

## CHAPTER 4

# Communication and Society

What role does communication have in society? In order to give a materialist answer to this question, one must deal with the relation of communication and production/work/labour. This chapter focuses on this question by engaging with the notions of labour and work (section 4.1), the dialectic of communication and production (sections 4.2 & 4.3), and the relation of communication, knowledge and information (section 4.4).

### *Models of Communication*

Denis McQuail outlines four models of communication:<sup>1</sup>

- communication as information transmission;
- communication as ritual through which humans express meanings and participate in society;
- communication as the creation of attention and publicity;
- communication as reception that requires the encoding and decoding of meanings.

Friedrich Krotz<sup>2</sup> argues that the information transmission model is the dominant model in media and communication studies. He conceives of communication as simultaneous information transmission and symbolic interaction that is at the same time an inner and an outer process, where humans agree on the definition of situations, where each subject imagines

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<sup>1</sup> Denis McQuail. 2010. *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage. Sixth edn. pp. 69–75.

<sup>2</sup> Friedrich Krotz. 2007. *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

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taking the role of the other subject, and where perspectives become entangled with each other.<sup>3</sup>

The position taken in this book on how to conceptualise communication is materialist, dialectical, and humanist. It stresses the fundamental role of social production in society that involves a dialectic of communication and production. In this dialectic of communication and production, there are sub-dialectics such as the dialectic of the internationalisation and externalisation of information, the dialectic of communication as practice and means of communication as structures, the dialectic of communication and society, the dialectic of subject and object, the dialectic of individual knowledge/social knowledge, the dialectic of societal structures/knowledge structures, the dialectic of cognition/communication, the dialectic of communication/co-operation, the dialectic of individual semiosis/social semiosis, the dialectic of social semiosis/societal semiosis, the dialectic of individual psyche/the social character, the dialectic of authoritarianism and humanism, etc. Chapter 4 of the book at hand outlines the foundations of the dialectical-materialist-humanist approach to communication theory.

### *The Mediatization of Society*

In media and communication theory, a significant number of scholars have employed the notion of mediatization to conceptualise the relationship of media and society.<sup>4</sup> Here are three definitions of mediatization:

- Friedrich Krotz defines mediatization as ‘the transformation of everyday life, culture and society in the context of the transformation of the media’.<sup>5</sup>
- Stig Hjarvard gives the following definition: ‘By the mediatization of culture and society we understand the process whereby culture and society to an increasing degree become dependent on the media and their logic. This process is characterized by a *duality*, in that the media have become *integrated* into the operations of other social institutions and cultural spheres, while also

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., chapter 2.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: Friedrich Krotz. 2007. *Mediatization: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. Andreas Hepp. 2013. *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity. Stig Hjarvard. 2013. *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*. Abingdon: Routledge. Friedrich Krotz and Andreas Hepp. 2013. A Concretization of Mediatization: How Mediatization Works and Why ‘Mediatized Worlds’ Are A Helpful Concept for Empirical Mediatization Research. *Empedocles: Journal for the Philosophy of Communication* 3 (2): 119–134. Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatization Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118.

<sup>5</sup> Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatization Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118. pp. 108–109.

acquiring the status of social institutions *in their own right*. As a consequence, social interaction – within the respective institutions, between institutions, and in society at large – increasingly takes place via the media.<sup>6</sup>

- Andreas Hepp writes: ‘Mediatization therefore deals with the process in which [...] diverse types of media communication are established in varying contextual fields and the degree to which these fields are saturated with such types. [...] [The focus is on] the question of how far changes in communication indicate the existence of socio-cultural changes.’<sup>7</sup>

These three definitions have a joint core, namely that mediatisation is the process by which media transform society, culture, everyday life, social institutions, social interaction, and social contexts so that sociality increasingly takes place via the media.

The concept of mediatisation is based on the notion of the medium. ‘A medium, then, should be defined as a single object and a type of object which serves the existence, and the transformation and modification, of communication.’<sup>8</sup> A medium has aspects of practice; it consists of symbolic expressions and is a space of experience, and has aspects of structure, namely media technology and the medium as social institution.<sup>9</sup> Krotz argues that mediatisation, alongside globalisation, individualisation, and commercialisation, is a meta-process of modernity.<sup>10</sup>

The notion of mediatisation certainly foregrounds media systems over communication practices. But one cannot automatically assume that the mediatisation approach is structuralist, because mediatisation was partly developed together with a concept of communication<sup>11</sup> and there have been debates that have stressed the role of the human subject in mediatisation processes.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Stig Hjarvard. 2013. *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*. Abingdon: Routledge. p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> Andreas Hepp. 2013. *Cultures of Mediatization*. Cambridge: Polity. p. 68.

<sup>8</sup> Friedrich Krotz. 2014. Media, Mediatization and Mediatized Worlds: A Discussion of the Basic Concepts. In *Mediatized Worlds: Culture and Society in a Media Age*, ed. Andreas Hepp and Friedrich Krotz, 72–87. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. p. 79.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 79–80.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Krotz. 2017. Explaining the Mediatisation Approach. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 103–118. p. 108. Friedrich Krotz. 2007. The Meta-Process of ‘Mediatization’ as a Conceptual Frame. *Global Media and Communication* 3 (3): 256–260.

<sup>11</sup> For example: Krotz, *Mediatisierung: Fallstudien zum Wandel von Kommunikation*.

<sup>12</sup> See for example: Peter Gentzel, Friedrich Krotz, Jeffrey Wimmer, and Rainer Winter, eds. 2019. *Das vergessene Subjekt: Subjektkonstitutionen in mediatisierten Alltagswelten*. Wiesbaden: Springer VS.

*The Critique of the Political Economy of Communication*

Graham Murdock<sup>13</sup> argues that the mediatisation model

pointedly ignores the primacy of capitalist dynamics in shaping the central contours of modernity. [...] The leading urban centres of the contemporary world have been constructed around industrial, financial, trading, export and administrative hubs that service capital. Present patterns of globalisation have been indelibly marked by capitalist colonisations and imperialisms and their legacies. Under the relentless drive to maintain models of growth predicated on ever-increasing levels of personal consumption, conceptions of individuality have been progressively annexed by capitalism's core ideology of possessive individualism. Writers on mediatisation often include economic dynamics in their inventories of contemporary transformative processes under the heading of 'commercialisation', but shifts in the organisation of the media system since the mid-1970s are never located within a more comprehensive account of the wider transformation of capitalism and its multiple implications for the organisation of economic and symbolic power. This absence appears like a ghost haunting recent commentaries by leading writers on mediatisation. In their efforts to compile a more complete account of the elephant they have neglected to ask who owns and trains it and what it is doing in the room.<sup>14</sup>

Murdock stresses that 'we need to begin analysis with the dynamics of "deep capitalism" rather than "deep mediatisation"'.<sup>15</sup> Friedrich Krotz argues that 'in a capitalistic world all such metaproceses depend on the economic dimension. Thus, commercialisation is the basic process providing stimulus to all action'.<sup>16</sup> Elsewhere he stresses that 'communication is functionalised and bound to the process of commodity exchange. The communicative reproduction of humans increasingly turns against them, which is what Marx called alienation'.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Graham Murdock. 2017. Mediatisation and the Transformation of Capitalism: The Elephant in the Room. *Javnost – The Public* 24 (2): 119–135.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>16</sup> Krotz, The Meta-Process of 'Mediatization' as a Conceptual Frame, p. 259.

<sup>17</sup> Translation from German: Friedrich Krotz. 2019. Wie konstituiert das Kommunizieren den Menschen? Zum Subjekt-konzept der Kommunikationswissenschaft im Zeitalter digital mediatisierter Lebensweisen. In *Das vergessene Subjekt: Subjekt-konstitutionen in mediatisierten Alltagswelten*, ed. Peter Gentzel, Friedrich Krotz, Jeffrey Wimmer and Rainer Winter, 17–37. Wiesbaden: Springer VS. p. 35.

The mediatisation approach has thus far not created in-depth analyses of communication and mediatisation in the context of capitalist society. The process of commercialisation only focuses on the exchange of commodities for money on markets, i.e. on what Marx terms the sphere of circulation. But there is also the sphere of commodity production, where human labour produces goods and services as commodities, which is why processes of commodification and capitalisation rank alongside commercialisation as key features of communication in capitalism. Capital is, as Manfred Knoche stresses, a structural transformer of the media.<sup>18</sup>

The economy is certainly, as Krotz stresses, a key aspect of capitalist society's organisation and transformation, but this holds true not just in respect to commodity circulation, but also in the context of production (work and labour) and consumption. The approach taken in the book at hand points out that beyond capitalism the economy is, as the realm of social production, the key foundation of society because all social relations are relations of production. Each sphere of society has emergent qualities that go beyond production and are grounded and based on social production. Commodification, capitalisation, commercialisation, individualisation, globalisation, and mediatisation are not the only meta-processes of modern society. In the realm of modern politics, there are processes of bureaucratisation, control, domination, and surveillance. And in the realm of culture, we find the process of ideologisation.

It should also not be forgotten that humans have the capacity to resist all of these processes of economic, political, and cultural alienation by processes of de-alienation and appropriation, i.e. through class struggles, political protests, and struggles for recognition (see chapters 8, 12, 14 in this book). The dialectical-materialist-humanistic approach to communication theory taken in the book at hand is based on a critical political economy of communication's assumption that 'without a sustained investigation of the dynamics and contradictions of marketised capitalism it is impossible to fully account for the driving forces propelling and organising mediatisation, to properly grasp their consequences for institutional and intimate life or to identify possible routes to challenge and change.'<sup>19</sup> In the analysis of the dialectics of media/communication and society, we need to give special attention to political economy, social production, ideology, alienation, class structures, social struggles, and emancipatory movements.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Manfred Knoche. 2016. The Media Industry's Structural Transformation in Capitalism and the Role of the State: Media Economics in the Age of Digital Communications. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 14 (1): 18–47.

<sup>19</sup> Murdock, *Mediatisation and the Transformation of Capitalism: The Elephant in the Room*, p. 132.

<sup>20</sup> See also: Christian Fuchs. 2020. *Marxism: Karl Marx's Fifteen Key Concepts for Cultural and Communication Studies*. New York: Routledge.

