' (Hegel 1830, §142). In contrast to poststructuralism, Honneth does not give up on the notions of essence and alienation, but rather seeks to ground them in society itself as immanent standard of ethical judgement that allows principles that can transcend dominative relations towards a just, good and fair society. He finds this the immanent essence of society in the social recognition that all humans – already as children – experience in their socialisation. Love, rights and solidarity are the basic forms of recognition that as a unity for him forms moral human essence. Reification means social relations that forget the need for recognition and thereby humiliate and disrespect others.

5.4.3. Social Production and Co-Production

The missing link in Honneth's theory is social production. Humans not just mutually recognise themselves in order to exist, they together produce the social world in processes of co-operation. No individual and no society can exist and survive without a basic level of co-operation, i.e. the solidary working together of humans in order to achieve certain goals. A club of egoistic individuals that only compete and do not aim to collaborate will sooner or later end up in constant warfare, violence, and hatred. It will not be socially sustainable, but rather destroy itself. This thought experiment shows that social co-production of the world is society's essence. If we apply Hegel's dialectical logic of essence and existence as moral principle, then this means that co-operation as the principle of social co-production of society is society's essence. In relations of domination and exploitation, humans encounter each other negatively so that one person or group tries to benefit themselves at the expense of others. The result is that certain humans are reified, they are reduced to the status of instruments and things that serve particularistic interests.

Axel Honneth shows the importance of the logic of essence and of the social as the essence of society and humans. Morally recognising each other is however just one form of co-producing the world. In processes of communication, humans can encounter each other and co-produce joint understandings of the

world. Recognition is the cultural process of co-producing the world. Humans however also need to engage in collaborative work that creates use-values in the economy and in political debates and governance that creates collective decisions in the political system. If social systems take on a co-operative character at a whole and eliminate domination, then they correspond to their essence. This essence is morally grounded within society itself. It is an immanent standard of morality. A true economy is therefore commonly owned and controlled, a true political system commonly governed, and a true cultural system – one that fosters mutual understanding and recognition. The ethical implication is that capitalism, dictatorships, and fundamentalisms are false forms of economic, political and cultural interaction.

5.4.4. Reification

Reification is the process in which classes and elites separate humans and society from their essence. It brings 'the essence of man into conflict with his existence, only when man's nature is subjugated, deformed and crippled can we speak of an objective societal condition of alienation' (Lukács 1971, xxiv). Whereas reification is the process that implements domination, alienation is the condition that results from reification. If humans appropriate their own essence in social struggles, then they do not return to a historical origin that once existed and was lost, but they struggle for social conditions that enable a humane existence and correspond to the immanent co-operative standards of sociality itself. Social struggles in class-based societies are struggles with potential results that lie on a spectrum between alienated and appropriated social conditions.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 give an overview of processes of reification and appropriation in society's three realms. The general distinction is the one between social systems that are alienated and that are under common control. Alienation means that humans do not control basic social structures in a way that advances the common good so that a particular class or elite is in control and takes advantage of others.

5.4.5. Three Subsystems of Society – Three Dimensions of Reification

Honneth (2008) distinguished three forms of reification: reification in our relationship to others, the world, and ourselves. So for him there are intersubjective, objective and subjective forms of alienation. This distinction points towards the dialectic of subject and object in social processes: human subjects have their own identities and personalities, based on which they encounter each other in the social world and in processes of social activity create, reproduce and transform the objective world. They co-produce the social world in processes of teleological co-positing. Human subjects interact in the social world and thereby co-produce objects.

FORMS OF ALIENATION/ REIFICATION	Subject (experiences, emotions, attitudes)	Intersubjectivity (social agency and interaction)	Object (structures, products)	Struggles
Economic reifi-cation	Work dissatis-faction	Lack of control/ alienation of labour-power: exploitation	Lack of control/ alienation of the means of production and output: propertyless-ness	Individual: anti-capital-ism Social: Unionisa-tion, class struggles
Political reifica-tion	Political dis-satisfaction	Lack of control/ alienation of political power: disempowerment and exclusion	Lack of control/ alienation of decisions: centralisation of power	Individual: politicisation Social: social movements, protests, parties, revolutions
Cultural reifica-tion	Cultural discontent	Lack of control/ alienation of influential com-munication: insignificance of voice, disrespect, malrecognition	Lack of control/ alienation of public ideas, meanings and values: centralisation of information	Individual: cultural literacy Social: struggles for recognition

Table 5.1: Forms of reification/alienation in society's three realms.

Exploitation is alienation and reification's economic form, political domi-nation its political form, and the two forms of cultural domination (cultural imperialism: unity without diversity; cultural fragmentation: diversity without unity) constitute cultural alienation. A commons-based economy, participa-tory democracy and cultural understanding (unity in diversity) are true social forms, in which social existence corresponds to its essence and humans have appropriated this essence.

In an alienated economic system, humans are exploited and produce property that is owned by a dominant class. In a self-managed economy, humans co-pro-duce, co-own and co-control property. In an alienated political system, an elite centralises political decision-making power and excludes citizens. In an appropri-ated political system, people have the power and co-decide in a system of participa-tory democracy, which constitutes political rights. In an alienated cultural system, an elite centralises meaning, making it so that others' identities and moral values are disregarded and disrespected. In an appropriated cultural system, humans co-produce meanings of the world, mutually understand and morally recognise each other so that a unity in diversity of lifestyles and moral values exists.

FORMS OF APPROPRIA-TION	Subject (experiences, emotions, attitudes)	Intersubjectivy (social agency and interaction)	Object (structures, products)	Struggles
Economic appropriation	Self-realisation	Self-control of labour-power: self-management	Self-control of means of production and output: democratic socialism	Individual: anti-capitalism Social: Unionisation
Political appro-priation	Active citi-zens	Self-control of power: people power	Self-control of decisions: participatory democracy	Individual: politicisation Social: social movements, protests, par-ties, revolu-tions
Cultural appro-priation	General intel-lectuals	Self-control of influential com-munication: involvement, mutual under-standing, respect and recognition	Self-control of public ideas and values: cultural pub-lic sphere	Individual: cultural lit-eracy Social: struggles for recognition

Table 5.2: Forms of appropriation in society's three realms.

5.4.6. Subjective Alienation

At the level of subjectivity, humans experience the world through their behav-
iours. They also emotionally interpret the world. Humans can feel alienated or
non-alienated in an objectively alienated or non-alienated world. Objective and
intersubjective alienation can, but does not necessarily have to result in emo-
tionally experienced alienation. Slave workers, citizens in a dictatorship and
people in a theocracy do not necessarily hate the slave masters, dictators, and
theocrats. Physical, structural and ideological violence can make them accept
domination, which can also result in a moral accommodation with their situ-
ation so that they cannot imagine a different situation and feel emotionally at
ease with the dominant order. Objective alienation however nurtures poten-
tials for emotional alienation, i.e. emotional experiences of dissatisfying labour,
political dissatisfaction and cultural discontent.
    Such subjective alienation may just express itself as apathy, disinterestedness,
or apathy. It can however, especially in situations of crisis, also nurture poten-
tials for politicisation and political engagement. Reflection, social ruptures and

movements can trigger individual empowerment (anti-capitalism, politicisa-tion, cultural literacy) that at a social level can as aggregated and networked social phenomenon result in class struggles, political protests and struggles for recognition. There is no guarantee that such struggles are successful. If they however are successful, then non-alienated social conditions can be the result. There can however also be counter-struggles so that non-alienated conditions can turn into alienated ones.

Non-alienated subjectivity means self-realising activity, active citizenship and general intellectuality. General intellect means not just a high level of gen-eral education and intellectual engagement, but also moral intelligibility so that humans provide recognition of each other. Humans can feel non-alienated in alienated social conditions: an employee may, for example, love his/her job and feel it's a form of self-realisation and therefore accept that the company owners get richer and richer from the many hours of unpaid overtime in the com-pany and the long working hours that damage his/her social life outside profes-sional life. In such a situation, economic self-realisation can come along with social alienation in the realm of culture and everyday life that expresses itself for example in a lack of friendships, family life, sexual satisfaction, etc. Another example is that active citizens can feel happy in fostering a racist right-wing extremist political agenda that aims to harm immigrants. They feel emotion-ally non-alienated at the political level, but advance an alienated political sys-tem. Honneth argues in this context that social recognition can 'just as well be sought in small militaristic groups, whose code of honor is dominated by the practice of violence, as it can be in the public arenas of a democratic society' (Honneth 2007a, 77). Struggles for appropriated social systems must take into account the fact that humans are only truly at home in society when they feel individually satisfied and exist under intersubjective and objective conditions that are commonly controlled and benefit all. This can require disrespect for structures and practices that foster disrespect and respect for those that disre-spect disrespect.

Given these basic reflections on alienation, the question arises how this con-cepts matters for the critical analysis of mediated communication.

5.5. The Media, Alienation and Morality

I want to discuss the question how alienation relates to the media with a specific example, namely Facebook. Facebook is the world's most widely used social networking site and Internet platforms. It enables registered users to share and comment on content with their network of contacts. It is an expression of the blurring of the boundaries between the public and the private, the home and the workplace, work time and leisure time, labour and leisure, production and consumption (Fuchs 2015, chapter 8): Facebook brings together activities and contacts from such different realms on the same profiles, which enables users

to observe people not just in the social roles they are familiar with them, but also other ones. It is however mistaken to see Facebook as a communications company: it does not sell communication or access to communication, but user data and targeted advert space. Facebook is one of the world's largest advertising agencies.

5.5.1. Mark Andrejevic and Eran Fisher on Digital Alienation

Some authors have discussed what alienation means in the world of Facebook. Mark Andrejevic (2012) argues that corporate social media only promise to overcome alienation, but in reality constitute digital alienation, a 'form of the enclosure of the digital commons' (84). 'Users have little choice over whether this [surveillance] data is generated and little say in how it is used' (85). Such 'external, storable, and sortable collection of data about' users' 'social lives' is 'separated from us and stored in servers owned and controlled by, for example, Facebook' (2011, 88). 'The result of the form of separation facilitated by Facebook is […] the alienability of the product of their online social activity: the fact that the fruits of this activity can become a resource whose uses range far beyond their control' (88). 'The data shadow is a figure of the alienated self' (Andrejevic 2014, 182) and results in 'algorithmic alienation' (189) that determines life chances based on data mining, big data analysis and statistical correlations.

   Eran Fisher (2012) in contrast to Mark Andrejevic argues that alienation 'signals an existential state of not being in control over something (the labour process, the product, etc.)' (173). Less 'alienation refers to a greater possibility to express oneself, to control one's production process, to objectify one's essence and connect and communicate with others. Thus, for example, working on one's Facebook page can be thought of as less alienating than working watching a television program' (173).

> The two processes that SNS [social networking sites] facilitate – the exacerbation of exploitation and the mitigation of alienation – are not simply co-present but are dialectically linked. SNS establish new relations of production that are based on a dialectical link between exploitation and alienation: in order to be de-alienated, users must communicate and socialize: they must establish social networks, share information, talk to their friends and read their posts, follow and be followed. By thus doing they also exacerbate their exploitation (179).

5.5.2. Nine Forms of Alienation on Facebook

Andrejevic and Fisher both take a critical theory perspective and agree that Facebook usage means exploitation of users' digital labour (see also: Fuchs 2014a, 2014b, 2015). They however have different understandings of aliena-

tion and therefore conceive Facebook either as alienated (Andrejevic) or de-alienated (Fisher). My argument is that these claims are not mutually exclusive in a dialectical concept of alienation. Honneth's distinction between subjective, intersubjective, and objective alienation helps us to map these differences: Andrejevic refers to the objective dimension (data as objects), whereas Fisher refers to subjective experiences. Table 5.3 outlines nine dimensions of alienation on Facebook.

On an intersubjective and objective level, alienation on Facebook means on the economic level the exploitation of users' digital labour that generates a data commodity and thereby value and the loss of control over how their data is used. On the political level, objective and intersubjective alienation refers to the

FORMS OF ALIENATION/ REIFICATION	Subjects' attitudes and feelings		Intersubjectivity (social agency and interaction)	Object (structures, products)
Economic reification	Feeling of alienation: "Facebook exploits me!"	Feeling of non-alienation: "Facebook is fun and voluntary and gives me social advantages. Therefore I do not feel exploited".	Exploitation of users' digital labour; users' non-ownership of platforms	Users' lack of control over the use of personal data
Political reification	Feeling of alienation: "The surveillance-industrial complex that Facebook is part of threatens freedom!"	Feeling of non-alienation: "For greater security, we have to give up some privacy. I therefore don't mind state surveillance of social media".	Political control and surveillance of citizens' communication	Citizens' lack of control over how political institutions regulate the Internet, establishment of a surveillance-industrial complex
Cultural reification	Feeling of alienation: "Facebook is mindless babble, narcissistic self-presentation and showing off!"	Feeling of non-alienation: "Facebook is a great form of socialising with other people!"	Asymmetric visibility of users that favours celebrities, corporations and powerful institutions	Asymmetric influence on public meaning making, centralised online attention structures and online visibility

Table 5.3: Nine dimensions of alienation on Facebook.

existence of a surveillance-industrial complex, in which Facebook and other communications companies collaborate, as Edward Snowden has shown, with state institutions such as the police and secret services in order to make a large amount of online communications visible to the state, which threatens liberal freedoms and shatters liberalism's promises. On the cultural level, objective and intersubjective alienation means that attention and online visibility that enable meaning-making are asymmetrically distributed so that everyday users are at a disadvantage and celebrities and powerful organisations at an advantage.

