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Foundations of Communication/Media/Digital (In)justice

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ABSTRACT

The task of this article is to outline foundations of a Marxist-humanist approach to communication justice, media justice, and digital justice. A dialectical approach to justice is outlined that differs from idealist monism, dualism, and pluralism. It conceives of injustice as alienation and inhumanity and justice as humanism. This approach is applied to communication, media, and the digital. The article outlines concepts and dimensions of (in)justice in general, communication (in)justice, media (in)justice, and digital (in)justice.

On 3 February 2019, Donald Trump tweeted: "With Caravans marching through Mexico and toward our Country, Republicans must be prepared to do whatever is necessary for STRONG Border Security. Dems do nothing. If there is no Wall, there is no Security. Human Trafficking, Drugs and Criminals of all dimensions – KEEP OUT!"[1] This tweet characterizes immigrants from the South as traffickers, drug dealers, and criminals. It makes the sweeping generalization that immigrants are criminals. Many observers will agree that such a tweet is the communication of ideology and of a particular form of injustice, namely the reduction of fleeing humans to criminality. The tweet denies immigrants their humanity. There is a connection of inhumanity and injustice. And in an information society, this connection is frequently communicated in public via the media and the Internet. But what is media/communication (in)justice? And how can we theorize media/communication (in)justice? This article is a contribution to the analysis of the media/communication and (in)justice.

Engaging with philosophical approaches to communication, Peters (1999, p. 269) concludes that communication is "a political and ethical problem" and that "just communication is an index of the good society." The analysis of communication and society brings up the question of what just communication is and how it should be defined. This article is a contribution to the theoretical debate on media and justice (see also, among others, Christians, Glasser, McQuail, Nordenstreng, & White, 2009; Couldry, 2012; Habermas, 1990; Jansen, Pooley, & Taub-Pervizpour, 2011; Jensen, 2021; Padovani & Calabrese, 2014; Rao & Wasserman, 2015; Silverstone, 2007; Taylor, 2017).

Frey, Pearce, Pollock, Artz, and Murphy (1996, p. 113) document that until 1996, the journal S*ocial Justice Research* contained "not a single article written by communication scholars or about communication behavior." *The Philosophical Review*, founded in 1892, published between 1970 and 2020 only seven articles containing the keyword "communication" in the title. *The Journal of Political Philosophy* during the same period just published one article containing "communication" in its title. There is little interest in communication in the field of philosophy. Vice versa, there is also little interest in justice in media and communication studies: Between 1970 and 2020, *Journal of Communication* only published nine articles containing the title keyword "justice." In *Communication Theory*, the amount was two articles. There has thus far been little explicit intersection between ethics/philosophy and

This article has been republished with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.
[1]https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1092181733825490945.

communication studies when it comes to the issue of what justice means. This article contributes to the intersection of philosophy and media/communication studies for the analysis of (in)justice. It is based on a Marxist-humanist ethics.

In many discussions of ethics, Marxism is either dismissed or not mentioned at all. Marxist theory has something important to add. Unfortunately it is often not acknowledged as a viable approach to ethics. For example, widely read and cited introductions to ethics and moral philosophy such as McNaughton's (1988) *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* do not at all mention Marx and Marx-inspired approaches (such as the ones by Theodor W. Adorno, Paul Blackledge, Gerald A. Cohen, Erich Fromm, Norman Geras, Peter Hudis, Eugene Kamenka, Steven Lukes, [the early, Marxist-humanist works of] Alasdair MacIntyre, George E. McCarthy, Richard W. Miller, Sean Sayers, Michael J. Thompson). The presentation of approaches to ethics is often limited to the discussion of virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism (e.g., Fieser, 2005).