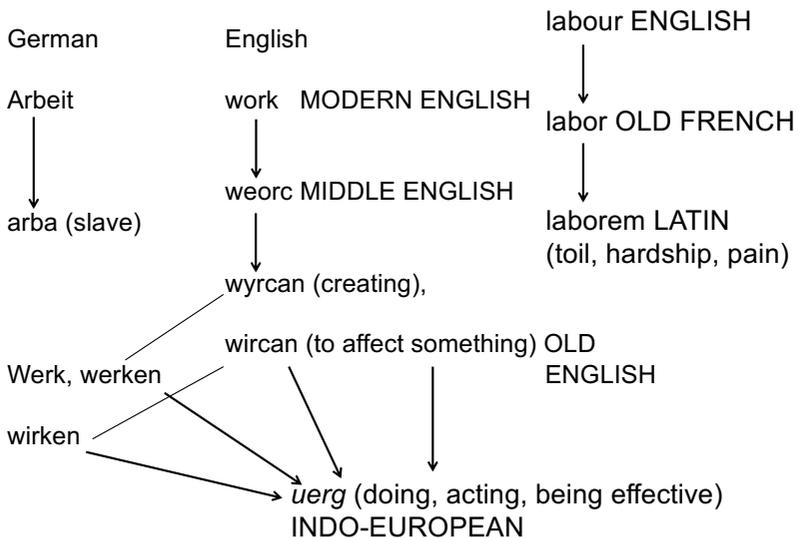
## 4.1. Communication, Work, and Labour

### *Work and Labour*

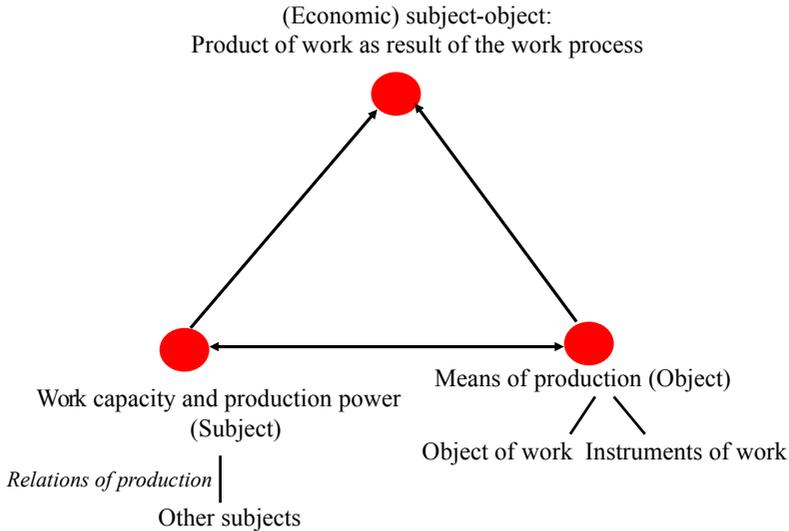
Figure 4.1 shows the etymology of the words 'labour', 'Arbeit', 'work', and 'Werk/werken'. The term 'labour' goes back to the Latin word 'laborem' that means toil, hardship, and pain. The German word 'Arbeit' stems from the Germanic term 'arba' that signifies a slave. The English term 'work' and the German word 'Werkstätigkeit' are linguistically related. They both go back to the Indo-European term 'uerg' that means doing, acting, creating, and having effects.

In German, the term *Werkstätigkeit* (work) is today forgotten. Instead, the word *Arbeit* is used for both work in general as well as alienated labour. In English language use, often no differentiation is made between *work* and *labour*. This circumstance is true for both everyday life and academia. In capitalism, language use has become reified so that in both German and English one does not properly distinguish between alienated and non-alienated activity, so that alienated labour appears as the general model of activity.

Chapter 3 discussed the dialectic of subject and object and the concepts of the productive forces and the relations of production. Seen from the perspective of work, the productive forces are a system in which human work capacity (the mental and physical skills of the human being) are used in the work process. Humans in the work process employ objects as means of production in order to create new products. The means of production include already existing resources (the object of work) and technologies (the instruments of



**Figure 4.1:** Etymology of the terms 'labour', 'work', 'Arbeit', and 'Werk'.



**Figure 4.2:** The dialectic of subject and object in the work process.

work). Humans work with instruments on resources in order to create new products. Work is a dynamic, dialectical process, in which human subjects utilise means of production in order to create new products (see figure 4.2). Humans work together in order to bring about the satisfaction of needs. Work works on society: It allows the satisfaction of needs. When referring to work in general, terms such as labour capacity, instruments of labour, objects of labour, or products of labour are often used. If more general processes are meant than concrete alienated activity in class relations, then it is better to speak of 'work' and 'production' than of 'labour'. Otherwise one risks fetishising labour and capitalism by making labour appear as the general model of the economy and society. Labour only exists in class relations. The term 'division of work' is nonsensical because the division of labour only exists in class relations and is sublated in a socialist society. Labour fetishism is the flip side of the fetishism of capital and commodities. In labour, humans forfeit their life for the dominant class. By being exploited and treated as things, they lose their humanity. In a socialist society, there is no labour, but rather self-determined work of well-rounded individuals.

In Humanist Marxism, authors use the concepts of class experience<sup>21</sup> and structures of feeling<sup>22</sup> in order to stress that subjectivity (including ideas,

<sup>21</sup> Edward P. Thompson. 1978. *The Poverty of Theory & Other Essays*. London: Merlin. pp. 8–10, 164, 171.

<sup>22</sup> Raymond Williams. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 128–135.

feelings, norms, beliefs, morals, values, traditions, and culture) is not just individual, but also collective. One has to add to these approaches the insight that there is a process that mediates between individual subjectivity and collective structures which is organised through communication.<sup>23</sup>

### *Teleological Positing*

For Georg Lukács, society is a complex of complexes, in which humans posit the world teleologically. Teleological positing means that humans try to achieve particular, consciously set goals in the work process and employ certain means for doing so. The teleological positing of work means on the one hand the ‘intervention into concrete causal relations in order to bring about the realization of the goal’<sup>24</sup> – ‘the positing of a goal and its means.’<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, it means that there is a ‘conscious creator’<sup>26</sup> in the work process. Teleological positing ‘has the purpose to utilise a concretely determined individual context for the purpose of a concrete-individual goal.’<sup>27</sup> It is a ‘consciously conducted’<sup>28</sup> social action that is capable of ‘creating causal processes, modifying the otherwise merely spontaneously functioning processes, objects, etc. of being, to turn objectivities into being that did not exist before the work process.’<sup>29</sup>

In this Marxist-Aristotelian concept of the economy, telos is not a force that exists outside of society, like Hegel’s world spirit or Anaxagoras’ *Nous*. Telos is rather a force that is immanent in society and emerges from humans’ conscious orientation on production. Aristotle formulates this immanent

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<sup>23</sup> See: Christian Fuchs. 2019. Revisiting the Althusser/E.P. Thompson-Controversy: Towards a Marxist Theory of Communication. *Communication and the Public* 4 (1): 3–20. Christian Fuchs. 2017. Raymond Williams’ Communicative Materialism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 20 (6): 744–762.

<sup>24</sup> Georg Lukács. 1980. *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*. London: Merlin. p. 67.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Translation from German [„bezweckt, einen konkret bestimmten Einzelzusammenhang für die Zwecke einer konkret-einzelnen Zielsetzung nutzbar zu machen“]: Georg Lukács. 1984. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 13: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 1. Halbband*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. p. 316.

<sup>28</sup> Translation from German [„bewusst vollzogene“]: *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>29</sup> Translation from German [„kausale Prozesse ins Leben zu setzen, die sonst bloß spontan funktionierenden Prozesse, Gegenstände etc. des Seins zu modifizieren, ja Gegenständlichkeiten seiend zu machen, die vor der Arbeit überhaupt nicht existierten“]: *Ibid.*, p. 54.

concept of teleology as follows: ‘everyone who makes makes for an end, and that which is made is [...] an end in a particular relation, and the end of a particular operation.’<sup>30</sup> Marx says in a similar manner that the human being ‘also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose’ in work: ‘Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work. [...] The simple elements of the labour process are (1) purposeful activity, that is work itself, (2) the object on which that work is performed, and (3) the instruments of that work.’<sup>31</sup>

In his works *Physics*<sup>32</sup> and *Metaphysics*<sup>33</sup>, Aristotle discerns four interacting causes: the material cause (*causa materialis*), the efficient/moving cause (*causa efficiens*), the formal cause (*causa formalis*), and the final cause (*causa finalis*).

Wherever there is change, we can identify four dimensions that we can describe in the form of four questions: What from? Where from? What? Why? From what is the change made (material cause)? From where does the change emanate (efficient/moving cause)? What is happening to the basic materials and building blocks and what form is given to them (formal cause)? What is the goal and purpose, and why is there change (final cause)?

These four causes can be applied to the work process: Resources as the object of work constitute the material cause. The working human subject who possesses work capacity and the skills to employ the means of production constitutes the efficient/moving cause. The interaction of the subject and the object in work, whereby the object of work is brought into a new form, is work’s formal cause. And work’s final cause is the creation of particular products as use-values that satisfy certain human needs. Marx is an Aristotelian in respect to the distinction between the object, subject, process, and product of work. Also Georg Lukács’ notion of teleological positing has an Aristotelian character. It particularly stresses the importance of consciously shaped final causes in human production.

Table 4.1. gives an overview of the four Aristotelian causes and applies them to work and communication. In communication, human subjects (efficient cause) in the communication process (formal cause) use certain means of communication in order to bring culture as the totality of ideas and meanings in society (material cause) into a new form so that specific social relations and society are (re)produced (final cause).

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<sup>30</sup> Aristotle. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. *Oxford World’s Classics*. Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 1139b.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Marx. 1867/1976. *Capital*. *A Critique of Political Economy*. Volume One. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin. p. 284.

<sup>32</sup> Aristotle. 1991. *Physics*. In *Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Barnes. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Book II, § 3.

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle 1999. *Metaphysics*. Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press. Aristotle. 1966. *Metaphysik*. Reinbek: Rowohlt. Book I, chapters 3 and 7.