Corporate social media have a contradictory character: they enable users to easier stay and get in touch with others at the micro-level of everyday life, which enhances the quality of their lives, but at the same time this advantage comes at the price of digital economic, political and cultural alienation and reified data that serve purposes that allow powerful organisations to exploit, control and exclude the large mass of users. Given that these forms of domination are data-mediated, they tend not to be immediately visible and experienceable by the users. You do not feel and see that your data is a commodity, that the state stores and accesses citizens' communications, and how many people talk about what you have posted on Facebook or about what the marketing teams of Shakira or Eminem, who have pages that are among the most 'liked' ones, have published.

The subjective level of alienation refers to the experiences and attitudes of users, i.e. if they feel alienated when using Facebook. Attitudes can in this respect be alienated, non-alienated, or a combination of both. Table 5.3 indicates prototypical attitudes. Alienated and non-alienated subjectivity in respect to Facebook do not necessarily exclude each other: users can think that social media sociality as such is advantageous, but that such platforms are problematic if they foster exploitation, surveillance, control and exclusion. Such an attitude implies on the level of political organisation the demand for an alternative form of design and organisation.

5.5.3. Digital Fetishism

The political problem is that it is easier to perceive Facebook as less alienating than a nuclear power plant that pollutes a river or lake. You can more easily use and enjoy Facebook, even when it exploits and monitors you, but you cannot swim in a nuclear contaminated lake or drink its water without seriously threatening your health. The damages caused by digital alienation are more indirect, mediated, long-term, and invisible. This does however not imply that they are unproblematic, but rather that they are more difficult to challenge and contest in social struggles. Users who argue that Facebook is great because it is social and that they therefore do not feel or do not mind digital exploitation, surveillance and exclusion express a partial truth, namely that social media can pose social advantages. At the same time their consciousness is reified because they cannot

see beyond immediacy, only think about immediate individual advantages and not about the disadvantages that some users may unjustly suffer for example from being excluded from obtaining a mortgage, losing their jobs or being suspected of terrorism because of data mined from social media and analysed with predictive algorithms by credit scoring companies, employers or state institutions.

Digital fetishism means that the immediacy of online sociality enabled by digital media veils the realities of digital exploitation, control, surveillance and exclusion that are more abstract. Digital media's concrete social and communicative use-value obscures the more abstract forms of digital commodities and power that underpin usage.

5.6. Conclusion

Axel Honneth has reformulated Georg Lukács' theory of reification and alienation in a critical theory of recognition. Recognition is for him the social essence of society that grounds a moral theory that allows moral standards for criticising the disrespect for care, rights and solidarity. The advantage of this theory is that it is based on the distinction of three subdomains of society, reformulates Hegel's dialectic of essence of existence in moral theory and thereby transcends postmodern moral relativism, stresses the importance of sociality as moral essence, and distinguishes between alienation's subjective, intersubjective, and objective dimensions.

Honneth's moral monism however also makes recognition and morality the foundation of society and thereby ignores the importance of humans' co-production of the social world and the relevance of the economy in society as being simultaneously part and no-part of all social systems. I have reformulated basic assumptions of theoretical concepts of morality and alienation in a way that takes social co-production and co-operation to be the essence of humans and society. Based on this foundation, I have identified nine dimensions of alienation along the distinction between economy, politics, and culture on one axis and the subject, intersubjective communication and the object on another axis. Social struggles can challenge alienation and result in humans' appropriation of the conditions that shape their lives.

The example of Facebook shows that alienation has not ceased to exist in the world of digital media, but has become more complex. The exploitation of digital labour, the surveillance-industrial complex and centralised online visibility constitute forms of digital alienation. The contradictory and mediated character of the online world makes it sometimes difficult for users to perceive and describe objectively alienated digital conditions as such. They tend tend to mistake digital alienation for digital freedom. Digital fetishism and digital alienation can only be overcome by social struggles that aim at appropriating the Internet and put it into the control of users. Digital media that are alternatively designed, shaped and used can advance achieving and living commonism,

participatory democracy, mutual understanding and respect. Attaining such a world requires not just alternative projects and social movements, but also political parties, programmes and demands that make media reforms that enable and provide space, time and resources for alternatives.

Notes

[1] http://philosophy.columbia.edu/directories/faculty/axel-honneth

[2] German original: 'Nach meiner Analyse sind wir nicht von unserem wahren inneren Wesen entfremdet, sondern von unserer Fähigkeit, uns die Welt in ihren räumlichen, zeitlichen, sozialen, handlungspraktischen und dinglichen Dimensionen "anzuverwandeln"' (Rosa 2012, 322).

[3] German original: 'Beziehung der Beziehungslosigkeit'.

[4] Translation from German: 'Entfremdung ist verhinderte Welt- und Selbstaneignung'.

[5] Translation from German: 'ontologischen Gleichartigkeit von Basis und Überbau, daß sie nämlich beide auf teleologischen Setzungen und deren kausalen Folgen beruhen'.

[6] Translation from German: 'Spielraum gewünschter (oder unerwünschter) Reaktionen auf gesellschaftliche Tatbestände, Situationen, Aufgaben etc.'

[7] Translation from German: 'daß auf je einer konkreten Produktionsstufe der Wert des Produkts der Arbeit sich scharf danach scheidet, ob es unmittelbar brauchbar oder unbrauchbar ist, während im künstlerischen Schaffen das Feld, die Möglichkeit von Wert oder Unwert außerordentlich weit gestreckt, im voraus kaum bestimmbar ist'.

References

Andrejevic, Mark. 2011. 'Social Network Exploitation'. In *A Networked Self*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi, 82–102. New York: Routledge.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2012. 'Exploitation in the Data Mine'. In *Internet and Surveillance: The Challenges of Web 2.0 and Social Media*, ed. Christian Fuchs, Kees Boersma, Anders Albrechtslund and Marisol Sandoval, 71–88. New York: Routledge.

Andrejevic, Mark. 2014. 'Alienation's Returns'. In *Critique, Social Media and the Information Society*, ed. Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval, 179–190. New York: Routledge

Fisher, Eran. 2012. 'How Less Alienation Creates More Exploitation? Audience Labour on Social Network Sites'. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 10 (2): 171–183.

Fraser, Nancy and Axel Honneth. 2003. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange.* London: Verso.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2011. *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies*. London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014a. *Digital Labour and Karl Marx*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014b. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hallahan, Kirk et al. 2007. 'Defining Strategic Communication'. *International Journal of Strategic Communication* 1 (1): 3–35.

Hegel, Georg Willhelm Friedrich. 1830. *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part 1: The Encyclopaedia Logic.* Indianapolis, IN: Hackett.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1812/1833. *The Science of Logic.* Edited and translated by George di Giovanni. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Honneth, Axel. 2007a. *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Polity.

Honneth, Axel. 2007b. *Pathologien der Vernunft: Geschichte und Gegenwart der Kritischen Theorie.* Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp.

Honneth, Axel. 2008. *Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea (With Commentaries by Judith Butler, Raymond Geuss and Jonathan Lear).* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Honneth, Axel. 2014. *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*. Cambridge: Polity.

Honneth, Axel. 1992. 'Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition'. *Political Theory* 20 (2): 187–201.

Honeth, Axel. 1996. *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts.* Cambridge: Polity.

Jaeggi, Rahel. 2005. *Entfremdung. Zur Aktualität eines sozialphilosophischen Problems.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus.

Lukács, Georg. 1967. Vorwort. In *Georg Lukács Werke, Band 2: Frühschriften II: Geschichte und Klassenbewußtsein*, 11–41. Luchterhand.

Lukács, Georg. 1971 [1923]. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin.

Lukács, Georg. 1978. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*. London: Merlin.

Lukács, Georg. 1986. *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. Zweiter Halbband Bände. Georg Lukács Werke, Band 14*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Rosa, Hartmut. 2012. *Weltbeziehungen im Zeitalter der Beschleunigung. Umrisse einer neuen Gesellschaftskritik.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Tomasello, Michael. 2008. *Origins of Human Communication*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

CHAPTER 6

Beyond Habermas: Rethinking Critical Theories of Communication

6.1. Introduction

6.1.1. Information Society or Capitalism?

One can often hear that we live in an information or knowledge society. These claims are overstated and often driven by businesses expectations that digital media is an investment area that can help achieving large profits. In 2014, 13.1 per cent of the 2,000 largest transnational corporations' revenues and 17.3 per cent of their profits were located in the information sector.[1]

The FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) sector held 19.8% of the revenues, 24.0 per cent were held by the mobilities industry,[2] and 21.7 per cent by the classical manufacturing sector. These sectors' shares of the 2,000 largest TNCs combined profits were 33.5 per cent (FIRE), 19.0 per cent (mobilities) and 18.6 per cent (manufacturing). It would therefore be an overestimation to characterise contemporary capitalism as information capitalism. Contemporary global capitalism is not just an information capitalism, it is also a financial capitalism, mobilities capitalism, hyperindustrial capitalism, etc. It is, however, also a mistake to ignore that labour that creates information plays a significant role in contemporary capitalism. The analysis that information labour has become more important in capitalism is not simply a post-industrial ideology. Critical political economy and critical theory should not dismiss this hypothesis as ideology, but use its own theoretical categories for interpreting it. A key question that arises in this context and that this chapter asks is: what is the relationship of labour and communication? If there is a significant role of information and communication labour in the contemporary economy, then a separation of the economy as base and the realm of meaningful information that is communicated among humans (culture) as superstructure cannot be held up so easily.

6.1.1. Jürgen Habermas' Theory of Communicative Action
and Beyond…

Jürgen Habermas has drawn attention to the importance of integrating communication into a critical theory of society. Any critical theory of communication must therefore inevitably take Habermas' works as one of its starting points. However, this does not imply that Habermas' theory is the ultimate truth of communication theory. It should be read in a critically constructive manner so that we can build on Habermas and go with Habermas beyond Habermas. In this chapter, I will engage with Habermas and other critical theorists' notions of communication and will especially look at how communication in these approaches relates to the economy.

Given that information labour and the culture industry collapse the boundary between base and superstructure, we have to ask the question how the economy and culture are related. This chapter does so by discussing several approaches: Alfred Sohn-Rethel, Jean Baudrillard, Jürgen Habermas, Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, and Raymond Williams. These are important critical theory approaches that have dealt with the question of how work and communication are related. It is not possible to give a complete discussion of all approaches that exist, which is why engagement with the mentioned authors must suffice for the purpose of this chapter.

They are representatives of four different approaches. There are four ways, two categories (such as labour and communication) can be related (Hofkirchner 2013):

1) B is reduced to A (reductionism, in which A is dominant),
2) A is reduced to B (reductionism, in which B is dominant),
3) A and B are separate (dualism),
4) A and B are identical and non-identical at the same time (dialectic).

This chapter therefore discusses examples four different theoretical ways of how labour and communication can be related: economic reductionism, cultural reductionism, dualism, and the dialectic.

6.2. Economic Reductionism: Alfred Sohn-Rethel

Alfred Sohn-Rethel[3] (1899–1990) was a Marxist economist and philosopher. He stood in close academic contact with Adorno. After having fled from Germany, he lived in Great Britain and moved back to Germany in the early 1970s. *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology* is his main book.

Sohn-Rethel (1978) is interested in how economic forms and thought forms are related. He conceptually connects the base and the 'mental superstructure' (2) by constructing mental production in analogy to commodity abstraction.

Marx would not have worked out a theory of mental and manual labour, which would however be important because abolishing the division of labour is a 'precondition of a classless society' (21).

6.2.1. Real Abstraction

Commodity abstraction means that for Marx, value-generating labour (abstract labour) abstracts from single use-values and exchange 'excludes use' (28). Human minds in such exchange are however concretely reflecting on what they are doing. 'The abstractness of their action will […] escape the minds of the people performing it. In exchange, *the action is social, the minds are private*' (29). Sohn-Rethel terms the abstraction that can be found in the capitalist process itself a real abstraction (20). Speaking of a real abstraction also implies that this kind of abstraction is distinct from what Sohn-Rethel terms the 'thought abstraction in the theory of knowledge' (21).

Sohn-Rethel distinguishes communication 'by signs' from commodity exchange (40). Commodity exchange would be practical solipsism:

> commodity exchange does not depend on language, on *what* we communicate to each other. Nothing regarding the essence of things need be communicated. Some semantics for 'yes' and 'no', for pointing to this or that, and to indicate quantity, is sufficient to the essentials of a transaction of exchange whether it is carried on between two village gossips or between two strangers who do not speak each other's language' (41).

Commodity exchange 'impels solipsism' (41–42).

6.2.2. Conceptual Abstraction

For Sohn-Rethel, the equivalent to exchange abstraction in the world of knowledge is abstract thinking (58) and conceptual thought (67). The separation between head and hand would in the thought world have found its first manifestation in Greek philosophy (66). Abstract conceptual thinking would find its typical expression in mechanistic, quantifying, mathematical reasoning that for Sohn-Rethel consists of 'concepts deriving from exchange abstraction' and is based on the 'logic of intellectual labour divided from manual labour' (73). The separation of intellectual and manual activities would be a consequence of class-based societies (4).

According to Sohn-Rethel, twentieth-century capitalism's abstract thought in the form of the separation of manual and mental labour found its expression in Taylorism and automation. The 'unity of mental and manual work' (181), the abolition of the division of labour, would be a precondition for the establishment of socialism.