Also in media ethics and digital ethics, introductions often tend to ignore Marx and the tradition built on his works (e.g., Christians, Fackler, Richardson, Kreshel, & Woods, 2017; Floridi, 2010, 2013; Patterson, Wilkins, & Painter, 2019; Ward & Wasserman, 2010). My own approach to ethics and critical theory combines, among others, Aristotle's virtue ethics and Marx's critical ethics (Fuchs, 2020a). Whereas many Marxists often engage with a variety of non-Marxian approaches, the same cannot be said of many non-Marxian approaches. My point is that Marxian ethics is a legitimate approach that should be more acknowledged in ethics in general as well as in media ethics.

Theories of justice

Morality is about principles of how to attain the good life and what the difference is between the good and the bad. Ethics is moral philosophy, the systematic theoretical study of morality and morals in society. Justice is one of the key categories in morality and ethics. It has been "a central concern of philosophy from the time of Plato [...] until today" (Rainbolt, 2013, p. 1). We can distinguish four types of theories of justice (Table 1): idealist monism; dualism; pluralism; and dialectics. The typology is based on logical principles of how to relate two categories: the one and the other. Monism identifies one overarching foundational principle from which others are derived. Dualism identifies two equally foundational, independent substances. Pluralism combines many dualisms so that there are multiple, diverse, independent categories or principles. It is a special form of dualism. Dialectics is a dialectic of identity and non-identity of the one and the many. There is a unifying principle identical to all aspects and there are interacting, encroaching, intersecting, diverse moments that have common as well as different aspects.

Idealist justice monism reduces justice to the level of political or cultural justice as key principle. Justice dualism identifies two equally important, independent principles of justice. Justice pluralism is a more complex form of dualism, a combination of several dualisms. It identifies multiple, independent principles of justice. Justice dialectics is based on a unified principle of justice that grounds diverse principles of justice. It is a unity in the diversity of justice that identifies a general principle and grounding of justice and diverse forms of justice that interact and are based on the unifying principle. It is at the same time monist and pluralist.

Idealist-monist theories of justice

John Rawls's (1999) book *A Theory of Justice* that was first published in 1971 is one of the most cited philosophy books published in the 20th century. In the year 2020, this work had around 90,000 citations.[2] It advances a *political monist theory of justice*. It is idealist because its ultimate principle of justice focuses on the realm of politics and political liberties and downplays the importance of the economy. It takes on the form of the *greatest equality principle* that says that all humans have "an equal

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[2]Data source: https://scholar.google.com/scholar?cites=5140131155315206711&as_sdt=2005&sciodt=0,5&hl=en, accessed on 1 September 2020.

right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties" (Rawls, 1999, p. 266). Rawls gives priority to political justice over socio-economic justice. He argues that the liberal rights that for him make up the constitutional essentials are "more urgent to settle" (Rawls, 2001, p. 49) than social problems. Rawls (1999, pp. 266–267; 2001, pp. 42–43) considers social and economic inequalities as justified as long as the greatest possible benefit is achieved for the least advantaged (*difference principle*) and offices and positions deciding over questions of distribution are open to all (*equal opportunity principle*).

Rawls's theory has been criticized for legitimating class inequality (Cohen, 2008; Miller, 1975). He characterizes liberal rights also as "background justice" (Rawls, 2001, p. 50), which implies a priority of political over socio-economic rights. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines the right to social security (§22), Rawls basically says that freedom of speech is more important than the right to eat, the right to housing, the right to health, the right to social security, and the right to lead a good life. According to Marxist criticism, Rawls's concept of justice sees it as legitimate that citizens starve as long as they have freedom of speech. Many capitalists will not commit to the difference principle when it implies they have to reduce their profits. They will argue that social policy measures such as higher corporation taxes or the reduction of the working day with full wage compensation destroy their companies and result in unemployment (Miller, 1975, p. 210). The capitalist ruling class has political and ideological institutions at hand that "work exclusively or almost exclusively in its interests" (Miller, 1975, p. 227). It does not voluntarily accept the creation of social equality (Cohen, 2008, p. 290).