**Table 4.1:** The four Aristotelian causes.

<b>Cause</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Work</b>	<b>Communication</b>
Causa materialis: material cause	What from? Out of which?	Resources, materials	Culture as totality of ideas and meanings
Causa efficiens: efficient/moving cause	Where from? Whence?	Workers	Human subjects
Causa formalis: formal cause	What?	Work process (workers apply means of production in order to change materials and bring them into a new form)	Communication process
Causa finalis: final cause	Why? For the sake of which? (For what? For whom?)	Satisfaction of certain human needs	(Re-)Production of social relations and society

### *Left Aristotelianism*

Monte Ransome Johnson points out that Aristotle distinguishes two dimensions of the final cause.<sup>34</sup> When asking the question of which goal there is, one needs to ask for what's sake something is done ('of which' = for what?) and for whose sake it is done ('for which' = for whom?). Aristotle draws a distinction between 'aims "for the sake of which", and beneficiaries "for whose sake".<sup>35</sup> For example, one can ask: What is the sake of the economy? Someone may answer: The task and final cause of the economy is to create wealth. But the question and its answer are incomplete because one needs to add the question: For whose sake is wealth created? In a capitalist economy, there is inequality between classes as the capitalist class owns the wealth that the working class produces. In capitalism, the economy is for the sake of profit and wealth owned by a few. In contrast, in a socialist society, wealth is created in order to benefit all. This example shows that there are different final causes according to the structure of society. In class societies, the final cause is based on instrumental reason, so that certain groups benefit by instrumentalising others and at the expense of the latter. In socialist societies, the final cause is based on the logic of the common good.

Although Aristotle advanced the logic of the common good by arguing that friendship and justice have to do with sharing – 'the things of friends are

<sup>34</sup> Monte Ransome Johnson. 2005. *Aristotle on Teleology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 66

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

common,<sup>36</sup> – he did not think this principle of the common good to the end in his own philosophy when arguing, for example, that domination, slavery, and patriarchy are natural.<sup>37</sup> The full implications of the logic of the commons were later developed by socialist thinkers such as Marx. In Aristotle's works, the justification of domination goes back to the false assumption in his *Politics* that 'the soul rules the body with the rule of a master'.<sup>38</sup> The rulers are identified with the soul and the ruled with the body. Class rule is indeed as old as the division between manual and mental labour,<sup>39</sup> but this circumstance does not imply that domination is natural. Ernst Bloch points out that there are two different political interpretations of Aristotle:<sup>40</sup> Right Aristotelianism, to which in the Middle Ages for example Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) belonged, separates matter and spirit. It downgrades the importance of matter in a Platonic manner and assumes that the spirit rules matter. Left Aristotelianism, to which for example Averroes (Ibn Ruschd, 1126–1198), Avicenna (Abū Alī al-Husain ibn Abd Allāh ibn Sīnā, 980–1037) and Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) belong, dialectically integrates mind and the formal cause into matter so that matter is seen as productive and self-producing. This assumption is a precondition for an interpretation of Aristotle that challenges domination and exploitation. Whereas Left Aristotelians such as Avicenna, Averroes, and Giordano Bruno 'first reduced the importance of Aristotle's separation of the forms on high from matter and then abolished it altogether, Aquinas dualizes the *formae separatae* and *form inhaerentes* to a degree far beyond Aristotle'.<sup>41</sup>

In *On the Soul (De Anima)*, Aristotle stresses that matter is the potential from which concrete forms develop (see chapter 2 [section 2.1] in the book at hand). The implication for the human being is that the body is the potential for the soul. Matter is 'potentiality, form actuality. Since then the complex here is the living thing'; 'the soul [...] is the actuality of a certain kind of body. Hence the rightness of the view that the soul cannot be without a body, while it cannot be a body; it is not a body but something relative to a body. That is why it is in a body, and a body of a definite kind'.<sup>42</sup> The soul is part of the human body

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<sup>36</sup> Aristotle. 2009. *The Nicomachean Ethics*. *Oxford World's Classics*. Translated by David Ross. Oxford: Oxford University Press. § 1159b.

<sup>37</sup> Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle's Politics*. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Second edition. § 1254b.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, §1254b.

<sup>39</sup> Alfred Sohn-Rethel. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

<sup>40</sup> Ernst Bloch. 1963/2019. *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left*. New York: Columbia University Press.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Aristotle. 1984. *On the Soul*. In *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*. Digital Edition, ed. Jonathan Barnes, 1405-1517. §414a.

and has emergent qualities such as thought, sensation, reason, perception and memory. For Aristotle, matter is the ‘fermenting substrate of possibility’.<sup>43</sup> The ‘idealist-materialist Aristotle’ has ‘more robustly contributed to the notion of the fermenting, dialectical matter than Democritus.’<sup>44</sup> Comparable to Aristotle, Marx understands the mind materially. Thought and communicated meanings are bound to the human subject. Marx formulates this circumstance in the following manner: ‘It is impossible to separate thought from matter *that* thinks. This matter is the substratum [‘Subjekt’=‘subject’ in the German original] of all changes going on in the world.’<sup>45</sup> So, in *The Holy Family*, Marx speaks of a dialectic of thought and matter, i.e. of a dialectical solution to the mind body-problem that overcomes the Cartesian dualism. Thought has a material foundation, namely the human body and brain, and at the same time emergent qualities. Aristotle’s dialectical concept of matter, in which the mind is dialectically grounded in the body’s potentiality, contradicts his justification of slavery and patriarchy in his *Politics*. The latter book is based on the undialectical assumption that the mind and the body are separate.

### *Communication as Teleological Positing*

Communication is not fundamentally different from production and work, because it produces and helps humans to reach certain goals, namely to inform themselves, reach understanding, form ideas, strengthen their imagination, be entertained, etc. There is a dialectic of production and communication, which means ‘nothing other than: humans *produce communicatively* and *communicate productively*.’<sup>46</sup> Humans communicate productively (*producing communication*) because communication produces and reproduces social relations, social structures, social systems, institutions, society as totality, and human sociality. Work is not isolated and individual production, but a co-operative form of activity, where humans communicate in order to organise production (*communication in production*).

Production/Work and communication reach dialectically into each other. Whereas communication is a specific form of production oriented on

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<sup>43</sup> Translation from German: Ernst Bloch, 1972. *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp. p. 143.

<sup>44</sup> Translation from German: *Ibid.*, p. 145.

<sup>45</sup> Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. 1845. *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism. Against Bruno Bauer and Company*. In *Marx and Engels Collected Works Volume 4*, 5–211. London: Lawrence & Wishart. p. 129.

<sup>46</sup> Horst Holzer. 2018. Communication & Society: A Critical Political Economy Perspective. *tripleC: Communication, Capitalism & Critique* 16 (1): 357–401. p. 371.

understanding and socialisation, production is only social and societal through communication. Work has a communicative character, and communication has a work character. Work is a social relation in which humans co-operate in order to co-produce new realities through which human needs are satisfied. Communication co-ordinates the production process. Raymond Williams argues in this context that ‘communication and its material means are intrinsic to all distinctively human forms of labour and social organization.’<sup>47</sup> The opposite is also true: Work is intrinsic to communication because production as the teleological positing of goals forms the model for all human practices in society. Therefore, production takes on a specific form in communication, namely the production and reproduction of sociality.

Communication is not just production, but also the foundation of the human understanding of the world. Through information and communication, we learn to know the world and other human beings’ motivations and views. ‘Understanding’ does not necessarily imply moral agreement, but the recognition and comprehension of circumstances. Communication is production and at the same time, as orientation on understanding, also more than communication. It has emergent qualities. Conversely, production is as work communicative, but as production of specific use-values it is more than mere communication.

In his book *Politics*, Aristotle writes that ‘man alone among the animals has speech’<sup>48</sup> (λόγον δὲ μόνον ἄνθρωπος ἔχει τῶν ζώων). For Aristotle, humans are the *zōon logon echon* (ζῶον λόγος ἔχων). A widely used translation of this passage is that the human is a rational animal. Hannah Arendt and Charles Taylor, however, question this translation.<sup>49</sup> In Greek, λόγος (logos) denotes both utterance/speech and reason/rationality. The double meaning of logos applies to the essence of human beings. Humans are both communicative and rational beings. They are teleological beings, which means that they strive, through work and communication, to reach defined goals. Communication and production extend into each other in a dialectical manner. Rationality means that goals are identified and means are used to reach these goals. Production is the human process of rationality, the process by which humans try to reach defined goals. Communication is a form of rationality, namely the production of the human being’s sociality, societalisation (*Vergesellschaftung*) and societality (*Gesellschaftlichkeit*). The German term *Gesellschaftlichkeit* is

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<sup>47</sup> Raymond Williams. 1980/2005. *Culture and Materialism*. London: Verso. p. 50.

<sup>48</sup> Aristotle. 2013. *Aristotle’s Politics*. Translated by Carnes Lord. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. Second edition. § 1253a.

<sup>49</sup> Hannah Arendt. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press. p. 27. Charles Taylor. 2016. *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press. p. 338. Charles Taylor. 2015. *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 217.

often translated into English as sociality. I deliberately use the term ‘societality’ as translation of *Gesellschaftlichkeit* because it nicely indicates that *Gesellschaft* and *Gesellschaftlichkeit* focus on society as totality. We can best interpret Marx’ pronouncement that the human being is ‘by nature [...] a societal animal’ (‘gesellschaftliches Tier’)<sup>50</sup> as meaning that a) humans (re)produce society and sociality through communicative action (communication as production) and that b) production is a process organised by communication that constitutes sociality and society (communication in production).

Avicenna comments that Aristotle’s understanding of the human as ‘the speaking (rational) animal’ has also been called ‘the “hylik” mind, that is to say the potential mind, thus likening it to the hyle, which is the potential matter.’<sup>51</sup> Avicenna thereby points out that communication, the capacity for language, and the mind are not independent of matter. The brain is a part of the human body that has specific vital potentials. It encompasses the potentials for thought, speech, and rationality that are enacted by specific individuals. Avicenna points out the productive, material character of the mind.

Mogobe B. Ramose<sup>52</sup> argues that a partial and particularistic interpretation of Aristotle’s assumption that ‘man is a rational animal’<sup>53</sup> that ‘excludes the African, the Amerindian, and the Australasian’<sup>54</sup> has been an ideological foundation of ‘colonization, racism, and slavery.’<sup>55</sup> This particularism has denied people of colour their humanity by assuming that ‘the colonized are by definition without reason.’<sup>56</sup>

People of colour have not only been denied rationality, but also the status of communicative beings. Based on the argument that they are not rational, colonialism and racism have assumed that they have nothing important to say or that what they say is harmful, which is why they have been denied an equal right to speak and be listened to in the public sphere. Ramose argues that the only valid interpretation of Aristotle is that ‘all human beings are rational animals.’<sup>57</sup> One must therefore also assume that *all humans* are communicating,

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<sup>50</sup> Karl Marx. 1867. *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie. Erster Band. MEW Band 23*. Berlin: Dietz. p. 346.