Sohn-Rethel's approach is politically important because it stresses that mechanistic thinking and the division of labour are problematic dimensions of class-based societies that need to be thought of in socialist strategies. But he situates communication and knowledge outside of the economy, which becomes evident in his distinction between the economy's real abstraction and knowledge and communication's conceptual abstraction. Sohn-Rethel makes a strict separation between the economy and culture. The phenomenon of cultural and communication labour makes it difficult to separate these two spheres. A software engineer creates a highly abstract and mechanistic form of conceptual knowledge: software code. This code is an intellectual product. It is part of the Sohn-Rethelian real economy in a double sense: a) Abstract and concrete labour produce software that b) is sold as a commodity. The abstract logic of the commodity and of exchange and the abstract logic of thought cannot be separated in this case. The one can also not be reduced to the other. Abstract thought and labour rather collapse into one: the software commodity is objectified abstract thought and the result of abstract labour.

6.2.3. Knowledge and the Economy

Sohn-Rethel does, however, not separate the economy and knowledge in a dualist manner. He rather reduces knowledge to the economy by arguing that the economic world determines the thought world. He speaks in this context of a conversion, replication and correlation: 'the real abstraction [is] being converted to its ideal reflection into intellectual form' (61, see also 31). The 'basic categories of intellectual labour […] are replicas of the elements of real abstraction' (76). 'Capital and mathematics correlate: the one wields its influence in the fields of economy, the other rules the intellectual powers of social production' (112). Formulations such as the ones in which the real abstraction is converted into the ideal reflection, or where the intellectual is a replica of the real, or in which there is a correlation, imply that the economy's real abstraction determines culture's intellectual abstraction. Sohn-Rethel's approach in the last instance is a form of economic reductionism and determinism.

6.2.4. Money as the Language of Commodities

Sohn-Rethel's dual separation of the real and knowledge also results in the fact that he considers economic exchange as being separate from communication. He argues that commodity exchange is a practical solipsism that does not need communication. This separation is not just questioned by informational exchange-values such as commercial software, but also by the communicative logic of exchange-value itself. Money is a particular form of communication that is instrumental, non-verbal, mediated, anonymous, impersonal, abstract, fetishised (abstracted from direct social relations), reified, and void of mean-

ing. Money communicates commodity prices on the market. Money is the form of communication that facilitates the abstract equalisation of commodities on the market in the exchange process. Marx therefore speaks of value as the 'language of commodities':

> We see, then, that everything our analysis of the value of commodities previously told us is repeated by the linen itself, as soon as it enters into association with another commodity, the coat; Only it reveals its thoughts in a language with which it alone is familiar, the language of commodities. In order to tell us that labour creates its own value in its abstract quality of being human labour, it says that the coat, in so far as it counts as its equal, i.e. is value, consists of the same labour as it does itself. In order to inform us that its sublime objectivity as a value differs from its stiff and starchy existence as a body, it says that value has the appearance of a coat, and therefore that in so far as the linen itself is an object of value [*Wertding*], it and the coat are as like as two peas. Let us note, incidentally, that the language of commodities also has, apart from Hebrew, plenty of other more or less correct dialects. The German word '*Wertsein*' (to be worth), for instance, brings out less strikingly than the Romance verb '*valere*', '*valer*', '*valoir*' that the equating of commodity B with commodity A is the expression of value proper to commodity A. *Paris vaut bien une messe!* (Marx 1867, 143–144).

In Marx's equation (20 yards of linen = 1 coat = 2 ounces of gold), money has the role that it makes commodities commensurable and comparable in the exchange process by communicating prices. Marx, other than Sohn-Rethel, saw money as a peculiar form of economic communication.

6.3. Cultural Reductionism: Jean Baudrillard

6.3.1. Baudrillard against Marx

Jean Baudrillard[4] (1929–2007) was a postmodern French philosopher. He specialised in theorising the world of signs and consumer culture. Whereas there is some positive influence of Marx visible in Baudrillard's early works, he later became profoundly anti-Marxist. Jean Baudrillard (1975) developed a fundamental criticism of Marx and Marxism. 'All the fundamental concepts of Marxist analysis must be questioned' (Baudrillard 1975, 21). 'Marx offers only a critical theory of exchange value. The critical theory of use value, signifier, and signified remains to be developed' (Baudrillard 1981, 129)

  Baudrillard claims that Marxist concepts such as labour, production, productive forces, class relations of production, capitalism, mode of production, base/

superstructure cannot explain the radical novel logic of the sign, the symbolic realm, culture, and language. Marxism 'never challenges human capacity of production' (Baudrillard 1975, 31) and would celebrate labour. It would disregard 'non-work or play' (Baudrillard 1975, 38). The Marxist understanding of social wealth as material 'has nothing to do with *symbolic* wealth' (Baudrillard 1975, 42–43). Whereas labour would put something into value, the symbol would put something into play (Baudrillard 1975, 44). The 'real rupture' is 'between symbolic exchange and work (production, economics)' (Baudrillard 1975, 45).

Marxism would focus on nature as the reality in the economic process (Baudrillard 1975, 54). For Baudrillard, society has been transformed so radically by the importance of the sign, that Marxism is no longer an adequate means for understanding reality. In the symbolic realm, the distinctions between producer/product, producer/user, producer/labour-power, users/needs and product/utility (Baudrillard 1975, 102–103) would become blurred. So for example in language, there would be no separation between producers and consumers (Baudrillard 1975, 97). Also the distinction between base and superstructure would break down (Baudrillard 1975, 118).

6.3.2. The Material and the Immaterial

The 'Marxist theory of production is irredeemably partial, and cannot be generalized. Or again: the theory of production […] is strictly homogeneous with its object – *material* production – and is non-transferable, as a postulate or theoretical framework, to contents that were never given for it in the first place' (Baudrillard 1981, 165). One implication of Baudrillard's approach is that he draws a boundary between the material and the immaterial. It is therefore no surprise that in another work he says: 'The content of the messages, the signifieds of the signs are largely immaterial. We are not engaged in them, and the media do not involve us in the world, but offer for our consumption signs as signs, albeit signs accredited with the guarantee of the real' (Baudrillard 1998, 34).

Baudrillard argues that Marxism is a productivism that frames the whole world in the language of production and disregards symbolic exchange. But he overlooks the dynamic nature of the world: everything that exists must come into existence. It is produced. The world is not static, but is at some level of organisation always in movement. Even if things at one level remain the same, they can only do so because of underlying changes. Reproduction requires and reproduces production, and production produces reproduction. Communication and signs do not simply exist, but need to be produced and reproduced. Communication is not a form of exchange, but humans' social production of shared meanings through which they interpret each other and the natural, social, economic, technical, political and cultural world.

Baudrillard basically argues that the economy and production are material, whereas culture and consumption are for him immaterial. The most basic question that philosophy and indeed also religion ask is: What is the world? Why does it exist? How does it exist? There can either be one or several fundamental substances that the world is made of and through which it transforms itself. If there is more than one, then there must be some causal relation between them. If one assumes that a spiritual substance (such as God) either exists besides and outside of matter or determines matter, then the world cannot be explained in the first instance because the question arises: who created the God-like spirit?

If we in contrast assume that matter is the process-substance of the world, is its own cause (causa sui), and has the capacity to produce and organise itself, then a different explanation of the world becomes possible: The world is matter-in-process that produces itself, is its own origin, and has the capacity to produce new organisational levels. Such reasoning also implies that there is no God because any assumption of the existence of God is an over-specification of theory that is unnecessary. Separating mind from matter, as Baudrillard does, cannot adequately explain the world's origin and development.

The human brain is a material system connected to the human body. A human's semiosis ceases when s/he dies. S/he can then no longer interpret the world and give meaning to it. We cannot see thoughts, but they are tied to a material substratum (the brain) that makes them material. They are intangible and non-physical, but material. We can also materialise thoughts in the form of textual, visual, audio, audio-visual forms that are stored in some material. The immaterial does not exist. Information is a specific form of matter. It is real and material, although it is more often non-physical and intangible than physical and tangible.

6.3.3. Sign Value as Replacement, Collapse and Abolition of Economic Value

Baudrillard does not, as for example Habermas, dualistically separate the economic and the symbolic, but rather reduces labour and the economic to the sign and culture. Sign value would replace economic value, symbolic manipulation would replace exploitation:

> It is a matter of the passage of all values to exchange-sign value, under the hegemony of the code. […] [The sign] is an operational structure that tends itself to a structural manipulation compared with which the quantitative mystery of surplus value appears inoffensive. The super-ideology of the sign […] has replaced good old political economy as the theoretical basis of the system (Baudrillard 1975, 121–122).

The sign would have become the hegemonic reality. 'The sign no longer designates anything at all. […] All reality then becomes the place of a semi-urgical

manipulation, of a structural simulation' (Baudrillard 1975, 128). All reality has for Baudrillard become symbolic. The economic would collapse into the symbolic: the 'structural configuration of value simply and simultaneously puts an end to the regimes of production, political economy, representation and signs. With the code, all this collapses into simulation' (Baudrillard 1993, 8). Production would collapse into culture and consumption: 'The entire sphere of production, labour and the forces of production must be conceived as collapsing into the sphere of "consumption", understood as the sphere of a generalised axiomatic, a coded exchange of signs, a general lifestyle' (Baudrillard 1993, 14). The economy and politics would turn into hyperreality: 'the two spheres are abolished in another reality or media hyperreality' (Baudrillard 1993, 65).

When Baudrillard speaks of replacement, collapse and abolition, then he means that the whole world today is symbolic, cultural, and ideological. There is for him outside to the world of signification. Signification is for Baudrillard the world. Baudrillard claims that Marxism is a theoretical imperialism of the economy. His theoretical answer to Marxism is a cultural imperialism that dissolves everything into the world of signs, the media, communication, language, thought, and consumption. By rejecting Marxism he turns against materialism and aims to revive philosophical idealism. The social world is in human society always at the same time economic, political and cultural: all social systems have resources, decision-making mechanisms, and social meanings. Society and social systems can never be dissolved into pure information. A university is a social system, in which non-information resources (buildings, classroom furniture, food and drinks in the cafeteria, etc.) and informational resources (teachers and students' knowledge and skills, books in the library, research databases, etc.) form an economy, specific rules determine the institution's politics, and certain pedagogical and research norms shape its culture. Researchers and students together in this economic, political and cultural environment produce systematic knowledge about the world. This is not simply possible because of pre-existing information, but also because of a diverse infrastructure.

6.3.4. Why Communication is Not Symbolic Exchange

Baudrillard argues that the mass media are not real media because they do not enable responses and reciprocity. They are 'anti-mediatory and intransitive' and 'fabricate non-communication' (Baudrillard 1981, 169). He defines communication in this context as 'a reciprocal space of a speech and a response, and thus of a *responsibility* […] We must understand communication as something other than the simple transmission reception of a message' (Baudrillard 1981, 169). Mass media would make 'all processes of exchange impossible' (Baudrillard 1981, 170). It is paradoxical that Baudrillard argues that the media world eliminates the economy, but at the same time uses the term 'exchange' for describing communication's essence. The modern use of the English term

exchange and the French term *échanger* goes back to the late fourteenth century and took on the meaning of barter and mercantile business.[5] So the terms are in both languages in modern times bound up with markets and the commodity form x commodity A = y commodity B, in which a certain amount of one commodity is exchanged for a certain amount of another one.

When we form sentences or speak with others, we do not perform measurements and do not weigh one word or sentence against another word or sentence in a quantitative manner. Money has the role of expressing and representing the amount of average labour objectified in commodities so that they can be exchanged. It quantifies the value of commodities. Human language is fundamentally different from money. It is first and foremost qualitative in character, it has certain general rules agreed by custom over hundreds of years (syntax), operates with meanings of combinations of symbols (semantics), and is used in specific contexts that interact with meanings (pragmatics). It is a combination of linguistic form and structure, social interpretation, and societal effects. Language does not function based on the logic x commodity A = y money M. Its essence is that it is qualitative and transcends the logic of measurement. This does, however, not mean that the products of labour cannot be turned into commodities. In commodity-producing societies, the access to linguistic products can certainly be commodified, which then results in exchange-relationships and measurements such as: 1 hour of psychological consultation = £60, 1 hour of financial advice = £100, entry to 1 theatre performance = £12.50, translation costs per word a text = £0.1, etc. Communication as such is alien to the commodity form. It can in a capitalist society, however, be force-fit into measurements such as 1 linguistic unit = £y.

Baudrillard is a prototypical representative of a cultural reductionism that reduces and dissolves labour and production into culture and sign systems.

6.4. Labour/Communication Dualism: Jürgen Habermas

Habermas' theory of communicative action makes a sharp distinction between on the one hand purposive (instrumental, strategic) action (including labour) that is orientated on success and on the other hand communicative action that is orientated on reaching understanding (Habermas 1984, 285–286). Work is for Habermas always an instrumental, strategic and purposive form of action, whereas communication's goal is to reach understanding. Habermas separates work and communication. This separation goes back to Hegel's philosophy.

6.4.1. Work and Interaction

In the article *Arbeit und Interaktion* (*Work and Interaction*), Habermas (1968) argues that Hegel (1803/1804, 1805/1806) in his Jena lectures on the philoso-

phy of spirit argued that work and interaction are two ways by which human beings relate to the world, organise the relationship between subject and object, and thereby constitute their self-conscious minds. Habermas (1968) based on Hegel's Jena system of philosophy argues that consciousness and the mind would be media of communication. The difference between work and interaction would be that the first is a form of strategic action and the second oriented on understanding. Strategic action would make decisions without trying to reach understanding with others (Habermas 1968, 22).