<sup>51</sup> Avicenna. 2018. *A Compendium on the Soul*. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/58186/58186-h/58186-h.htm>, p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> Mogobe B. Ramose. 2003c. The Struggle for Reason in Africa. In *The African Philosophy Reader*, ed. Pieter H. Coetzee and Abraham P.J. Roux, 1–9. London: Routledge. Second edition.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

linguaging beings. But it is also not sufficient to argue, as Charles Taylor<sup>58</sup> does, that the human being is the language animal: Humans are also purposefully, actively producing, working beings. They communicate in production and produce communication, which means there is a human dialectic of production and communication.

Viewed from both sides, production and communication are at the same time identical and non-identical, which is just another expression for saying that a dialectical relation exists between them. The next two sections will further discuss this dialectic by analysing the production of communication (4.2) and the role of communication in production (4.3).

## 4.2. The Dialectic of Production and Communication: The Production of Communication

### *The Productive Role of Communication in Society's Dialectic of Subject and Object*

According to Lukács, work and production are the 'model for soci[et]al being'.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, human communication and language are also based on this model, which finds its expression in the production and reproduction of social relations by the application of language in communication. Communication is a particular form of teleological positing that organises teleological positings.<sup>60</sup>

Communication as a complex is not situated outside of the economy, politics, and culture, but is an inherent part of all production processes in all subsystems of society. Communication is also a meta-teleological positing that organises, produces, and reproduces social relations, whereby production becomes possible in social relations. Language is 'universal and ubiquitous in society [...] in that there is not a single complex in society's being that could exist and develop itself without language's mediating role'.<sup>61</sup> But just like communication, production also has a universal character in society because all human activities produce results.

By communicating, humans connect society's structures to their everyday experiences and their everyday experiences enter society's structures. That structures condition and enable human practices means that they enable

<sup>58</sup> Charles Taylor, *The Language Animal*.

<sup>59</sup> Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*, p. v.

<sup>60</sup> Georg Lukács. 1986. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 14: Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. pp. 172–173.

<sup>61</sup> Translation from German [„gesellschaftliche Universalität und Ubiquität [...], indem es keinen einzigen Komplex im gesellschaftlichen Sein gibt, der ohne die Vermittlungsfunktion der Sprache existieren und sich weiterbilden könnte“]: *Ibid.*, p. 180.

communication through which individuals inform themselves, network, and (re)produce social relationships. Society is inherently linked to the dialectic of structures and practices. And this dialectic also includes that communication mediates social relations. Communication mediates the dialectics of subject/object, actors/structures, individual/group, individual and groups/organisations, individual and groups and organisations/institutions, individual and groups and organisations and institutions/society.

The mediation of human action implies 'leav[ing] behind the immediacy of empirical reality'.<sup>62</sup> Neither societal nor individual being are things-in-themselves, but exist only through mediation, i.e. through societal relations. Such mediation can only be achieved via communication. In the language of Hegel this means that society's being-in-itself is only possible as being-for-another. The human being is, as Marx says, 'the ensemble of the soci[et]al relations'.<sup>63</sup> Societal relations such as capital can in most cases continue to exist when a single worker or capitalist dies or leaves, because they can be replaced. Thus, societal relations are general. Social relations, in contrast, are concrete and interpersonal relations that humans enter in their everyday life. Peter works together with his colleagues Mary and Joseph. He has a conflict over working hours, overtime, and wage levels with manager Sandra. If Sandra leaves the company, the labour dispute will not necessarily come to an end, because she can simply be replaced by another manager who represents capital's interests and is similarly ruthless and brutal.

Social relations take place in everyday life at particular times and in particular locales. Communication as the mediating process that (re)produces social relations is an everyday phenomenon. Peter and his colleagues communicate that they hate overtime and think their wages are much too low by reporting their assessment to Sandra and their union, who are thereby compelled to react to this complaint. Sandra reacts according to capitalist interests. It is not entirely clear how the union reacts (appeasement, negotiations, escalation). Power relations are abstract societal relations that are instantiated, lived, executed, reproduced, and potentially questioned, challenged, and radically changed in and through communication processes in everyday life.

Communication is based on the fact that the human being is 'an answering being'.<sup>64</sup> But an answer presupposes questions. Therefore, the human being is also a questioning being. Humans ask questions about themselves and the

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<sup>62</sup> Georg Lukács. 1923/1971. *History and Class Consciousness*. London: Merlin Press. p. 162.

<sup>63</sup> *MECW* Volume 5, pp. 4 & 7.

<sup>64</sup> Translation from German [„ein antwortendes Wesen“]: Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*. 2. Halbband, p. 339.

relations we find in nature and in society. Communication is a dialectic of questions and answers, so that posing questions results in the search for answers; society's transformation poses new questions, to which humans again seek answers, etc. The search for answers to questions posed by society is one of the general driving factors of society's transformation. Structures of domination are contradictory. Therefore, in class societies, the answers and solutions to questions are controversial, contested, and embedded into society's conflicts and social struggles.

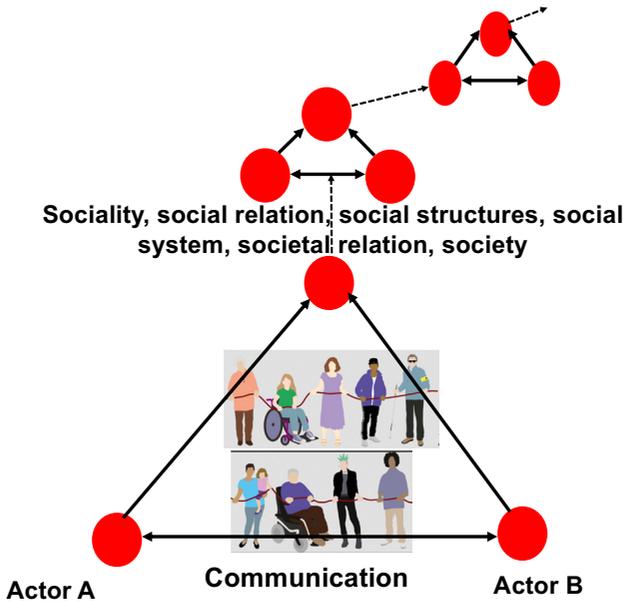
Through everyday communication, humans (re)produce social structures that (re)produce societal structures that enable, condition, and constrain further communication processes in everyday life. Society is the totality of societal relations. Every societal relation emerges from and includes numerous social relations. A societal relation (such as the class relation between capital and labour) is a totality of particular social relations. So, for example, the class relation consists of numerous capitalist organisations, in which concrete workers face concrete capitalists in everyday life. Societal relations are not isolated, but moments that reach into other moments so that totalities emerges. A totality is not the same as totalitarianism. Every society is a totality of moments that reach into each other. A concrete moment of society is not particularistic, individualistic, or atomised, but rather a moment in a totality. A moment necessarily extends beyond itself by reaching into other moments. Society is a 'complex of complexes' that interact as moments and reproduce society.<sup>65</sup>

Communication produces meanings. Through communication, humans signify and interpret society, nature, themselves, and each other. But not every behaviour is communicative. Non-social behaviour is not communicative. If one sings alone in the shower or reflects alone on the world, then one reflects and produces symbols for oneself and does not communicate with other humans. There is no social context. The work of the professional singer, who sings for himself and others, is a social activity. In contrast, singing in the shower is often not a social activity. Of course, the matter is different if someone listens ('Stop making such a terrible noise while showering') and complains about or praises the shower songs ('You are a talented singer and should apply to a casting show such as *Idols* or *Got Talent*').

The boundary between individual and social behaviour is at the same time the boundary between non-communicative and communicative behaviour. Behaviour and communication are not two separate, but connected moments. There is a dialectic of the individual and the social: The individual is a social and societal being that can only individualise in relation to other humans. The social is a productive relation between individuals that produces and reproduces structures in social systems and society.

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<sup>65</sup> Translation from German [„Komplex aus Komplexen“]: Ibid., p. 155.



**Figure 4.3:** Model of communication as social and societal production process.

#### *A Model of Communication as Social and Societal Production Process*

Figure 4.3 shows a model of communication as social production process: In the communication process, humans produce the social that enters into ever newer communication processes that again create the social. Humans thereby constitute sociality as a dynamic process and open totality. The production of the social includes the production of social relations, social structures, social systems (groups, organisations, institutions, society's subsystems), societal relations, and society. Communication and sociality are dynamic processes that humans create in a retroactive, dialectical manner: Every end point of the production of communication/sociality is the starting point of further production. Society is a sphere that re-emerges constantly from the productive dialectic of structures and human practices, in which communication is the productive process of mediation. Through communication, humans co-produce and reproduce social structures that enable and constrain practices so that the dialectics of structures and practices, sociality, structures, and society reproduce themselves dynamically. Communication is the productive process of mediation that organises the dialectic of structures and practices as open totality.

Communication is not just a social process that produces positive outcomes of sociality. It is not automatically morally good. When there is a group of people who plan to enslave or exploit others, then they also have to communicate in order to realise their plan. 'Language is also used to create, alter, and break

connections between people.<sup>66</sup> Humans not only communicate in order to produce and reproduce social relations, but also to change, end, or destroy social relations so that communication, along with the relations in which it takes place, comes to an end. Examples are a written notice of job termination or a divorce. Both end a social relationship and the regular communication processes taking place in it. War, genocide, and mass extermination are the most drastic examples of communicative action that kills humans but also thereby destroys their social relations. Acts of warfare, genocide, and extermination communicate hatred directed against certain groups.

Whereas positivist concepts of communication only stress how communication results in morally positive associations, fatalist notions focus only on how communication dissociates. However, communication is a dialectical social process that has potentials to produce diverse outcomes on a continuum that ranges from construction/destruction, peace/war, love/hate, association/dissociation, unification/separation, integration/disintegration, community/disparity, friendship/enmity, co-operation/competition, beginning/end, birth/death, etc. The opposite sides of these antagonisms are not just expressions of two different logics of society – the logic of instrumentalism and the logic of humanism – but they can also reach into each other. So, for example, companies co-operate in order to destroy competition and other companies, or soldiers co-operate in order to kill identified enemies. Communicating dissociation is communication as the production of the destruction of social relations. It is communication that announces the dissolution of communication. Just as there is general meta-communication (communication about communication, for example communication about the rules of communication, the code of conduct of an organisation), there is also negative meta-communication – communication about the disappearance of communication.

One implication of communication's mediating and socially productive role in social relations is that language and language use are contextual. At the level of semantics, the meaning of a single word depends on all the other words in the sentence. The meaning of a sentence depends on other sentences in the same paragraph and the overall text. Language and language use are also dependent on social and societal contexts: The state as society and organisation conditions the meaning that certain words and symbols and phrases take on. Communication is a practice that is part of the reproduction and change of social systems and society. Just as society shapes language and communication, language use and communication shape society. Humans who communicate do so as members of social systems and society. They communicate in various social and societal roles and contexts. Language and communication are thereby socially contextual practices.

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<sup>66</sup> Charles Taylor. 2016. *The Language Animal. The Full Shape of the Human Linguistic Capacity*. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press. p. 261.

Human communication is shaped by social contexts and (re)produces social contexts. One implication of the social and contextual character of language is that humans are not individual atoms, but social beings who exist in and through social relations. The larger context of communication extends beyond the immediate temporal and spatial presence of humans in face-to-face communication. In space, communication can extend beyond local space. In time, communication can transcend synchronous time via asynchronous communication and history via the recording of communication. Society is constitutive of communication, and communication is a constitutive factor of society. Constitution of and through communication includes both reproduction and differentiation.

Having discussed the production of communication, we will next discuss communication in production.

### 4.3. The Dialectic of Production and Communication: Communication in Production

#### *Communication Structures*

In the economy, humans produce physical and non-physical products that satisfy human needs. Economic production always has a symbolic and communicative dimension. In production, humans relate to each other communicatively in order to co-ordinate their activities. In class society, such co-ordination includes orders, control, and surveillance used by management for organising the exploitation of workers. The produced and reproduced structures such as commodities, capital, companies, markets, etc. symbolise the economy in society.

Communication in production also takes on the form of communication technologies. Means of communication are 'means of social production'<sup>67</sup> that play an 'inherent role in every form of production.'<sup>68</sup> Language, books, newspapers, the telegraph, the telephone, or the networked computer are examples of means of communication that transmit information across spatial distances. Recording technologies have the capacity to store information over time so that it is not just communicated in real time, but can also be communicated time-delayed as recording. Communication technologies play a role in the production, communication, consumption, storage, and recollection of information. In a more general sense, one can say that not only do communication technologies symbolise, store, and communicate, but that every structure in society symbolises the social, makes social action durable, and communicates information about power, wealth, influence, and status.

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<sup>67</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p. 51.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

Information and communication technologies enable the production, distribution, and consumption of goods to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries so that these processes can be co-ordinated and organised over distance. The storage of information enables surveillance of humans who execute information processes. The rise of the computer, databases, the Internet, and social media have created new possibilities for management to monitor and control workers.

A further aspect of communication in production is related to the qualities of the produced goods. On the one hand, engineers and assemblers produce communication technologies. On the other hand, workers' means of communication are also used as means of production for creating non-physical, informational, and communicative goods, i.e. information, social services, and social relations. Through scientific-technological progress, work to a certain degree distances itself from the production of natural objects.<sup>69</sup> Work is not just a process between humans and nature, but also one between humans, so that humans, by utilising technologies, produce physical, social, and informational use-values from natural, industrial and cultural resources (see table 3.2 in chapter 3, section 3.2: The Relations of Production and the Productive Forces).

In the course of society's history, the social, in the form of relations, intentions, experiences and knowledge, has increasingly become part of the objects, instruments, and products of work. As a consequence, production distances itself to a certain degree from nature. However, this does not mean that the production of information replaces the production and extraction of natural resources and the production of natural and industrial products, but that it complements these processes. A concrete example is that software is useless without hardware and power supply. Software as an information product interacts in its use and production with industrial products and natural products. Lukács distinguishes between two types of teleological positings, namely the ones that change nature and the ones that change the social. The development of labour and co-operation has resulted in the increasing importance of the second type in capitalism, namely of the complex of 'mental work'.<sup>70</sup>

### *Communication Work*

Communication work (sometimes also termed 'knowledge work' or 'information work' or 'creative work') is a particular type of work that produces information. Every work is based on the dialectics of body/mind and physical/mental activities. But one can nonetheless decide whether a certain work has more of a bodily or a mental character. The miner and the philosopher are

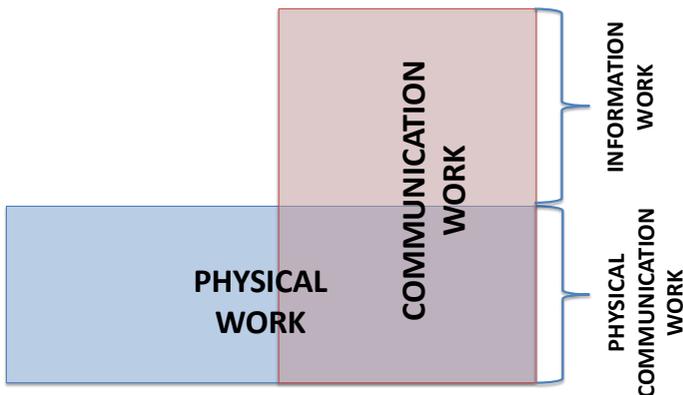
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<sup>69</sup> See. Radovan Richta, ed. 1969. *Civilization at the Crossroads: Social and Human Implications of the Scientific and Technological Revolution*. White Plains, NY: International Arts and Sciences Press.

<sup>70</sup> Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins*. 2. Halbband, p. 136.

two good examples for the distinction between physical work and knowledge work. There are of course also intermediate stages, such as the surgeon, whose work is at the same time a challenge for body and mind. Physical work creates products that are things that one can touch. Information is in contrast intangible (but not immaterial). Information stores and communicates meanings. It represents something for which it stands as a symbol. Communication work is a form of social production that creates information or information technologies. The production, communication, and interpretation of information takes place with the help of information technologies such as the computer. The production of information and communication technologies is part of communication work. Although such technologies are physical, they are key means for communication. The overlap of a subset of physical work and a subset of communication work constitutes the work that creates communication technologies. This type of work can be termed physical communication work. Information work is a mental type of communication work. It produces social meanings, symbols, contents, and information. Information work and physical communication work are two connected aspects of communication work. They create communication technologies respectively information. The stage model in figure 4.4 visualises the relationships just described.

Alfred Sohn-Rethel<sup>71</sup> has shown that the emergence of class society resulted in the division of manual and intellectual labour. In the course of the development of modern class society, the activities of managers, bureaucrats, planners, politicians, and consultants, who plan, execute, and control the accumulation of power, have been added as professions. Class rule means inequality and injustice. Wherever there is injustice, we find forms of management and control



**Figure 4.4:** The relation of physical work and communication work.

<sup>71</sup> Alfred Sohn-Rethel. 1978. *Intellectual and Manual Labour. A Critique of Epistemology*. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

that try to make potential resistance unlikely. But it is short-sighted to limit the definition of communication work just to the organisation, the management, and the execution of domination. The rise of the culture industry has turned culture and communication to a certain degree into commodities. Cultural and communication workers produce communicative and cultural commodities such as music, films, software, advertisements, consultancy, information technologies, entertainment, etc. Communication work takes on 'proletarianised' forms. As a consequence, many immediate producers of communication goods are exploited in class relations.

The production of communication and communication in production are based on human knowledge and communicate information as particular content. The next section deals with the relation of communication, knowledge, and information.

#### 4.4. Communication, Knowledge, and Information

##### *Nature, Culture, and Communication*

Humans differ from animals because they produce in a self-conscious, anticipatory, morally judging and societal manner. But how did the transition from animals to humans take place? Marxist theory argues that in the development of humans, there is a dialectic of the development of the body and the mind in and through the work process. It says that a central development was in this respect the emergence of upright posture and the related development of the grasping hand, which as a consequence led to the reversal of means and ends so that instruments were no longer used spontaneously, but consciously and with a plan, i.e. utilised as technologies. These developments led to the emergence of society.<sup>72</sup> Language and linguistic communication emerged in and through work because one had to co-ordinate complex processes in the organisation of hunting and production in general. When activity became more complex, co-operation became necessary, for which practical knowledge and its communication through language became necessary.<sup>73</sup> Work brought about the transition from animals to humans, society, and culture.

The boundaries posed by nature diminished over time so that work took on an ever more societal character and became detached from the direct transformation of nature, although humans of course stand necessarily in a

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<sup>72</sup> Friedrich Engels. 1876. *The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*. In *MECW Volume 25*. London: Lawrence & Wishart. pp. 452–464. Klaus Holzkamp. 1985. *Grundlegung der Psychologie*. Frankfurt: Campus. pp. 162–206.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 224–231. See also: Christian Fuchs. 2015. *Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media*. London: Routledge. Section 3.2 (pp. 55–62).

metabolism with nature.<sup>74</sup> The retreat of the natural boundary expressed itself first in the reduction of the amount of agricultural labour and the increase of the amount of industrial labour. Since the second half of the 20th century, one can in developed countries observe a decrease in the amount of agricultural and industrial labour (i.e. manual labour) and a significant increase of service and information-producing labour.

Culture is the system of society in which humans produce meanings, subjectivity, and identities. Communication, in contrast, is the process of the production and reproduction of social relations. Wherever there is culture as a social relation, there is communication. And whenever we communicate, we produce culture.

Since the human being offers interpretations of the world to others in the communication process, social relations always have a cultural dimension. But this circumstance does not imply that culture is society's dominant system. Every social relationship has economic, political, and cultural dimensions. If one of these dimensions is dominant, then the relation belongs to a particular subsystem of society. In the workplace, humans produce commodities and class relations. We also find a culture of work and certain micro-political rules in the workplace, but a company is not part of the political or cultural system, but belongs to the economic system. All companies have economic, political, and cultural dimensions, but the economic one is dominant. Whereas communication is the social process of meaning production, culture is the system encompassing the totality of the relations of meaning production. Culture shapes, conditions, enables, and constrains our everyday communication that reproduces the cultural system and its structures.

Raymond Williams stresses the 'centrality of language and communication as formative social forces.'<sup>75</sup> Williams defines culture as a 'whole way of life.'<sup>76</sup> Culture includes lived culture, recorded culture, and traditional culture.<sup>77</sup> All three forms have 'characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate.'<sup>78</sup> For Williams, culture is a meaning-making system that consists of practices through which 'a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored.'<sup>79</sup> This means that wherever one communicates, there is culture, and culture must be communicated in order to be able to reproduce itself.

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<sup>74</sup> See: Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being. 3: Labour*, pp. 17–18, 46, 76, 103, 118.

<sup>75</sup> Williams, *Culture and Materialism*, p. 243.