Also in his main work, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Habermas (1984a, 1987) draws a distinction between strategic action (as for example in labour) and communicative action. For Habermas (1984a, 85), teleological action (that he also terms purposive-rational action, see page 285) means that an 'actor attains an end or brings about the occurrence of a desired state by choosing means that have promise of being successful in the given situation and applying them in a suitable manner'. Strategic action is teleological action in a social situation, instrumental action teleological action in a non-social situation (1984a, 85).

6.4.2. Teleological Action and Communicative Action

Habermas strictly separates teleological action and its steering media of money and power from communicative action and language:

> Finally the concept of communicative action refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations [whether by verbal or by extraverbal means]. The actors seek to reach an understanding about the action situation and their plans of action in order to coordinate their actions by way of agreement. The central concept of interpretation refers in the first instance to negotiating definitions of the situation which admit of consensus. As we shall see, language is given a prominent place in this model (Habermas 1984a, 86).
>
> I shall speak of communicative action whenever the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action participants are not primarily oriented to their own individual successes; they pursue their individual goals under the condition that they can harmonize their plans of action on the basis of common situation definitions (Habermas 1984a, 285–286).

Linguistic communication is for Habermas inherently non-dominative, oriented on understanding and reaching a good society. He essentialises linguistic communication as naturally pure, fair, good, etc.:

> Reaching understanding is the inherent telos of human speech. Naturally, speech and understanding are not related to one another as means to end. But we can explain the concept of reaching understanding only if we specify what it means to use sentences with a communicative intent. The concepts of speech and understanding reciprocally interpret one another (Habermas 1984a, 287).

Habermas does not deny that money and power are forms of communication. He however sees them as alienated media of communication that colonize, delinguistify, control, steer, dominate, replace and curtail authentic communicative action in the lifeworld and thereby create social pathologies:

> The transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media means an uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts. Media such as money and power attach to empirical ties; they encode a purposive-rational attitude toward calculable amounts of value and make it possible to exert generalized, strategic influence on the decisions of other participants while *bypassing* processes of consensus-oriented communication (Habermas 1987, 183).[6]

Teleological-purposive action (as in labour or exchange) could also take place through language, but language would only be authentic in communicative action:

> The teleological model of action takes language as one of several media through which speakers oriented to their own success can influence one another in order to bring opponents to form or to grasp beliefs and intentions that are in the speakers' own interest. […] Only the communicative model of action presupposes language as a medium of uncurtailed communication whereby speakers and hearers, out of the context of their preinterpreted lifeworld, refer simultaneously to things in the objective, social, and subjective worlds in order to negotiate common definitions of the situation (Habermas 1984a, 95).
>
> The concept of communicative action presupposes language as the medium for a kind of reaching understanding, in the course of which participants, through relating to a world, reciprocally raise validity claims that can be accepted or contested (Habermas 1984a, 99).

So in these formulations it becomes again evident that, for Habermas, language and linguistic communication are authentic forms of social relations that he considers to be expressions of the normative good and potentials for a good society.

6.4.3. Media Dualism

Habermas bases his theory on a 'media dualism' (Habermas 1987, 281) that separates money and power on the one hand from linguistic communication on the other hand. The world of labour and politics are conceptually split off from the world of communication. There are several theoretical limits of Habermas' work/communication-dualism:

- Habermas connects linguistic communication to human speech and thereby neglects that there are also other forms of language, which is why Marx (1867, 143) describes money as the 'language of commodities'.
- In a general sense, we can say that reaching communicative understanding and any form of communication is a form of purposeful action: the means of language is used for achieving the goal of relating oneself to other humans and reaching a joint understanding of the world.
- Communication in modern society is not an immune or innocent sphere: ideologies are forms of communication and language that are highly instrumental. Ideologies instrumentalise language and meanings for justifying exploitation and domination. Communication thereby becomes an instrument of domination. Within communication studies, a specific field called strategic communication has developed. It studies how communication can be used for influencing and persuading specific audiences of particular purposes, especially in marketing and politics (see Hülsmann and Pfeffermann 2011, Paul 2011). Strategic communication is just another term for propaganda that serves capitalist and bureaucratic ends. So communication is not immune from the logic of the instrumentalisation of humans and speech for domination, but can serve quite different purposes.
- Work not only serves strategic-instrumental purposes, but can be quite altruistic and motivated by helping others and fostering the common good that benefits all. Marx was convinced that an entire society could be built on the logic of common goods. Limiting the notion of work to strategic-instrumental action deprives theory of a vocabulary for conceptualising social activities that produce use-values in a society based on solidarity, common goods and voluntary work.

6.4.4. Horst Holzer on Habermas

Horst Holzer[7] (1935–2000) was a German sociologist of the media and one of the most prominent victims of the occupational ban in public services that was enforced against members of the German Communist Party (DKP). Holzer criticises Habermas for claiming that Marx reduces 'the self-generative act of the human species to labor' and has a 'restricted conception of the species' self-reflection through work alone' (Habermas 1971, 42). Marx rather would see

work as all forms of "*societal production*"[8] (Holzer 1987, 23). Habermas 'is not able to see societal production's *essential* determination, namely that not only the productive forces are developed in the process of production, but also the *societal relations*, including communication and interaction, that humans enter in this production process'[9] (Holzer 1987, 27).

Communication is neither automatically good nor bad. It is not the moral essence of society. Just like a voluntary fire brigade has to communicate in order to save a child from a burning house as an act of altruistic social action, so too does a group of suicide bombers have to communicate in order to co-ordinate mass killings as a sinister form of social action. Communication is a necessary symbolic mediation of all social relations. It is a form of symbolic production that creates and sustains social relations. It is basic to all social systems and societies and serves the rational goal of organising social relations. If one wants to draw a moral distinction between different forms of rationality, as Habermas does, then the dualism of teleological action and communicative action fails. A more appropriate distinction is the one between instrumental action that aims at instrumentalising humans and society for fostering the domination of some over others and co-operative action that is based on the logic that actions benefit all (Fuchs 2008). Habermas (1984b, 477–490) discusses Marxist humanists' criticisms of his theory. They advance the argument that he overlooks the fundamental importance of work as creative production in society and its potentials for a non-alienated society of well-rounded individuals. He describes these approaches as romantic and doubts that work is as essential for society as communication.

Habermas' theory strictly separates communication and labour, the lifeworld and the economy. It is, as he says himself, based on a media dualism.

6.5. Towards a Dialectic of Labour and Communication: Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Raymond Williams

6.5.1. Lev Vygotsky's Activity Theory

Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934)[10] was a Marxist psychologist from Belarus. He developed a theory of activity, whose basic point is that human cognition and language are grounded in human activity.

Vygotsky (1978) argues, based on Marx, that human speech and practical activity develop in dialectical interconnection with each other. 'The sign acts as an instrument of psychological activity in a manner analogous to the role of a tool in labor' (Vygotsky 1978, 82). Tools as means of labour and signs as means of communication have for Vygotsky in common that they are both forms of mediated activity. The difference is for him that the tool is externally oriented on changing nature and the sign is internally oriented: the sign 'is a means of

internal activity aimed at mastering oneself' (55). In sign use, external events are internalised.

Vygotsky's approach is a step to conceiving labour and communication not in a reductionist or determinist, but a dialectical manner. The dialectic is for Vygotsky that work and communication have common and different aspects at the same time. Vygotsky however ascertains an overall dualist approach that keeps the realms of work and communication separate: labour is oriented on nature, on 'mastering, and triumphing over, nature' (55), and not also on culture. And sign production is for him not a specific form of work. Cultural work that produces information can on such foundations not be adequately understood.

6.5.2. *Valentin Vološinov:* Marxism and the Philosophy of Language

Valentin Vološinov[11] (1895–1936) was a Russian linguist. He was interested in establishing foundations of the Marxist philosophy of language. The foundations of this approach have been formulated in his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.

Vološinov (1986, 9) argues that a sign is not part of the natural or social reality, but 'reflects and refracts another reality outside itself'. The Leninist theory of reflection's basic assumption is that there is a reflection of the outside reality in consciousness and knowledge. Vološinov argues in contrast that a sign 'is also itself a material segment of that very reality' (11), from which it is different and that it reflects and retracts. Vološinov (1986, chapter 2) explicitly asks the question about the relationship of base and superstructure in the context of his theory of signs and language. The basic argument is that the sign's materiality are the social relations, in which humans communicate with the help of signs. The '*forms of signs are conditioned above all by the social organization of the participants involved and also by the immediate conditions of their interaction.* When these forms change, so does sign' (21).

Horst Holzer makes an argument similar to Vološinov by saying work is a form of social production in society and that by creating use-values, work also produces a social environment of meanings and for meaning-making: 'Societal work (that takes place physically and mentally) creates a "*meaningful*" environment in so far as through the purposes that are objectified in societal labour with the goal of securing and developing life, *meaning* is realised'[12] (Holzer 1987, 62).

In class-based societies, signs would also form an 'arena of the class struggle' (Vološinov 1986, 23) so that signs are contradictory. Vološinov distinguishes between inner and outer signs and argues that both are social in nature. Communication can, based on this distinction, be understood as the dialectic of the externalisation of inner signs (utterance) and the internalisation of outer signs (introspection) (36). For Vološinov, communication and language are therefore activity and 'meaningful creativity' (48). It also means a 'we-experience' that is based on an 'I-experience' (88).

Vološinov's theory of language is not a mechanic theory of reflection, in which thought is part of the superstructure and a linear reflection and copy of material reality that is communicated from A to B. Lenin, for example, wrote: 'Matter is a philosophical category denoting the objective reality which is given to man by his sensations, and which is copied, photographed and reflected by our sensations, while existing independently of them' (Lenin 1908, 130). In such an understanding, language and communication are separate from material reality and matter in a linear way determines the content of thought and speech.

Vološinov in a at a first glance rather counterintuitive manner says that a sign is part and not-part of reality. He thereby wants to express that the world of signs is its own world that is part of material reality and is mediated dialectically with other realities through cognition and communication. Symbolic interaction of humans with the outside social and physical reality is non-linear ('refracted'), which means that it is not calculable, but shaped in a complex way by social and societal contexts. With the notion of linguistic creativity (98), Vološinov points out the fact that communication is a form of production, the production of signs in human interaction. But he leaves open the question how communication and signs relate to work and labour. The term 'labour' is in fact only used twice in his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. So although Vološinov provided some foundations for a dialectical-materialist theory of communication, he never clarified the relationship of communication and signs to labour.

6.5.3. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi's Marxist Semiotics

Ferruccio Rossi-Landi[13] (1921–1985) was an Italian Marxist semiotician. His main theoretical insight is that language and communication are not just semiotic production processes, but specific forms of work.

Rossi-Landi's semiotic theory is partly problematic (see Fuchs 2016, 61–63), but at the same time helps to clarify the dialectic of work and communication: language-use and communication are work that produce words, sentences, interconnected sentences, arguments, speeches, essays, lectures, books, codes, artworks, literature, science, groups, civilisation and the linguistic world as totality (Rossi-Landi 1983, 133–136). As 'words and messages do not exist in nature' (Rossi-Landi 1983, 36), they must be the products of human work that generates use-values. They are use-values because they satisfy the human needs of expression, communication and social relations (Rossi-Landi 1983, 37). 'Like the other products of human work, words, expressions and messages have a use-value or utility insofar as they satisfy needs, in this case, the basic needs for expression and communication with all the changing stratifications that have historically grown up around them' (Rossi-Landi 1983, 50).

Wulf D. Hund[14] is a professor of sociology at the University of Hamburg. He specialises in the critical theory of racism and in the 1970s was among those

German authors who worked on the foundations of the Marxist political economy of communication. Wulf Hund (1976, 273) argues that traditional communication theories separate work and interaction and assume that 'society is essentially constituted through communication'.[15] 'Just like any work, communication occurs always just as production'[16] (163). Based on Rossi-Landi, Hund argues for a materialist theory of communication that analyses 'the work character of communication'[17] (271).

6.5.4. Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism

Raymond Williams[18] (1921–1988) was a Welsh literary critic, cultural and communication theorist, and novelist. He developed the approach of Cultural Materialism and not just worked on British literature, but also on topics such as communications, television, everyday culture, the sociology of culture, political theory, ecology, language, etc.

In his later works, Raymond Williams advanced the insight that most critical theories are not 'materialist enough' (Williams 1977, 92) because they separate culture and the economy (for a detailed discussion, see: Fuchs 2015, chapter 2). Culture understood as 'language, ideas, values, beliefs, stories, discourses and so on' is 'itself material' (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 176). Williams (1977, 78) argues that Marx opposed the '*separation* of "areas" of thought and activity'. He formulates as an important postulate of Cultural Materialism that '[c]ultural work and activity are not […] a superstructure' (111). The importance of cultural labour in the information society would be one of the reasons why the separation of the economy and culture cannot be upheld:

> Thus a major part of the whole modern labour process must be defined in terms which are not easily theoretically separable from the traditional 'cultural' activities. […] so many more workers are involved in the direct operations and activations of these systems that there are quite new social and social-class complexities (Williams 1981, 232).

Williams (1977) in *Marxism and Literature*'s chapter on language to a certain extent brings together insights from Vygotsky, Vološinov and Rossi-Landi. He argues that Vygotsky and Vološinov enabled a break with mechanic reflection theory in Marxist theory, 'a new starting point' (34) for 'the way to a new kind of theory' (35) by stressing language as social activity and creation. For both authors, signification would be 'a practical material activity; it is indeed, literally, a means of production' (38). Vygotsky and Vološinov have provided foundations for understanding language as dialectic of structural conditioning and productive agency. This becomes for example evident when Vološinov says that communication is a dialectic of introspection and utterance and a dialectic of refracted reflection and creativity. The exact relation between work and communication

remains however unexplained in both approaches. Williams indicates that Rossi-Landi takes steps towards overcoming such limits (43).