<sup>76</sup> Raymond Williams. 1958. *Culture & Society, 1780–1950*. New York: Columbia University Press. pp. xviii & 325.

<sup>77</sup> Raymond Williams. 1961/2011. *The Long Revolution*. Cardigan: Parthian. p. 70.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 62.

<sup>79</sup> Raymond Williams. 1981. *Culture*. Glasgow: Fontana-Collins. p. 13.

In the economy, where work produces goods in order to satisfy needs, purposes and goals are much more clearly defined than in culture, where we find a broad variation on issues concerning taste and the scope 'of desirable (or undesirable) reactions to societal matters of fact, situations, tasks, etc.'<sup>80</sup> Lukács remarks that 'on a specific level of production, the value of the labour product differs sharply according to whether it is immediately useful or not useful, whereas in artistic creation the field and possibilities of value and non-value are extraordinarily widely stretched and hardly determinable in advance.'<sup>81</sup>

In teleological positing, ideas are a guiding and goal-orienting force so that culture is immanent in work. In class societies, it is not the immediate producers, but the dominant class that defines the guiding principles of work. Humans define goals that are influenced by societal needs. Culture operates as the formation of meaning in the economy, just as the economy operates as production in culture. Therefore, culture is economic and non-economic and the economy is cultural and non-cultural.

### *Knowledge and Communication*

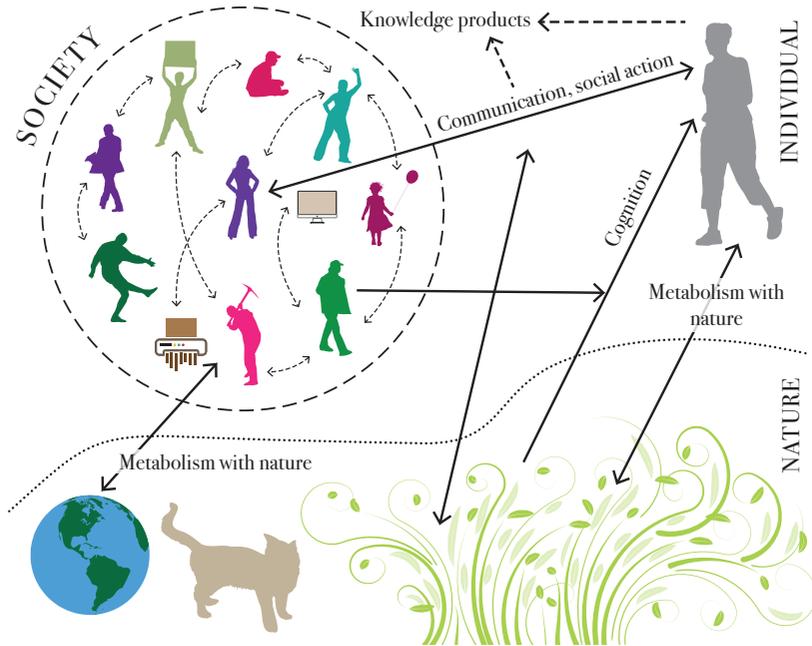
In the process of cognition, humans perceive, recognise, and interpret the world. In our everyday life, we produce, in interaction with the world, new knowledge that is rarely completely new, but helps us in any case to co-ordinate our behaviour in the world.

Figure 4.5 visualises the production of knowledge. A human does not necessarily have to communicate with other human beings in order to create new knowledge. Individual observation produces new experiences that result in knowledge about the world. Knowledge is always knowledge of certain aspects of society and nature. Such contexts shape and condition, but do not determine the form and content of knowledge. Humans externalise parts of their knowledge of the world in the communication process. Humans gain knowledge of each other through communication. Through communication and cooperation and based on individual knowledge, social groups, organisations, social systems, and societies produce collective knowledge. Academic disciplines and fields such as philosophy or communication studies are examples of systems that produce collective knowledge. It is not single individuals and their

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<sup>80</sup> Translation from German [„gewünschter (oder unerwünschter) Reaktionen auf gesellschaftliche Tatbestände, Situationen, Aufgaben etc.“]: Lukács, *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins. 2. Halbband*, S. 417.

<sup>81</sup> Translation from German [„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“]: *Ibid.*, p. 535.



**Figure 4.5:** The production of knowledge.

individual academic knowledge that make up such a field. Rather, academic fields feature dominant paradigms, counter-paradigms, and discourses that take place in the academic public (publications, conferences, discussions, etc.).

While bourgeois sciences strive towards analytically describing class society, which creates knowledge for the sake of domination, critical research aims at producing academic knowledge that can contribute to the transformation and abolition of class domination. It aims at producing critical knowledge.

In heteronomous societies, knowledge structures represent class structures and structures of domination. There are struggles about the definition of such knowledge and what and how science should communicate in the public sphere. The class background of an individual does not necessarily dominate his/her consciousness. Marx and Engels came from bourgeois families, but their thought and practices were not bourgeois, but rather socialist. In class societies, there are struggles about knowledge, i.e. struggles about who formulates knowledge about the world in what ways. Individual knowledge, communication, and social knowledge have particular contents, in which the relations that humans enter in society and the relations they have to nature are manifested. Such manifestations are not photographic reflections, but rather complex, non-linear relations. So, for example, a painting stands in a particular societal context that shapes artistic production, at least in an indirect manner. Based on such a context, form and content can either be more realist depictions

of parts of nature and society, or abstractions. In both cases, the same or similar societal conditions shape the result. Based on particular contexts, artworks as knowledge structures can take on diverse forms and contents.

In the communication process, humans relate their knowledge to each other and reveal to each other how they interpret certain parts of the world, i.e. of society and nature. There is a dialectic of the individual, society, and nature. In the communication process, humans relate to each other in a symbolic way by sharing meanings they give to the external world.

Georg Lukács<sup>82</sup> analyses human cognition and knowledge with the concept of the signal system. Based on the works of Ivan Pavlov, he discerns various signal systems: Signal system 1 organises unconscious bodily movements and reflexes that are reactions to natural and bodily signals. This system has to do with the autonomic nervous system. Language is signal system 2 that humans employ for using spoken and visual words. This signal system is specific to the human being. Lukács criticises Pavlov for not seeing an inherent relation of work and language.<sup>83</sup> Signal system 1' is, like signal system 2, a system that operates with signals of signals.<sup>84</sup> Signal system 1' generalises signals of signals and makes them conscious.<sup>85</sup> It defines typical aspects of relations.<sup>86</sup> Lukács discusses as examples of phenomena produced by signal system 1' fantasies, thoughts, creativity, love, understanding, spontaneous decision-making, tactics, the aesthetic reception of arts and culture, or the knowledge of nature. By saying that 'signal system 1' especially serves human cognition<sup>87</sup> and shapes psychological life,<sup>88</sup> it becomes clear that for Lukács, signal system 1' is the system of human cognition and the psyche, i.e. the processes in the human brain.

With the help of signal system 1', and based on existing knowledge and the dialectic of continuity and discontinuity, humans produce new knowledge.<sup>89</sup> 'So we everywhere on relatively developed levels of society see a complex, contradictory co-operation of signal systems 1' and 2'.<sup>90</sup> Signal system 1'

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<sup>82</sup> Georg Lukács. 1963. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 12: Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 2. Halbband*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>87</sup> Translation from German [„Signalssystem 1' vor allem der Erkenntnis des Menschen dient“]: Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>89</sup> Georg Lukács. 1963. *Georg Lukács Werke Band 12: Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen. 2. Halbband*. Darmstadt: Luchterhand. pp. 33–35.

<sup>90</sup> Translation from German [„So sehen wir überall auf relativ entwickelter Gesellschaftsstufe, eine komplizierte, widerspruchsvolle Zusammenarbeit der Signalsysteme 1' und 2“]: Ibid., p. 64.

transforms the signals (about forms and content) that humans obtain via signal system 2.<sup>91</sup> There is a dialectic of human cognition and communication: Humans relate to the natural world and society, perceive the world, and produce new knowledge.

The human brain transforms and processes signals perceived in the context of human behaviour. The human brain co-ordinates the interaction of the human being in its societal, social, and natural environment. In the communication process, humans externalise parts of their knowledge about the world and internalise knowledge from others. There is a dialectic of externalisation and internationalisation of knowledge in the communication process. With the help of signal system 1<sup>1</sup> humans produce knowledge about the world in the process of cognition. The communication process is organised with the help of signal system 2 (language). In it, humans engage with other humans whereby social relations and sociality are produced and reproduced. As a consequence, the human being is reproduced as a societal and social being. The signal systems enable the human being to act instinctively, reflect on the world, and communicate.

In the engagement with other humans, the human being acts not just as a societal, but also as a natural being (breathing, heartbeat, bodily movements, etc.). In the communication process, the human being's social and natural activities interact. This dialectic is evident in the way language works: Humans externalise knowledge from the brain with the help of bodily movements such as breathing in and out, the vibration of the vocal cords in the larynx; amplification of the sounds created in the vocal cords through the mouth, the nose and the throat; movement of the mouth, the lips and the tongue; non-verbal communication achieved by the movement of other body parts, etc.

### *Types of Knowledge*

Society is organised in the form of production complexes that interact with each other, namely the economy, politics, and culture. In each of these systems, a specific structure is produced: In the economy, use-values that satisfy human needs; in the political system, collective decisions and rules; and in culture, meanings and identities. Also, particular types of knowledge are needed in order to produce structures in society's subsystems (see table 4.2).