The works of Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Raymond Williams are important foundations for a dialectical critical theory of communication. They give some insights into the dialectical relations between structures/agency, technology/practices, reflection/production, sociality/individuality, externalisation/internationalisation, economy/culture that are crucial for such a theory. In the final section, I will try to bring together some of these insights.

6.6. Towards a Dialectical Critical Theory of Communication

6.6.1. What is Communication?

Communication is the social production of meaning in society. It is the social process of shared and joint meaning-making with the help of symbol production and symbolic interaction. All social relations are communicative. Humans via communication together make sense of the world, i.e. of nature, society and each other. Not all behaviour is communicative. Non-social behaviour is not communicative. Singing alone in your bathtub while taking a shower and thinking about the world is a form of self-reflection, self-understanding and symbol production, but it is not communication because it lacks a social context. Other than the professional singer, in the shower you only sing for yourself, not for others. If, however, someone listens and finds the quality of your singing appalling and complains to you ('Stop making such horrible noises while showering'), then your individual singing turns into communicative social action.

The boundary between the individual and the social is also the boundary between non-communication (behaviour) and communication. Behaviour and communication are not separate, but there is a dialectic of the individual and the social: the individual is the social being that can only individualise himself/herself in relations to others. The social is the productive relation between individuals that produces and reproduces structures in society and social systems. The individual/social dialectic is also one between cognitive information and social information. The individual constantly produces and reproduces cognitive information that is a foundation of communication, in which social information is jointly co-constructed. Social information enables and constrains an individual's information and cognition.

6.6.2. Structure and Agency

Communication is based on a structure/agency-dialectic. It is neither a mechanic reflection of the world nor an isolated individual behaviour. Meaningful information is not simply a passive cognitive resource that is expressed

and transmitted. It is also not simply a copy of outside reality. Communication is, as Vološinov says, a dialectic of the utterance of inner signs (cognitive/individual information) in processes of externalisation that share information in a social environment and the introspection of outer signs (social information) that internalise social information and transform individual information. Communication is a meaningful, productive and creative social activity.

6.6.3. Communication and Communications: Practices and Media Systems

In order to stress the dialectic of structure and agency, Raymond Williams distinguishes between communications (communication systems, means of communication) and communication. Communications are the 'institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received. I mean by communication the process of transmission and reception' (Williams 1976, 9). He draws a distinction between structures and practices of communication. Such structures that Williams terms communications can also be termed media, information and communication technologies, or means of communication.

There is no communication without a medium of communication and no medium without communication. A separation between media studies and communication studies is therefore artificial. It is rather an expression of institutional power struggles in the academic world. A medium is a structure that helps humans to organise communication. It conditions, i.e. enables and constrains communication. Even in face-to-face communication there is a medium: the air that transmits light and sound waves so that humans can see and hear each other in a social situation of co-present individuals who communicate at the same time in the same place. There are different kinds of media in human communication. Information technologies are the structures or media of communication. They are means of communicative production. The body is a medium of non-verbal communication. Language is a means of textual and verbal communication. Nature is a medium of interpersonal communication (the air as medium for communicating sound and light wave). Socio-technical structures such as computer networks, broadcast technologies, printed paper, etc. are media of socio-technologically mediated communication. Money, power, love, collective beliefs, etc. are symbolically generalised media of communication. Symbolically generalised media are social structures that have the role of sign systems in non-verbal communication. Money, for example, communicates the exchange-value of commodities on markets.

In the *Sociology of Culture*, Williams (1995/1981, 88) discerns means of communication that use the human body and those that use non-human material objects. He further subdivides this division and so distinguishes seven means of cultural production (Williams 1995/1981, 89–91): bodily resources (e.g. human

speech), the combination of external and bodily resources (e.g. use of masks in theatre performance), performance instruments (e.g. musical instruments), culturally significant objects (e.g. sculptures), material systems of signification (e.g. writing), and complex amplificatory, extending and reproductive technical systems (e.g. television, telephone, radio). In another work, Williams (1989, 174–175) distinguishes between amplifying, storage and instrumentally alternative media (alternatives to bodily resources). Elsewhere he speaks of amplificatory, durative and alternative media (Williams 1980, 55). In a fourth form, humans only make use of the body for verbal and non-verbal communication (Williams 1989, 174; Williams 1980, 54–55).

Williams does not provide a true media typology because the features he identifies can overlap. He rather identifies some possible features of communications systems. A computer network for example is not primarily based on the human body. It can potentially multiply and thereby *amplify* the attention given to voices, texts, images, videos, etc. It is also *a storage* medium that stores content as digital data that is transmittable at high speed. It provides textual, visual and audio-visual *alternatives* to human activity: it can, for example, record, store and transmit a short story that a storyteller invented so that s/he only needs to tell the story once and not repeatedly in order for it to become available to a wider public.

Communication requires media for the encoding, diffusion and decoding of information (production, distribution, consumption). Media in each of these steps can be technologised and/or based on nature and human capacities. Production, distribution and consumption of information can be based on pure human activities or be technologically mediated. The networked computer is a medium, in which the production, distribution and consumption of information converge. Digitisation makes the computer a universal machine for universal communication. In computer-mediated communication, the production, distribution and consumption of information are all three based on technology. Consumption can at the same time be production of information. Digital communication is, however, not simply technological, but based on human activities, i.e. writing, typing, human speech and bodies that are recorded in audio-visual digital formats (digital images, digital videos, etc.). So we here have an example of how the media of the human body, the human mind and computer technology work together. Social systems are organised in space and time. Not all of them are based on face-to-face communication, in which humans are in the same place at the same time. Communication can be mediated and stretched in time and over space. If such a stretching takes place, then communication is either spatially (synchronous communication with spatial distance) or temporally (asynchronous communication without spatial distance) or spatio-temporally distanced (asynchronous communication with spatial distance). All technological and symbolically generalised media spatio-temporally distanciate communication, but are at the same time grounded in and dialectically mediated with the media of the human body and the human mind.

6.6.4. Niklas Luhmann's Fetishism of Modern Media

One must be very careful to distinguish between anthropological and histori-cal means of communication, especially in respect to symbolically generalised media. Money and markets are not eternal, but historical features of commu-nication in societies that are based on exchange-value. Economic relations can also be organised as gifts and co-operatives instead of as exchange and markets. The institutions of liberal democracy are dominant in contemporary modernity, but are not co-extensive with and not the only means of political communication. Liberal democracy contains as the negative dialectic of its own enlightenment also totalitarian tendencies. There are specific historical forms of communication media's organisation. Economic institutions organis-ing production, distribution and consumption, political institutions organising decision-making, and cultural institutions organising collective meaning-pro-duction are the most fundamental symbolically generalised media of com-munication. Money, markets, parliaments, dictatorships, etc. are only specific historical expressions of these media. In class-based society, such structures and the practices they mediate are contradictory and contested. The problem of Luhmann's theory of communication is that it is a theory of modern society that presents the structures of modernity as general structures characteristic for all societies.

> We would like to call "symbolically generalized" the media that use gener-alizations to symbolize the nexus between selection and motivation, that is, represent it as a unity. Important examples are: truth, love, property/ money, power/law; and also, in rudimentary form, religious belief, art, and, today, standardized "basic values". In all these cases this – in a very different way and for very different interactive constellations – is a matter of conditioning the selection of communication so that it also works as a means of motivation, that is, so that it can adequately secure acceptance of the proposed selection. […] Further discussion of this must be left to a theory of society, but the general theory of social systems and their com-municative processes can serve to draw attention to the highly selective character of these functionally privileged modes of communication. Lan-guage, media of dissemination, and symbolically generalized communi-cation media are thus evolutionary achievements that interdependently ground the processing of information and increase what can be produced by social communication. This is how society produces and reproduces itself as a social system (Luhmann 1995, 161–162).

Power is, for Luhmann, a negative form of violence and domination. He speaks of money, power and religion in the context of a theory of general-ised communication media and a general theory of social systems. He pro-jects contemporary Western capitalist societies as models for all societies and

thereby categorically eliminates theorising non-capitalist societies. He thereby also underestimates the contradictory character of modern society as advancing antagonistic potentials of domination (instrumentalisation) and co-operation. Luhmann's theory is a fetishistic, uncritical theory of communication and society.

6.6.5. Communication History and Institutions

The mediation of communication is connected to different organisations of spaces and times of communication. Communication can take place at the same time or at different times (synchronous/asynchronous communication) and at the same place or at different places. Means of communication allow the temporal and spatial distanciation of communication and are at the same time constructing joint social spaces of communication that re-embed disembedded communication. Humans can traverse distances and stay connected to each other and communicate with each other in a mobile manner with the help of communication technologies.

The history of communication technology is however not simply a history of spaces and times of communication or of scientific-technological progress. There are actual social needs and institutions that bring about new spatial and temporal organisations of communication and new communications systems. Class rule, political rule and their combination in specific forms of political-economic rule (empires, nation states, imperialism, global capitalism, etc.) require communicative orders that organise social relations of domination in time and space. The history of communication(s) is therefore bound up with history of class, domination and class struggles. Williams (1989, 172) therefore stresses that communications are not simply technologies, but at the same time social relations, which is why 'communications systems have always to be seen as social institutions'.

6.6.6. Work and Communication: Communication at Work and the Work of Communication

There is an etymological difference between work and labour (Fuchs 2015, 24–25). Marx (1867) expresses this duality as the dialectic of concrete and abstract labour. Work is the social production of novelty that satisfies human needs. It is the concrete dimension of human production. Abstract labour in contrast refers to the class dimension of work organised in class-based societies. So whereas work is a general feature of society, labour is the organisation of work in class-based societies, which implies unequal ownership, surplus appropriation, and exploitation. What is the relationship between work and communication?

We must distinguish between *communication at work* and the *work of communication*. Work is a social relation, in which humans co-operate in order to co-produce new reality that satisfies human needs. Communication is a social co-ordination in the work process. Communication at work means that all work is a social relation and therefore requires communication for the co-ordination of social production. Williams writes that 'communication and its material means are intrinsic to all distinctively human forms of labour and social organization' (Williams 1980, 50). Besides communication, also anticipatory, creative cognition is a key aspect of work, as Marx (1867, 284) stresses:

> But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose in those materials.

From Rossi-Landi and Hund, we can take the idea of the work character of communication and the work of communication: communication is human work because it produces social meaning in the form of shared words, sentences, arguments, texts, discourses, and entire languages. In communication, humans are co-producers of meaningful information in society. The work of communication is a metaphor for foregrounding the productive, active and creative character of social information. Also Marx stresses that the symbolic realm is one, in which humans engage in real, active production: 'Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., that is, real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms' (Marx and Engels 1845/1846, 36).

But communication is not just work, but also the foundation for understanding: through communication, humans learn to understand the world and the motivations and individual information of others. Other than Habermas, we should not assume that understanding automatically means moral agreement, but rather only the interpretation of the social world in order to make meaning of it. So communication is a specific form of work, but it is as social meaning and as the process of understanding the world at the same time also more than work. Work that is not purely individual, but a social relation conducted in a group, is also communicative in character. It is a productive social activity organised by communication that creates novelty and satisfies human needs. But it is not just, but more than communication.

Work and communication are therefore seen from both sides identical and non-identical, which is just another formulation for the work/communication dialectic. Human production is social and therefore a communicative relation (communication at work). Communication is itself productive and therefore

a specific form of work (the work of communication). Work is the productive aspect of human activity, whereas communication is human activity's aspect of meaning-making in social relations. Meaning and social relations are themselves particular forms of production – symbolic and social production. They do not simply exist, but need to be created and reproduced.

6.6.7. Communication Work

Communication work is a particular form of work that creates information (see figure 6.1). All work is based on a dialectic of the body and the brain, physical activity and mental activity. But we can distinguish between work that is predominantly physical and work that is predominantly cognitive and communicative. *Physical work* creates tangible products that you can touch and feel. Information is in contrast an intangible product that stores and communicates meaning and represents something else for which it stands as a symbol. *Communication work* is a social production process that creates information and information technologies. Information is often produced, disseminated and received by information technologies such as the networked computer. The production of these physical information technologies is also part of communication work, but is physical work. A subset of physical work is communication work that creates information technologies. In contrast, information work is mental communication work that produces social meaning. Physical work and information work are two connected aspects of communication work – they create communications and communication.
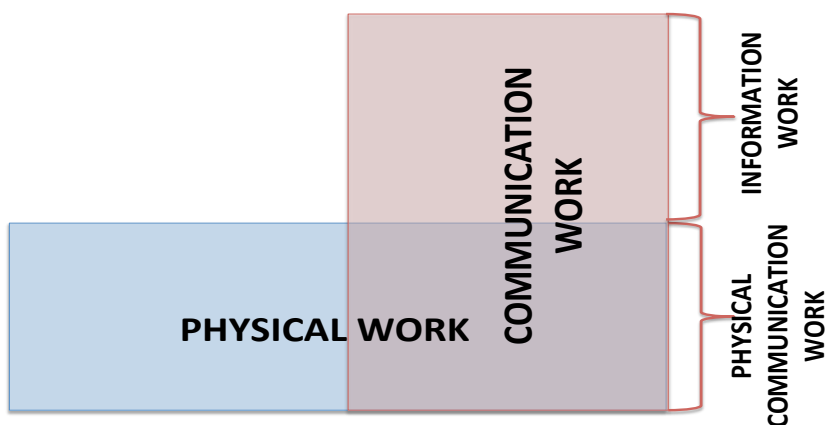
Figure 6.1: Communication work (see also: Fuchs 2015, chapter 2).

Sohn-Rethel has shown that class-based societies have created a division between physical and communication labour. Communication labour has turned into the specific profession of managers, bureaucrats, administrators, planners, and politicians, who plan, execute and control power in social systems. Class rule is based on inequalities. Wherever there is inequality, some form of management and control is needed in order to contain actual or possible resistance with the help of direct, structural and ideological violence. It would, however, be a mistake to assume that communication labour only has an administrative-bureaucratic role because since the rise of the culture industry in the twentieth century, communication has also taken on the commodity form. Communication commodities (the large-scale sale of professional knowledge in the form of music, films, software, advertisements, consultancy, news, entertainment, information technologies, etc.) are like all commodities produced by labour. Communication labour in information capitalism has therefore also been 'proletarianised' so that we can observe the exploitation of communication workers in diverse class relations. Communication labour is not a clear-cut emancipatory or repressive category. There is dominative communication labour that produces and diffuses dominant ideology and proletarianised communication labour that produces communication commodities. Partly these roles are overlapping (e.g. when information workers who sell their labour power share neoliberal and managerialist ideology), but this is no necessity.

6.6.8. Going Beyond Habermas: The Rationality of Action

Habermas (1984a, 22) understands rationality as action for 'for which there are good reasons or grounds'. An action is the more rational, the more it 'is connected with them can be defended against criticism' (Habermas 1984a, 9). Habermas requires this concept of rationality in order to be able to argue that social relations based on communicative action are more rational than those mediated by money and power. But the Latin etymological root of the term rationality, the word *ratio*, only means that our actions are based on reasoning and thought: humans reflect and have certain goals when acting. The outcome of action is not always morally good, but rationality as goal-making and anticipatory reflection is what distinguishes humans from animals. Even a suicide bomber who wants to kill as many people as possible bases his/her actions on reflection and has specific goals. Most of us will consider these goals and motivations as morally reprehensible, but their irrationality has a clear rationality of irrationality.

Communication is like all human behaviour always goal-oriented and purposeful. But against Habermas, we have to say that communication is not automatically or intrinsically morally good. Communication is fundamental to human sociality and society, but it is not inherently sacred, enlightening, redemptive, or liberating. It also does not automatically generate consensus and

agreement. Communication is the symbolic way we produce and reproduce social relations and thereby our social systems and society. The SS henchmen, who killed Jews in Auschwitz, had to communicate in order to co-ordinate their crimes against humanity. Altruistic people, who organise clothes, shelter and food for the homeless, also communicate with each other in order to organise aid. Both forms of communication are rational, but certainly have fundamental differences. Habermas is right to draw a distinction between dominative and liberating action. But it is doubtful that this distinction is co-extensive with the one between purposive and communicative action. All action has certain purposes and all social action is communicative. The key distinction is between rational action that serves domination and rational action that aims to transcend domination.

6.6.9. Instrumental and Co-operative Communication

By domination we mean social relations, in which one group controls and uses resources and exerts physical, structural or ideological violence in such a way that it derives benefits for one group at the expense of others. Domination can result in economic privileges through labour exploitation, political privileges through control, cultural privileges through ideological dominance. We can therefore distinguish between the accumulation of economic resource-power, political decision-power and cultural definition power as forms of economic, political and cultural domination. Domination is based on instrumental rationality and instrumental communication: dominative social relations are organised in such a way that one group instrumentalises others. Exploitation, control, manipulation, and exclusion are expressions of instrumental rationality. Instrumental communication is communication based on instrumental rationality. Co-operative rationality is opposed to the dominative logic of instrumental rationality. It does not aim at creating, reproducing or deepening domination. Its goal is social relations that transcend domination and create contexts that allow all humans to benefit and lead a good life. Co-operative rationality aims politically at participatory democracy, whereas instrumental rationality in the last instance means fascism. Co-operative communication is communication that is based in co-operative rationality.

The history of class-based societies is also a history of the clash between instrumental and co-operative rationality. Whereas dominant groups aim to find ever newer ways of how to instrumentalise humans in their interests and how to communicate such domination as ideological necessary, inevitable and without alternatives, dominated groups have the potential to resist, to self-organise alternatives that challenge instrumental rationality by embryonic forms and social systems of co-operation and to collectively communicate their opposition and the need for a society grounded in co-operative rationality.

6.6.10. The Rationalities of Communication and Raymond Williams' Distinction Between Authoritarian, Paternal, Commercial and Democratic Communications

The distinction between instrumental and co-operative rationality is important for the world of communications. Raymond Williams (1976, 130–137) distinguishes between authoritarian, paternal, commercial and democratic organisational forms of the media. The first three can be understood as political, cultural and commercial expressions of instrumental reason in the organisation of media systems. Authoritarian communications mean that there is state control, manipulation and censorship of the media. Such systems' 'purpose of communication is to protect, maintain, or advance a social order based on minority power' (131). Paternal communications are authoritarian systems 'with a conscience: that is to say, with values and purposes beyond the maintenance of its own power' (131). There is ideological control that aims to impose certain moral values on audiences because it is assumed that such morals are good for citizens and that the latter are too silly to understand the world. In commercial communications, there is commercial control: 'Anything can be said, provided that you can afford to say it and that you can say it profitably' (133). All three forms are instrumental: they instrumentalise the media as tools for control and domination.

In contrast democratic communications are based on co-operative rationality. Communications are 'means of participation and of common discussion' (134). Williams argues for a 'cultural democracy' that combines public-service media and local media. 'The idea of public service must be detached from the idea of public monopoly, yet remain public service in the true sense' (134) of public service content. Instrumental and co-operative media are contradictory forces. Williams observes the tendency that the commercial colonisation of communications dominates: 'All the basic purposes of communication – the sharing of human experience – are being steadily subordinated to this drive to sell. […] The organization of communications is then not for use, but for profit' (Williams 1976, 25). The 'commercial has been steadily winning' (Williams 1976, 137). This tendency holds true until today. Only cultural forms of class struggle can drive back the capitalist colonisation of communications.

6.6.11. Towards A Dialectical Critical Theory of Communication Beyond Habermas

A critical theory of communication is dialectical in a manifold sense. It theorises that the dialectics of work/communication, body/mind, individuality/sociality, internalisation/externalisation, subject/object, practices/technology, communication/media, agency/structures, communication/communications, instrumental communication/co-operative communication that are fundamental determinants of communication.

Jürgen Habermas has made important contributions for theorising communication, but his dualist idealisation of communication falls short of a dialectical critical theory of communication. It is therefore time to go beyond Habermas in critically theorising communication. This goal can be achieved by drawing on the diverse tradition of cultural Marxism in an open manner that is curious about less well-known texts, tries to connect thoughts from various authors, including the Frankfurt School and other versions of cultural Marxism, and relates to new developments in society and theory.

Notes

[1] Sectors in the Forbes 2000 data included in the information sector for this calculation were: advertising, broadcasting, communications equipment, computer and electronic retail, computer hardware, computer services, computer storage devices, consumer electronics, electronics, Internet shopping and distribution, printing and publishing, semiconductors, software and programming, telecommunications.

[2] The mobilities industry included for this calculation the following industries: car industry, railroad construction, transport, logistics, oil and gas, airlines.

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Sohn-Rethel

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Baudrillard

[5] See: Exchange, in: Online Etymology Dictionary, http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=exchange (accessed on 12 December 2015).

[6] Compare also the following formulations: 'modern societies attain a level of system differentiation at which increasingly autonomous organizations are connected with one another via delinguistified media of communication: these systemic mechanisms – for example, money – steer a social intercourse that has been largely disconnected from norms and values, above all in those subsystems of purposive rational economic and administrative action that, on Weber's diagnosis, have become independent of their moral-political foundations' (Habermas 1987, 154). 'I have distinguished the steering media that replace language as a mechanism for coordinating action from the forms of generalized communication that merely simplify an overly complex nexus of communicative action, and that in doing so remain dependent on language and on a lifeworld, however rationalized' (Habermas 1987, 277).

[7] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Horst_Holzer

[8] 'gesellschaftliche Produktion' (translation from German)

[9] Translation from German: Habermas ist 'nicht imstande, die *wesentliche* Bestimmung der gesellschaftlichen Produktion zu erkennen: daß im Prozeß der Produktion eben nicht nur die Produktivkräfte entwickelt werden, sondern auch die *gesellschaftlichen Beziehungen* – eingeschlossen:

'Kommunikation', 'Interaktion' – die die Menschen in diesem Produktion-sprozeß miteinander eingehen'.

[10] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky

[11] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Valentin_Voloshinov

[12] Translation from German (CF): 'Vielmehr wird über die gesellschaftliche (sich materiell und geistig vollziehende) Arbeit eine '*bedeutungsvolle*' Umwelt geschaffen, und zwar insofern, als sich mittels der *Zwecke*, die in der gesellschaftlichen Arbeit mit dem Ziel der Lebenssicherung und -entwicklung vergegenständlicht werden, *Bedeutungen* realisieren'.

[13] See: http://www.ferrucciorossilandi.com

[14] https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wulf_D._Hund

[15] Translation from German (CF): 'Gesellschaft konstituiere sich wesentlich durch Kommunikation'

[16] Translation from German (CF): 'Wie jegliche Arbeit, ereignet sich auch Kommunikation immer nur als Produktion'

[17] Translation from German (CF): 'Arbeitscharakter der Kommunikation'

[18] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raymond_Williams

References

Baudrillard, Jean. 1975. *The Mirror of Production.* St. Louis, MO: Telos Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1981. *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign.* St. Louis, MO: Telos Press.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1993. *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London: Sage.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1998. *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures.* London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. New York: Routledge.

Fuchs, Christian. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age: A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on "Capital Volume 1"*. New York: Routledge.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1968. 'Arbeit und Interaktion. Bemerkungen zu Hegels Jensener "Philosophie des Geistes"'. In *Technik und Wissenschaft als "Ideologie"*, 9–47. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984a. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 1*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984b. *Vorstudien und Ergänzungen zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume 2*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1803/1804. *Jenaer Systementwürfe I.* Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. 1805/1806. *Jenaer Systementwürfe III.* Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag.

Hofkirchner, Wolfgang. 2013. *Emergent Information: A Unified Theory of Information Framework*. Singapore: World Scientific.

Holzer, Horst. 1987. *Kommunikation oder gesellschaftliche Arbeit? Zur Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns von Jürgen Habermas*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag.

Hülsmann, Michael and Nicole Pfeffermann, ed. 2011. *Strategies and Communications for Innovations: An Integrative Management View for Companies and Networks.* Heidelberg: Springer.

Hund, Wulf D. 1976. *Ware Nachricht und Informationsfetisch: Zur Theorie der gesellschaftlichen Kommunikation*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

Lenin, Vladimir I. 1908. In *Lenin Collected Works,* Volume 14, 17–388. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

Luhmann, Niklas. 1995. *Social Systems*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1845/1846. 'The German Ideology'. In *Marx & Engels Collected Works, Volume 5*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Paul, Christopher. 2011. *Strategic Communication: Origins, Concepts, and Current Debates.* Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger.

Rossi-Landi, Ferruccio. 1983. *Language as Work and Trade: A Semiotic Homology for Linguistics & Economics.* South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.

Sohn-Rethel, Alfred. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour: A Critique of Epistemology.* London: Macmillan.

Vološinov, Valentin N. 1986 [originally published in 1929]. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, Lev S. 1978. *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1976. *Communications*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. 3rd edition.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1980. *Culture and Materialism.* London: Verso.

Williams, Raymond. 1981. *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1989. *What I Came to Say.* London: Hutchinson Radius.

Williams, Raymond. 1995/1981. *Sociology of Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

The task of this book is to present readings on specific works of selected Frankfurt School thinkers and to thereby open up the discussion on cultural Marxism to new frontiers. These openings are the opening of Marxism to culture and communication, the opening of the way we read cultural Marxism from single, dominant texts towards alternative, less well-known works, and the opening of discourse in cultural Marxism from the focus on single thinkers towards a plural dialogue and unity in diversity. The chapters in this book can be read independently, but are also connected to each other. The conclusion aims to help the reader to connect the single chapters' lines of thought.

7.1. The Starting Point: Karl Marx

In the *German Ideology*, Marx discusses foundations of a materialist theory of culture and ideology. He stresses as a critique of the Young Hegelians Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach and Max Stirner that the critique of religion and concepts is not sufficient, but that rather also a critique of politics and the economy, i.e. a critique of capitalism's political economy, is needed. Marx emphasises that materialism means in society that human beings living in particular social relations actively produce society's social relations. Matter in society means social relations and the social production of reality. 'By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their material life' (Marx and Engels 1845, 37). The means of subsistence not only include food, shelter and technology, but also means of communication that humans use for organising their social relations through communication. Life involves 'eating and drinking, housing, clothing, and various other things' (Marx and Engels 1845, 47). Communication is one of these various other key phenomena.

The production and communication of ideas is therefore for Marx not detached from material social life, but is itself material and social: 'Men are producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., that is, real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms' (Marx and Engels 1845, 42). Culture is a social product of human social relations in society.

Marx applies this materialist concept of culture also to the world of ideology understood as a '*camera obscura*' that makes humans and their social relations 'appear upside-down' (Marx and Engels 1845, 42). Ideologies are not abstract ideas existing eternally outside of history. They are produced and reproduced by specific ideological workers such as consultants, managers, bourgeois journalists and intellectuals, etc. Marx therefore speaks of a division of labour within the ruling class 'so that inside this class one part appears as the thinkers of the class (its active, conceptive ideologists, who make the formation of the illusions of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood), whereas the others in this class have less time to make up illusions and ideas about themselves' (Marx and Engels 1845, 68).