There is a dialectic of knowledge structures and societal structures. In producing and reproducing societal structures, humans apply their individual skills and physical capacities and externalise them in the production of new structures. Thereby, new knowledge structures emerge together with societal

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

**Table 4.2:** Types of individual and social knowledge.

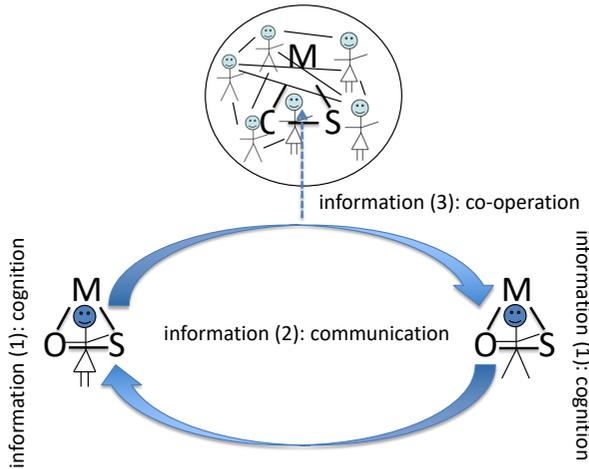
	<b>Societal Structures</b>	<b>Individual Knowledge</b> 	<b>Social Knowledge</b>
<b>Economy</b>	Use-values, means of production	Skills	Knowledge products
<b>Politics</b>	Rules, collective decisions	Political opinions and insights	Collective political worldviews
<b>Culture</b>	Collective identities and meanings	Identity, meanings	Collective identities, collective meanings

structures. In economic production, humans utilise their individual skills. There are also knowledge-based use-values such as music, software, databases, lessons, etc. In all social production, several humans are involved. If they cooperate directly, they produce a common understanding of the production process as social knowledge structure. In class societies, such joint understandings are often contested and contradictory. An example is that workers and management see different causes of their company's problems (management: 'unproductive workers'; workers: 'incompetent management that takes wrong decisions'). In the political system, humans act based on their political understanding of the world and political worldviews, which results in political rules and collective decisions that form societal structures as well as collective political worldviews that in class society have a contradictory and contested character. In the cultural system, humans produce collective identities and meanings based on individual identities and interpretations of the world. In culture, there is no difference between societal structures and collective knowledge structures. The dialectic of individual knowledge and social knowledge is part of the dialectic of structures and practices that is inherent in all societies and all social systems.

How are table 4.2 and figure 4.5 related? Individual knowledge is part of concrete human beings' subjectivity; whole societal structures and social knowledge are situated in society. Humans exist in and through society. Their production and communication processes also take place in society.

### *Information and Communication*

Semiotics analyses the information process as process O – S – M, where an object O is represented by a sign S, to which a certain meaning M is given. The whole information production process O – S – M is also termed 'semiosis'. Semiosis is a dynamic process: Existing meanings are the starting point for further cognition and communication processes that produce new meanings



**Figure 4.6:** Model of semiosis/information production.

and reproduce and differentiate existing meanings. Old meanings are sublated, whereby new ones emerge. Semiosis is a dialectical process. Figure 4.6 visualises the semiotic process as a dialectic of cognition, communication, and co-operation.<sup>92</sup>

Semiosis consists of three interconnected semiotic processes:

1. *Individual semiosis* is a thought process, i.e. *cognition*, in which the individual interprets the world mentally.
2. There is a dialectic of individual semiosis and *social semiosis*. In social semiosis, humans convey interpretations of the world with the help of language. In the *communication* process, the world of meanings and interpretations of at least two persons changes. When X and Y communicate, then parts of the world of meanings  $M_x$  of person X become the object  $O_y$  of the semiosis conducted by person Y. In a reciprocal manner, parts of the world of meanings of person Y –  $M_y$  – become the object  $O_x$  of the semiosis conducted by person X. In social semiosis, the world of meanings of at least two persons changes in the communication process that takes place between them.
3. Many communication processes are ephemeral and do not result in substantial structural changes of society. But some social relations and

<sup>92</sup> On the introduction of the distinction between cognition, communication, and co-operation, see: Wolfgang Hofkirchner. 2002. *Projekt Eine Welt: Kognition-Kommunikation-Kooperation. Versuch über die Selbstorganisation der Informationsgesellschaft*. Münster: LIT.

communications transform society. This is for example the case when a new social system is created. In such a case, individual semiosis and social semiosis are the foundation for *societal semiosis*: In such a case, communication is organised as *co-operation*, where two or more humans work together so that new societal structures emerge or existing ones are differentiated. In the co-operation process, communication is the starting point of meaning-making and through which commonly produced knowledge structures emerge.

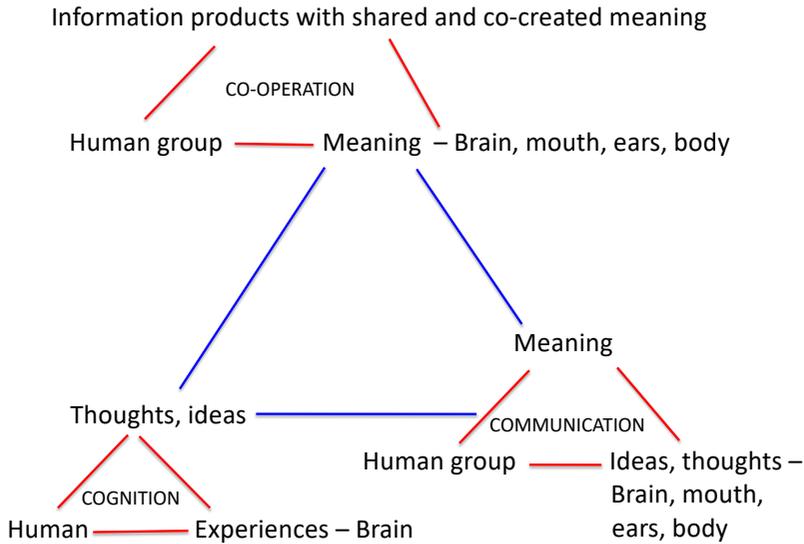
The production of information does not exist outside of matter. Neither is information a second substance that is independent of matter or stands in any relation to it. Information is a semiosis of semiosis and a dialectic of dialectics. It is a material process, through which systems are brought into certain forms (*in-form-ation*). Social relations, social systems, and society are complexes of production organised between humans. Information is in the context of humans a social and societal production process, a specific form of the organisation of matter.

Language is the result of humans' communicative activities over many generations. Just like every other human complex, information is oriented on the model of production and work (see table 4.3). The brain works in the cognition process. The body and the mind work together in the process of speaking. Humans work together in the co-operation process. Just like production in general, the production of information is a work process with concrete results and effects.

Figure 4.7 visualises that the processes of cognition, communication, and co-operation are mediated in a dialectical manner and together form the process of information production as type of work. Each of the three processes of

**Table 4.3:** Subject, object, and product (= subject-object) in cognition, communication and co-operation.

	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Object of work</b>	<b>Instruments of work</b>	<b>Products</b>
Cognition = human brain work	Human being	Experiences	Brain	Thoughts, cognitive patterns, ideas
Communication = human group work	Group of humans	Thoughts	Brain, mouth, ears	Meaning
Co-operation = collaborative human group work	Group of humans	Meaning	Brain, mouth, ears, body	Information products with shared and co-created meaning



**Figure 4.7:** The information process as work.

cognition, communication, and co-operation is a form of work: In cognition, the brain works. Communication is based on cognition. It uses cognition's products, namely ideas and knowledge, as its object of production. Co-operation is based on communication and uses the products of communication – meanings – as its object. Information is a dynamic work process in which ideas, meanings, and knowledge products are created.

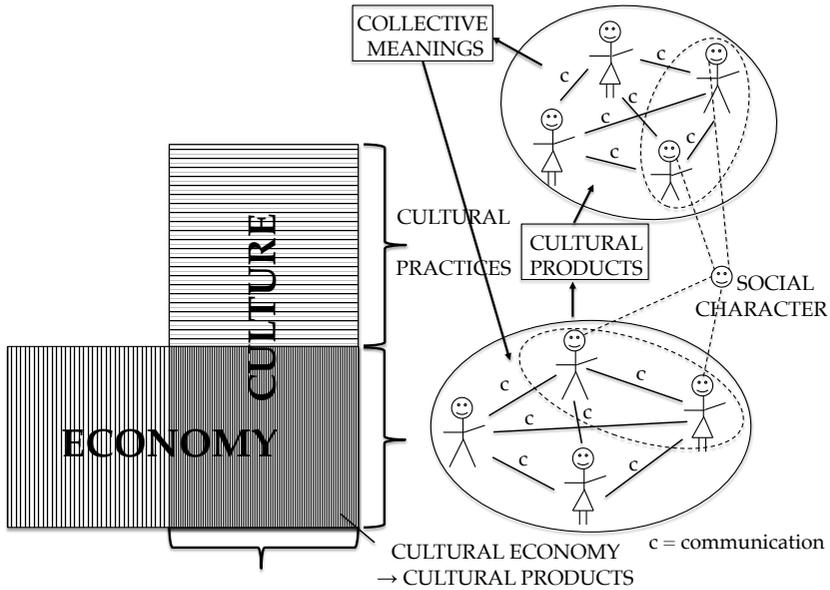
In every dialectical production process, there is a subject that works on objects in order to create new products. The product emerges from the subject's work that takes place with the help of objects, namely the object and the instruments of work that are used as means of production. New products become the foundation of further work. They become part of the object in new production processes. Production is thereby a dynamic, self-referential process (see figure 4.3).

### *The Human Psyche and Society*

For Erich Fromm, the social character is a mediation between culture and the economy.<sup>93</sup> He defines the social character as 'the matrix of the character structure *common to a group*'.<sup>94</sup> We can conceive of the social character as a

<sup>93</sup> Erich Fromm. 1965. The Application of Humanist Psychoanalysis to Marx's Theory. In *Socialist Humanism: An International Symposium*, ed. Erich Fromm, 207–222. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 210.



**Figure 4.8:** The relationship of the economy and culture and the role of the social character in society.

psychological totality that brings together a social group’s common psychological features. Society’s institutions shape the social character. So, a society’s political economy, its class or economic structure, the education system, religion, traditions, etc. play a role.

The economy is the field of society where humans create use-values to satisfy their needs. Culture is the field where humans create meaning of the world. There is a dialectic of the economy and culture. This implies that these spheres interact and that they are at once identical and non-identical. The model in figure 4.8 visualises the relationships of culture and the economy. It also outlines the role of the social character and communication processes in society.

There is an economy inside and outside of culture. And there is a culture inside and outside of the economy. The cultural economy is the overlap of culture and society. In it, mental workers create cultural products. These cultural products are used as inputs for non-economic social practices (also cultural practices). Through cultural practices, humans co-produce collective meanings of the world. Communication is the process that supports humans in organising social relations. Communication is not simply an exchange of ideas taking place in a superstructure. Communication takes place in all dimensions and realms of society. All human practices are social and relational. Cultural products objectify ideas. When humans communicate ideas about cultural products in the cultural system, then cultural products can be the outcome. Ideas play a role in all fields of society, and therefore also in the

cultural system and the cultural economy. Ideologies, worldviews, philosophy, religion, etc. are examples of collective meanings. Collective meanings display an influence on other fields of society such as the economy. Social groups that have particular social characteristics operate in social systems. An example is that workers form a particular social group in the capitalist economy. Workers share the common characteristic that they are compelled to sell their labour power in order to survive. What Fromm terms the social character is a particular form of group whose members share particular psychological features. The social character is not limited to one social system. It operates in multiple social systems at once. Fromm identifies the authoritarian and the humanistic character as the two main forms of the social character. Social groups by definition have a particular social character. But there is no identity of social groups and social characters. There are different character types within the same social group. For example, workers can be authoritarian or non-authoritarian. Dominant groups are groups that dominate others. Their members always to a certain degree have an authoritarian character. For example, in order to become a manager or capitalist you have to have a certain desire or willingness to exploit and control others.