7.2. Georg Lukács: Teleological Positing

So Marx in this part of the *German Ideology* asks profound questions about society: how are the economy and culture related? What is the connection of labour and ideology? Georg Lukács in his *Ontology of Social Being*, the subject of this book's second chapter, re-poses Marx's questions. He felt that in his *History and Class Consciousness* he did not ask questions about the role of labour in society and focused too much on ideology. He therefore posed a foundational question of cultural Marxism, namely the one about the relationship of culture and economy, in his final book. The ontological critical theory of society that he worked out in the *Ontology* does not eliminate the ideology critique Lukács formulated in *History and Class Consciousness*. Ideology is a profound part of the *Ontology*. So one can say that the *Ontology* subsumes *History and Class Consciousness* and generalises Lukács' critical theory of society.

Lukács argues that human production is a teleological positing with a purpose, orientation and goal. This means that humans are inherently creative beings, who reflect on the potential outcomes before undertaking an activity. Marx formulated this circumstance of teleological positing in different words in *Capital Volume 1*'s chapter 7 (see Fuchs 2016, chapter 7):

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a

result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [verwirklicht] his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it (Marx 1867, 284).

So for both Marx and Lukács, humans are inherently active, creative, self-conscious, anticipatory social beings. Lukács implicitly distinguishes between physical and information work when he argues that one type of teleological positing produces changes of nature, the other changes of the social. He also uses the term mental work in the latter context.

There are also obvious parallels between Lukács' *Ontology* and Raymond Williams' Cultural Materialism. Williams stresses that all culture is material. He highlights the 'material character of the production of a social and political order' and describes the concept of the superstructure as an evasion (Williams 1977, 93). Williams (1977, 111) argues that '[c]ultural work and activity are not […] a superstructure'. Cultural Materialism sees 'the complex unity of the elements' required for the existence of culture: ideas, institutions, formations, distribution, technology, audiences, forms of communication and interpretation, worldviews (Williams 1977, 138–139). Williams stresses that especially the emergence of a significant share of information labour in the economy requires rethinking the separation of culture and the economy: The 'productive forces of "mental labour" have, in themselves, an inescapable material and thus social history' (Williams 1989, 211). '[I]nformation processes […] have become a qualitative part of economic organization' (Williams 1981, 231).

Williams just like Lukács was interested in Marx's question of what the materiality of culture is. Both implicitly reached the same answer, namely that social production is the unifying human activity that creates all use-values, including cultural ones such as ideas, artworks, entertainment, advertisements and ideologies. But whereas Williams lacked the elaboration of specific concepts that expressed this connection of culture and the economy, Lukács made Cultural Materialism more concrete with the help of the notion of teleological positing. Lukács stresses that mental work and ideology are not the same. He considers a subset of mental work as the labour of the ideologists that Marx speaks about that produce, reproduce and spread dominative ideas that justify class and domination.

Lukács is not just interested in a theory of teleological positing, but also in the forms that such human activity takes on in class-based society. And here he connects the *Ontology* back to the concepts of reification and alienation that he first introduced in *History and Class Consciousness*. In class-based societies, humans are instruments for the dominant class' achievement of advantages, power and profit. Exploitation turns human labour-power into

an instrument of class relations. Ideology tries to instrumentalise human thoughts by spreading ideas that justify exploitation and domination. Teleological positing thereby is not oriented on humanity as end-in-itself, but its means and ends are reversed: in class-based society, humans become means and instruments for the privileges of a dominant class. In class-based society, there is the dominance of what Max Horkheimer called 'instrumental reason' and what Herbert Marcuse described as 'technological rationality'.

The Frankfurt School grounded these notions in Lukács' concept of reification. In the *Ontology*, Lukács generalises his analysis of reification into a critical theory of society. The struggle for a human society is the struggle for a negation of class-based society's negativity. It is the struggle for a society, in which humans' teleological positing, i.e. human production, is a self-determined end-in-itself, not an instrument that benefits the dominant class and dominant groups. Such a society presupposes the abolishment of class, domination, exploitation, and toil. Lukács' *Ontology* is not a substitution, but a dialectical sublation of *History and Class Consciousness*.

7.3. Theodor W. Adorno: The Dialectics of Knowledge

Theodor W. Adorno had already died when Lukács' *Ontology* was published. For Adorno, the term ontology was associated with Heidegger's philosophy that he saw as a fascist, racist and anti-dialectical theory. He argued against Heidegger's ontology for a dialectical theory of society. He may have disapproved of Lukács' use of the term ontology, but certainly both Adorno and Lukács were interested in the creation of a dialectical critical theory of society.

Adorno was not just a critic of the culture industry, but also a dialectical philosopher. He rejected a linear and mechanistic theory of knowledge, in which knowledge reflects and is determined by the outside world. In his studies on Hegel, Adorno provides a dialectical-realist alternative to such mechanistic reflection theories. All knowledge production is based on a dialectic of human subjects and an external objective environment (nature, society). In the same essays, Adorno also theorises communication. Language is, for Adorno, a dialectic of the individual's naming and communication of an object. Adorno furthermore stresses the dialectic of structure and agency and the dialectic of the individual and the group in the production of knowledge.

Lukács' *Ontology* and Williams' Cultural Materialism help us to understand that modernity's dualities such as culture/economy, communication/work, mind/body, ideology/labour, leisure/labour, consumption/production, private/public, play/labour, society/nature, subject/object, etc. are not dual categories that are separate from each other or reducible to each other. In both readings, they are identical and non-identical at the same time: culture is part of the economy because there is cultural work, or what Lukács terms 'mental work' as a specific form of teleological positing, that creates cultural products. And culture

is at the same time separate from the economy because cultural meanings take effect not just in the economy, but all over society.

Adorno adds to this analysis by his reading of Hegel. He helps us to understand how culture is not just dialectical in relation to the economy, but is in itself a manifold dialectical process: Cultural production is based on dialectics of subject/object, individual/social group, agency/structure, individual knowledge/social knowledge. Adorno is a negative dialectician. The structure of knowledge as negative dialectic can be described by the fact that the subject, the individual, agency and individual knowledge are never a pure identity, but non-identical with themselves: they are related to an object, a social group, structures and social knowledge.

Adorno's analysis does not remain abstract, but is a critique of the class structures of knowledge that try to make knowledge identical. Ideologies try to reduce the dialectic of knowledge so that the possibility that society could be different is hidden. Ideology tries to present class-based society as identical with society itself. It proclaims a false identity of subject and object and thereby denies the dialectical character of all social reality and all knowledge. Ideologies are for Adorno anti-dialectical forms of knowledge. His critique of the culture industry is a specific application of his dialectical critical theory of knowledge. The political task is then to deconstruct ideologies and to find ways in society that can strengthen the production of dialectical, critical knowledge.

7.4. Herbert Marcuse: The Meta-Dialectic and the Dialectical Logic of Essence

Marcuse engaged systematically with Hegel's dialectical philosophy and applied it to various phenomena of twentieth-century capitalism. Whereas Williams' Cultural Materialism deals with the dialectic of culture and the economy, Marcuse was in his general works such as *Reason and Revolution* concerned with how the dialectic works in society in general and in capitalism in particular. The very concept of this approach is certainly related to Lukács' dialectical ontology and Adorno's dialectic of the subject and the object. The aim is a dialectical critical theory of society. Marcuse's main philosophical concern was to ground a dialectic that is non-deterministic and non-mechanistic and thereby opposes and avoids the pitfalls of Soviet dialectics that turned into a totalitarian ideology.

Marcuse was interested in a humanistic dialectic, a truly dialectical dialectic. He worked out a meta-dialectic of the subjective dialectic and the objective dialectic that stresses that capitalism and class-based society's contradictions condition, but do not determine the future. It is human praxis that shapes the future, especially in situations of rupture and crisis in society. So Marcuse's point is, paraphrasing Marx (1852,103), that humans make the dialectic, but they do not do so just as they please, but under objective, structural dialectic circumstances set in the past.

An example of how this meta-dialectic works: in the mid to late 1990s, lots of new Internet-based businesses were emerging. Many of them attracted venture capital investments and started being listed on the stock market. A substantial amount of them struggled to make profits and with continuous losses a divergence between stock market values and real accumulation emerged. Financialisation resulted in a structural antagonism between real and virtual economic values in the Internet economy. This financial bubble exploded in 2000 and caused the so-called 'dot-com crisis'. According to estimates, this crisis resulted in a loss of US$5 trillion in stock market value on the NASDAQ stock exchange, on which many tech corporations' stocks are traded.[1] The structural force of the objective dialectic that resulted in the crisis compelled actors in the Internet economy to rethink and revise their economic strategies. In such situations of crisis, the future is relatively open and depends on the choices made. There would for example have been the choice that Internet corporations turn into non-profit co-operatives in order to reduce the digital economy's crisis-proneness. Especially in situations of crisis, collective human action as the subjective dialectical force matters in determining the future. But a chance was missed. The most common reaction was rather a new capital accumulation strategy, namely to foster social media businesses that are based on targeted advertising, which has created new economic contradictions centred around the question of how profitable targeted advertising can actually be (Fuchs 2014b).

Just like Lukács and Williams and to a lesser degree Adorno, Marcuse also studies the role of cultural work in society. He adds a psychoanalytic dialectic to the analysis by exploring the relationship of play and labour. In the age of prosumption (consumption that is at the same time labour and production of commodities), the Internet and neoliberalism, the boundaries between play and labour have become blurred. Playbour has become a new management strategy and ideology. Examples are the Google offices that look like playgrounds and have entertainment and relaxation areas, which hides the fact that the employees work very long hours (Fuchs 2014b, chapter 6). Play has become subsumed under the logic of labour exploitation, i.e. class.

Marcuse speaks of technological rationality as the attempt to turn consciousness into a machine and an instrument that legitimates domination and exploitation. What Adorno based on Horkheimer's concept of instrumental reason terms identity thinking is in Marcuse's theory termed one-dimensional thought. Ideology reduces the complexity of reality's dialectics to just a single dimension.

Marcuse was particularly interested in grounding ethical foundations of critical theory. He did so with the help of Hegel's dialectic of essence and existence. A state of affairs can only be true if its existence corresponds to its essence. Ideas that try to for example create the impression that reality and interests are different from what they are in essence are for example an ideology, the attempt to make reality appear different from its essence in order to justify dominant interests. The logic of essence in a more general understanding points towards

the potentials of what society could be, its not-yet. The logic of essence can ground a critical ethics of co-operation that allows people to politically question domination and class as forms of alienation. In the world of Facebook, we are confronted with the social, whereas the commodity form is not immediately visible to the user. We do not directly experience how personal data is traded as commodity. This inverse commodity fetishism hides the commodity form behind the social. Communication's essence appears as ideology that masks Facebook's commodity form and the exploitation of users' digital labour. In the world of corporate social media, exploitation is real, but tends to become invisible and only indirectly experienceable.

7.5. Axel Honneth Revisits Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness*: The Critical Theory of Recognition, Alienation and Reification

Adorno and Horkheimer's notion of instrumental reason as well as Marcuse's category of technological rationality have in the Frankfurt School mainly been used for analysing how ideology creates one-dimensional and identical consciousness. The very idea that humans are turned into machines and instruments that serve the particular interests of the dominant class is, however, of broader relevance and is also important outside the realm of ideology. It goes back to Lukács' concept of reification that he formulated in *History and Class Consciousness* and that is based on Marx's theory of commodity fetishism and alienation. Axel Honneth has explored the relevance of Lukács' concept of reification for grounding a critical theory of recognition.

For Lukács, reification in very general terms means that there are social structures that treat humans not as real humans, but turn them into instruments serving particularistic interests by dominating, exploiting or trying to manipulate them. Honneth is interested in combining moral philosophy and critical theory. He does so in contrast to other contemporary theorists of alienation by reinterpreting Lukács' concept of reification. Whereas Honneth in his earlier works tends to speak of love, rights and esteem as the three realms of human recognition in society, in his later works he identifies the recognition of needs, equality and the achievements of work. Reification is for Honneth forgetfulness of recognition. Whereas reification is the process that implements domination, alienation is the condition that results from reification.

Honneth's theory of recognition can be connected to the Marxian concept of social production and thereby also be related to Lukács' notion of teleological positing: humans have the interest to engage with others and produce a social world in the economy, politics and culture because they aim to achieve recognition. Recognition is a key goal of humans' teleological positings in society. They produce use-values, decisions and meanings as a social process not just in order to survive, but also in order to lead a good life, which includes to be recognised

by others and to recognise others. Such a distinction of three forms of recognition is based on a distinction among three realms of society: the economy, politics, and culture. Reification and alienation deny humans social recognition by fostering exploitation, control and exclusion. There are economic, political and cultural forms of reification/alienation. Each of them operates on three levels: the subject, intersubjectivity, and the object. Struggles against these nine forms of alienation are struggles for the appropriation of the control over the conditions, under which humans socially produce their lives and society.

A theory of alienation and appropriation that is grounded in and goes beyond the works of Lukács and Adorno is also connected to the works of Marcuse and Adorno discussed in this book: Marcuse is concerned with the dialectical logic of essence. If we assume that co-production and co-operation form an essential feature of humans in society, from which we can derive the ethico-political right that humans should collectively control the economy, politics and culture, then this means that economic, political and cultural alienation are false conditions of society that negate human essence in society. Marcuse's concept of technological rationality and Horkheimer and Adorno's notion of instrumental reason can be interpreted not just at the ideological level, but in general as processes of reification in society that result in and reproduce alienated social conditions.

7.6. Beyond Jürgen Habermas' Critical Theory of Communication

Habermas has established the most influential critical theory of communication. Any critical engagement with communication must take Habermas as one of its starting points. But it certainly does not have to end with or stop at Habermas.

Habermas distinguishes between instrumental and non-instrumental dimensions of society: work/interaction, system/lifeworld, system integration/social integration, instrumental rationality/communicative rationality, teleological action/communicative action, steering media (money and power)/language. His theory is dualist and leaves the realms of the economy and culture separated. Such an approach is ontologically as unsatisfying as economic reductionism and cultural reductionism. Communication is not immaculate, unadulterated, authentic, immune, innocent, and sacred. It is not intrinsically morally good, enlightening, or liberating.

The common ground of Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* and the cultural Marxist approaches of Lev Vygotsky, Valentin Vološinov, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi and Raymond Williams presented in chapter 6 is that humans actively produce signs, information and communicative relations. Communication is a domain of social production. Rossi-Landi and Williams suggest in a manner comparable to Lukács that communication is a specific form of work, the production of symbols that are used in the production and reproduction of social relations.

7.7. Towards a Dialectical Critical Theory of Communication

What conclusions can we draw from the critical approaches in cultural Marxism discussed in this book and its single chapters?

Marx argues in the *German Ideology* that society is a 'real process of production', in which humans engage in the 'material production of life itself' (Marx and Engels 1845, 61). The material character of society is that it is a human realm of social production. Lukács characterises social production as teleological positing: Humans do not just produce, but they produce based on their capacity to define specific goals and purposes of social life. And they do not do so in isolation, but together with others. Co-operation is therefore what Hegel, Marx, Lukács and Marcuse term the essence of society. The 'production of life' is 'a social relation – social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end' (Marx and Engels 1845, 48–49). The logic of co-operation contradicts the logic of instrumental reason.

Social production takes place in the economy, politics and culture. Humans produce use-values, collective decisions and meanings. The economy and work are not limited to the production of physical goods. Also culture and politics are on the one hand part of the economy: humans produce and communicate meanings and collective decisions in social processes. But culture and politics are not identical with the economy. They are simultaneously part and no-part of the economy. Once produced, rules and meanings take effect all over society.

Communication is a fundamental symbolic production process in all these realms of society that helps bringing about and reproducing social relations. We can learn from Adorno and Vološinov that communication and the production and sharing of knowledge are based on dialectics of subject/object, individual/social group, agency/structure, individual knowledge/social knowledge, internalisation/externalisation. If we look at the logic of development of society, all of its subsystems and knowledge, then a Marcusean version of the dialectic applies: development is neither mere necessity, nor mere chance, but a dialectic of chance and necessity, in which the objective structural dialectic conditions the possibilities for human praxis so that humans in the subjective dialectical process make history.

Lukács and Honneth show that alienation and reification in societies structured by class and domination bring about structures that are not controlled by all humans, but by the particularistic interests of specific groups. Alienated societies violate human essence in society. It denies humans recognition. What Horkheimer/Adorno call instrumental reason and what Marcuse calls technological rationality describes structures of alienation and reification that try to turn humans into instruments that are dominated, controlled, exploited, excluded and manipulated so that an elite controls society. An alternative is a co-operative society, in which humans appropriate the economy, politics and

culture, i.e. are in collective control of the social life they produce and reproduce in society.

All human action is purposeful, which Lukács stresses by his category of teleological positing. Only specific purposeful action is instrumental action, namely action aimed at domination, exploitation, control, manipulation or exclusion. We can distinguish between instrumental action that aims at instrumentalising humans and society for fostering the domination of some over others and co-operative action that is based on the logic that actions benefit all. Communication as the symbolic process bringing about social relations all over society is embedded into structures of domination and emancipation. There are instrumental and co-operative forms of communication.

Pegatron is a Chinese company that manufactures phones and computer equipment for Apple and other communications companies. In 2015, China Labor Watch released an investigative report about the working conditions in a Pegatron factory in Shanghai:

> With a median work week of 60 hours, workers typically accumulate 70 to 90 hours of overtime a month, far in excess of the Chinese statutory limit of 36 hours. One worker even worked 119 overtime hours in September. […] Overtime is mandatory. A Pegatron staff member said that a worker who simply wants to do an 8-hour, 5-day workweek "does not conform to our hiring practices". […] Workers are paid the minimum wage (about $1.83/hour), so they depend on overtime to make a living wage. […] Labor intensity can be high. For example, CLW's investigator worked on one unit every 3.75 seconds, standing for the entirety of his 10.5 hours of daily work. […] Dorms are crowded, with anywhere from 8 to 14 people housed in one room. […] up to 40 people need to share the use of one toilet. […] Dorms are poor and unhygienic. Mold grows everywhere. Bed bugs have spread throughout some dorms. […] In pre-job training, nothing is mentioned of the toxic chemicals that workers may come into contact with during the course of their jobs or how to protect themselves. This is despite hazardous working conditions that may include coming into contact with substances like cadmium, lead, and mercury, and handling heavy industrial equipment. […] Pegatron fines workers for various behaviors, including crossing their legs or not wearing their work ID. […] There was no apparent labor union observed at Pegatron. Pegatron's trainer did not know the meaning of the words "labor union" (China Labor Watch 2015, 8–9).

Amazon Mechanical Turk is Amazon's crowd work platform. Workers earning their living on this platform have set up WeAreDynamo.org, a platform that documents working conditions and campaigns, for example publishing letters that these workers wrote to Amazon.com CEO Jeff Bezos. One 'Turker' describes her work the following way:

The stark reality is, in the past two weeks, I've earned approximately $0.75 an hour (yes, that's 75 cents/hr), however, that will be reduced by 15.3% when I file my Federal taxes next year (Self Employment Tax), as for my state, I haven't confronted that aspect as of yet. […] I know my family is fortunate to have health insurance, a roof over our heads, food in our bellies, and the choice to live where we want but that doesn't mean I shouldn't also be upset over poor wages, after all, this isn't the 19th century with sweatshops, robber barons, and no unions, although, it seems like it more and more with the richest 1% of the world soon to own 50% of the world's wealth. One of my greatest fears is not being able to help my children go to college, especially for my oldest child who falls into the Gifted range. A mind is a terrible thing to waste, don't you agree?[2]

How does a dialectical critical theory of communication help us to understand such phenomena? Such a theory sees the economy and culture as inherently connected and does not separate physical and mental labour. The workers in Chinese factories such as Foxconn, Pegatron or Quantat that assemble digital technologies are manufacturing workers. They conduct physical labour. Freelance workers on platforms such as Mechanical Turk, Upwork, TaskRabbit, Freelancer, PeoplePerHour, etc. tend primarily to be information workers who produce some form of information and make use of online freelance platforms (created by software engineers). Both type of labour have in common that they take place in the digital industry that is dominated by large transnational corporations. Corporations such as Amazon.com and Apple do not just exploit one type of digital labour, but different ones: Amazon.com doesn't just put a rent on freelance services via Mechanical Turk, it also sells physical goods such as the Kindle and paperbacks and intangible goods such as e-books. Apple's primary income source is the sale of digital technologies such as Apple computers and the iPhone. But Apple also sells content via its iTunes store. Given the global and convergent character of transnational information corporations, it is not feasible to separate the physical and the mental labour conducting for these companies. Digital workers form a collective workforce. The phenomenon of cultural and digital labour shows that culture and the economy are not separate.

The working conditions are as poor as described in the two examples because global information corporations are profitable businesses: Apple's profits amounted in 2015 to US$53.4 billion[3]. Amazon's profits were in the same year US$596 million.[4] There is a class antagonism between information labour and information capital. These conditions can only be changed if the information workers of the world unite at the transnational level in order to challenge the power of information capital. Apple was in 2015 the world's twelfth largest company, Amazon the 458th largest.[5] The dialectic takes on a very political form in information capitalism so that class relations bring about highly exploited forms of labour. At the same time, many digital media companies have come

under criticism for avoiding paying taxes, which not just increases their profits, but also deprives states of tax income and supports austerity measures that destroy the welfare state and threaten social security.

Information capitalism's result is that humans are denied recognition and are alienated from society's essence. Digital media are instruments and technologies of domination: many information and other workers are highly exploited, which fosters information corporations' profits on the one side of the socio-economic dialectic and precarity on the other. Surveillance ideologies and practices have erected a totalitarian system of control, in which citizens are categorically suspected to be terrorist and criminals. As a consequence, the Internet has in most parts of the world become a highly controlled communication network. In terms of culture, visibility and attention are highly stratified online and controlled by celebrities and corporations. Another aspect of digital culture are digital ideologies: digital ideologies not just celebrate digital entrepreneurialism, but also justify digital media corporations' reifying practices. Apple, in its Supplier Responsibility 2015 Progress Report, for example, prides itself by claiming:

> "Excessive work hours are a widespread and persistent industry problem. At Apple, finding a solution remains a top priority. We limit work-weeks to 60 hours, except in unusual circumstances, with at least one day of mandated rest every seven days. And all overtime must be strictly voluntary. […] We tracked over 1.1 million workers on average per week in our supply chain and 92 percent of all workweeks were compliant with our 60-hour maximum standard".

Given that the International Labour Organization's conventions and recommendations define the 40-hour week as a general standard, it is inhumane that Apple considers 60 hours to be an appropriate number of hours per week in the developing country companies that are part of its supply chain. Apple tries to create the impression that by monitoring working hours in its supply chain it really cares about workers. It tries to create the impression that a 60-hours working week is humane. Comparing these claims with international standards shows, however, that such attempts are manipulative and ideological.

Digital media, however, are not just technologies of domination, but to a certain degree are also part of struggles for a society, in which humans overcome alienation and collectively control their conditions of life. We can find examples of online peer production that foster the digital commons instead of digital commodities. There are cultural co-operatives that question precarity and exploitation (see http://cultural.coop). There are progressive social movements that use social media in protests (Fuchs 2014a). And there are platforms for co-operative work that foreground how people can work together instead of performing the individual self online. Alternative tendencies questioning capitalism are certainly often much more precarious than the media world's

corporate and dominative mainstream. They nonetheless show the desire for a world beyond domination and exploitation. The world of information technology is one that is shaped by a dialectic of repression and emancipatory struggles. Digital media are technologies of domination and liberation at the same time. These potentials are, however, not equally distributed. In a class-based society, we can always take the dominative use of technologies for certain, whereas alternative uses aiming at liberation are much more fragile and precarious. Only political praxis can bring about humanity's emancipation from repression. A critical theory of communication and society stands in solidarity with those who resist and oppose the corporationalisation, commodification and bureaucratisation of communication and the world.

Notes

1 'Fears of dot-com crash, version 2.0.' *Los Angeles Times Online*, 16 July 2006.
2 http://www.wearedynamo.org/dearjeffbezos
3 Data source: Apple, SEC-filings, form 10-K for year 2015.
4 Data source: Amazon, SEC-filings, form 10-K for year 2015.
5 Data source: Forbes 2000, list for 2015.

References

China Labor Watch. 2015. 'Something's Not Right Here. Poor Working Conditions Persist at Apple Supplier Pegatron'. http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/upfile/2015_10_21/2015.10%20Apple%20Pegatron%20report%20FINAL--compress.pdf

Fuchs, Christian. 2014a. *OccupyMedia! The Occupy Movement and Social Media in Crisis Capitalism*. Winchester: Zero Books.

Fuchs, Christian. 2014b. *Social Media: A Critical Introduction*. London: Sage.

Fuchs, Christian. 2016. *Reading Marx in the Information Age. A Media and Communication Studies Perspective on "Capital Volume I"*. New York: Routledge.

Marx, Karl. 1852. 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte'. In *MECW, Volume 11*, 99–197. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Marx, Karl. 1867. *Capital. Volume 1*. London: Penguin.

Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. 1845. *The German Ideology*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus.

Williams, Raymond. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1981. *The Sociology of Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Williams, Raymond. 1989. *What I Came to Say*. London: Hutchinson Radius. 1968, 114

Index

D

CRITICAL THEORY OF COMMUNICATION

This book contributes to the foundations of a critical theory of communication as shaped by the forces of digital capitalism. One of the world's leading theorists of digital media Professor Christian Fuchs explores how the thought of some of the Frankfurt School's key thinkers can be deployed for critically understanding media in the age of the Internet. Five essays that form the heart of this book review aspects of the works of Georg Lukács, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Axel Honneth and Jürgen Habermas and apply them as elements of a critical theory of communication's foundations. The approach taken starts from Georg Lukács *Ontology of Social Being*, draws on the work of the Frankfurt School thinkers, and sets them into dialogue with the Cultural Materialism of Raymond Williams.

Critical Theory of Communication offers a vital set of new insights on how communication operates in the age of information, digital media and social media, arguing that we need to transcend the communication theory of Habermas by establishing a dialectical and cultural-materialist critical theory of communication.

It is the first title in a major new book series **'Critical Digital and Social Media Studies'** published by the University of Westminster Press.

MEDIA STUDIES | SOCIOLOGY | CRITICAL THEORY

CDSMS

CRITICAL DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA STUDIES

THE AUTHOR

Professor Christian Fuchs is the Director of the Westminster Institute for Advanced Studies and the Communication and Media Research Institute. He is editor of the journal *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* and a member of the European Sociological Association's Executive Committee. His fields of work are critical theory of society; critical digital media studies; information, media, communication & society.

@fuchschristian | http://fuchs.uti.at