The social character is a mediation level in-between the individual psyche and society. The social character is formed by communication in multiple social systems. The social character is a character structure specific to a particular group in society. Communication forms and reproduces the social character. The social character and social structures condition, enable, and constrain an individual's practices and thoughts.

Erich Fromm sees humanism as the opposite of authoritarianism. He distinguishes between the humanistic and the authoritarian character, humanistic and authoritarian conscience, and humanistic and authoritarian ethics.<sup>95</sup> In authoritarianism, 'an authority states what is good for man and lays down the laws and norms of conduct', whereas in humanism the human being is 'both the norm giver and the subject of the norms.'<sup>96</sup> The human is an individual being and a species-being. The species of the human is a social and societal being. Individuals realise their possibilities only truly and fully when all human beings can realise all their possibilities truly and fully. Humanism does not simply mean the creation of a good life for the single individual, but the creation of the good life of all. Authoritarianism implies that an individual, a class or a group uses violent means in order to enforce a particularistic will against others. The authoritarian individual, class, or group sees its will as absolute. In contrast, a state of existence with a mass of unrelated individuals with unrelated wills results in an order of egoists who do not share anything

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<sup>95</sup> Erich Fromm. 1947/2003. *Man For Himself: An Inquiry Into the Psychology of Ethics*. Abingdon: Routledge.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

**Table 4.4:** The authoritarian and the humanistic character in the economy, politics and culture.

	<b>Authoritarian character</b>	<b>Humanistic character</b>
<b>Economy</b>	The exploiter	The commoner
<b>Politics</b>	The dictator	The democrat
<b>Culture</b>	The ideologue/demagogue	The friend

and do not have anything in common. Neither authoritarianism nor individualism possess the humanistic dialectic of the individual and society.

Table 4.4 gives an overview of different social characters. The differentiation is grounded in the notions of the authoritarian and the humanistic character.

The typology shown in table 4.4 uses the distinction between society's economic, political and cultural realms. All three are fields of production, where teleological positing takes place: In the economy, humans create use-values in order to satisfy their needs. In the political system, humans produce collective decisions that are binding in society. In the cultural system, humans produce collective meanings in order to make sense of the world.

The exploiter instrumentalises, exploits, and uses others. The commoner fosters the common good in order to benefit all. The dictator uses violence in order to impose their will on others. The democrat engages and deliberates with others. Democrats together make collective political decisions. The ideologue aims at manipulating others. Friends help others.

In social relations in general, the humanistic character is loving, co-operative, and helpful to others, whereas the authoritarian character is destructive, indifferent, masochistic, and sadistic. In the economy, the humanistic character creates something, whereas the authoritarian character exploits, hoards, markets, and appropriates.<sup>97</sup> Building on Fromm allows us to define the (ideal type) authoritarian character as destructive, exploitative, and competitive in economic relations and aggressive and hateful in general. In contrast the humanistic character type is creative in the economy and co-operative and loving in general (see table 4.5). By productiveness in general we understand human beings' and society's capacity to realise their potentials. In contrast, the mode of having and authoritarianism are built on the guiding principle 'I take away from others what I need'.<sup>98</sup> It is therefore unproductive. Exploitation is the most rudimentary dimension of the mode of having and of authoritarianism. Exploiters do 'not expect to receive things from others as gifts, but to take them away from others by force or cunning'.<sup>99</sup> Exploitation is about economic appropriation. Its logic can shape all realms of society, including economic production, the world

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

of knowledge (exploiters ‘will tend not to produce ideas but to steal them’<sup>100</sup>), love, family life, etc.

### *Authoritarian and Humanistic Communication*

Authoritarianism and humanism also matter in the domain of information: We can distinguish between humanistic knowledge/communication and authoritarian knowledge/communication (see table 4.6).

The *authoritarian economic organisation of information* is based on the class character of communication and knowledge production. The property-owning class is in control of the means of communication. The latter are organised as private property. The dominant class exploits knowledge and communication workers who produce knowledge and forms of communication. In capitalism, communication and knowledge are commodities whose sale yields profit. This means that they are part of the system of capital accumulation. The *humanistic economic organisation of information* means that the means of communication are under collective ownership and form a common good, which means that

**Table 4.5:** A variation of Fromm’s general distinction of social character types.

	<b>Authoritarian social character</b>	<b>Humanistic social character</b>
Economic relations	Destructive, exploitative, competitive	Working, creating
Social relations in general	Aggressive, hateful	Loving, co-operating, helping others

**Table 4.6:** Authoritarian and humanistic forms of information.

	<b>Authoritarian</b>	<b>Humanistic</b>
Economic system	Knowledge and communication as commodities, exploitation of knowledge labour, means of communication as private property	Knowledge and communication as commons, co-ownership and co-production in self-managed knowledge-creating companies
Political system	Dictatorial control of knowledge and communication processes	Participatory knowledge and democratic communication
Cultural system	Ideological knowledge and communication	Socialist humanist knowledge and communication

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

knowledge products are gifts and not commodities. Such common knowledge goods are produced in self-managed companies (co-operatives).

In the *authoritarian political organisation of knowledge and communication*, an individual or group is an authority who controls the state monopoly of the means of violence, the means of public communication, and the knowledge that is thereby produced and communicated. In Nazi Germany, the state controlled broadcasting. The regional radio companies were unified into one state company, the Reichs-Rundfunks-Gesellschaft (RRG, Reich Broadcasting Corporation). The Reichsrundfunkkammer (Reich Chamber of Broadcasting) registered all individuals who worked in the media industry. The media system was aligned with the Nazis' ideology ('Gleichschaltung'). The RRG controlled twenty aligned radio stations and one TV channel (Deutscher Fernseh-Rundfunk). In authoritarian political communication, humans are not able to listen to themselves. 'We listen to every voice and to everybody but not to ourselves. We are constantly exposed to the noise of opinions and ideas hammering at us from everywhere: motion pictures, newspapers, radio, idle chatter.'<sup>101</sup> In authoritarian communication, humans are compelled to listen to a leader (an ideology, system group or individual). Citizens are forced to follow the orders of the leader.

In the *humanistic political organisation of information*, the production of public knowledge and communication is democratically governed. Citizens and workers are represented in media organisations' decision-making structures. There is not a dictatorial, central control of voice, but rather everyday citizens have a public voice and reports focus on everyday people. 'To be able to listen to oneself is a prerequisite for the ability to listen to others.'<sup>102</sup> The *humanist organisation of political communication* implies that humans listen to themselves and to each other. They engage with each other.

In an *authoritarian cultural system*, there is the public communication of ideological knowledge. Ideological knowledge justifies exploitation and domination. With it, certain groups or individuals try to convince the public that exploitation and domination are good, necessary, natural, or unavoidable. Ideologues use strategies such as acceleration, brevity, dissimulation, distortion, lies, manipulation, personalisation, scandalisation, scapegoating, superficiality, etc. Ideologues create and disseminate false knowledge. They aim at creating and reproducing false consciousness. A *humanist cultural system* is non-ideological, i.e. a system in which humans create and communicate knowledge that supports human beings' capacities for critical, complex, and creative thinking. 'In the structure of having, the dead word rules; in the structure of being, the alive and inexpressible experience rules.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>103</sup> Erich Fromm. 1976/2008. *To Have or to Be?* London: Continuum. p. 89.

The authoritarian organisation of knowledge and communication implies that information workers and their informational products are seen and treated as things. Such systems aim at the accumulation of information or the accumulation of hegemony, money, and power with the help of information. So, for example, authoritarian learning is having-oriented: Knowledge is seen as a thing. The learners have to learn knowledge by heart. Authoritarian teachers police learners with the help of marks and exams. 'Students are supposed to learn so many things that they have hardly time and energy left to *think*.'<sup>104</sup>

#### 4.5. Summary and Conclusions

We can summarise the main results of this chapter as follows:

- Communication and society are dialectically intertwined. Max Horkheimer says in this context: 'But language is at the same time, not merely as a universal means of communication, but also as a medium of expression, intertwined with society's real relations.'<sup>105</sup>
- Work is a dialectical process in which humans as subjects create products with the help of means of production (objects of work and instruments of work). Communication is not fundamentally different from production and work, because it produces meanings and helps humans to attain goals, namely to inform themselves and understand the world.
- There is a dialectic of production and communication. Humans communicate productively and produce communicatively. In the production of communication, humans produce and reproduce social relations, social structures, social systems, societal relations, society as totality, and human sociality. Moments of communicative production include the communicative co-ordination of production; the use of communication technologies in production, distribution and consumption; and communication work's production of knowledge goods.
- In the production process, humans interact with nature and with each other as societal subjects. In the course of society's history, the development of the productive forces resulted in the retreat of the natural boundary, whereby the production of knowledge and culture in the economy and the role of the economy in the cultural system became more important.
- The production of information is based on the dialectics of subject/object, individual knowledge/social knowledge, societal structures/knowledge

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<sup>104</sup> Fromm, *Man For Himself*, p. 56.

<sup>105</sup> Translation from German: Max Horkheimer. 1954. Karl Kraus und die Sprachsoziologie. In *Max Horkheimer Gesammelte Schriften Band 13: Nachgelassene Schriften 1949–1972*, 19–24. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer. p. 20.

structures, cognition/communication, communication/co-operation, individual semiosis/social semiosis, social semiosis/societal semiosis.

- Society shapes the human psyche in processes of socialisation. The social character is a level of mediation between the individual psyche and society. Humanism and authoritarianism are two antagonistic types of social character. A dominative and exploitative society is dominated by the logic of authoritarianism. We can also distinguish between authoritarian and humanistic communication.

Capitalism is modern society's dominant form. Production takes place in concrete societal relations. The same is therefore also true for the production of communication and knowledge. A critical theory of communication is therefore based on the analysis of the relation of communication, labour, and capitalism. The next chapter discusses aspects of this relation. It opens this book's second part that focuses on the analysis of communication in capitalist society.