Axel Honneth's theory of recognition is a *cultural monist theory of justice* (see Table 2). Honneth (2007, 2008) reinterprets Lukács' concept of reification as disrespect. He says that reification is society's disrespect for certain groups and individuals. Disrespect is a lack of recognition for certain human beings in society. Honneth identifies love, equality, and achievement as three forms of respect. For Hegel, these are the recognition of the need for love provided in the family, the recognition of human autonomy in civil society and the legal system, and the recognition of individual particularity by the state and in ethical life and processes of solidarity (Honneth, 1996, p. 25). The absence of such forms or recognition would be the foundation of struggles for recognition. For Honneth, a reconstructive theory of justice needs three normative principles: justice of needs, deliberative equality, and justice of achievement (Honneth, 2014, p. 49).

Honneth does not properly take into account the roles of work, the economy, and use-values in society. The economy seems to simply be another solidarity community providing a particular form of esteem and achievement. The ideal-type economy is about a specific aspect of free human self-realization through work. In what Marx terms the realm of freedom, work is a source of pleasure, need satisfaction, communication, and care for others. Work is more than a source of achievement. Whereas in *The Struggle for Recognition*, Honneth (1996) tends to ignore the economy, in *The I in We* (Honneth, 2014) he subsumes it into the third realm. This means, however, that he reduces the economy and work to recognition. The satisfaction of human needs through social production is primarily a matter of survival and pleasure that cannot be reduced to culture and recognition. Honneth's approach is a "'moral' monism" (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 254), where recognition is the unifying principle of morality and society

Dualist theories of justice

Dualist approaches to justice consider one overarching principle of justice as insufficient and therefore postulate two principles operating in two relatively independent realms of society. Nancy Fraser (1995, 1997) advances a dualist theory of justice (see Young, 1997), where the starting point is that "justice today requires *both* redistribution *and* recognition" (Fraser, 1995, p. 69). She considers redistribution and recognition, political economy and culture/identity, as two relatively distinct and equally important realms of society. She discerns between economic and cultural injustices. But in reality, all culture is economic in that it is a realm of the production of meaning (that in contemporary capitalism is often mediated by capital and commodities as the existence of cultural commodities shows) and all economy

is cultural because workers have particular working cultures, companies have philosophies, there are corporate ideologies such as neoliberalism, etc. For Fraser, exploitation, economic marginalization, and deprivation are types of economic injustice, whereas cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect are forms of cultural injustice. Although Fraser acknowledges articulation and interaction, the economy and culture, economic and cultural injustice, and redistribution and recognition are conceptually separate.

In her approach formulated in the 1990s, Fraser held such a two-dimensional concept of justice focused on the economy (distribution) and culture (recognition). Later, she added the concept of political justice (Fraser, 2009) and developed her approach into a *pluralistic* theory of justice. (see Table 3).

Fraser sees the economy, culture and politics as three equally important and relatively independent domains of society. She argues for a perspectival dualism where the two realms are impinging on each other (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 64). We can characterize Fraser's theory as interactive dualism. For her, the two levels of are autonomous and interact in certain cases. Fraser rejects the assumption of a universal normative principle of justice. Recognition, distributive justice, and representation/participation are for her "multiple points of entry into social reality" (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 205). The problem with such an approach is that it establishes a plurality without unity.

Pluralist theories of justice

The capabilities approach of Amartya Sen (2009) and Martha Nussbaum (2011) is one of the most influential *pluralistic theories of justice*. Capabilities are about human functioning, being, and doing. In the capabilities approach, justice has to do with the distribution of opportunities for realizing capabilities and can be advanced through institutional changes. Nussbaum (2011, 33–34) identifies ten central capabilities: life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses/imagination/thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, concern for other species, play, control over one's political and material environment. The capabilities approach identifies a plurality of human needs, but it remains unclear what unifies and connects human needs. Iris Marion Young (1990) is another representative of a pluralistic theory of justice. Her theory of (in)justice's key category is oppression. She distinguishes between five forms of oppression that she terms the five faces of oppression (see Table 4).

Young rejects the assumption of a human nature and essence: "Although social processes of affinity and differentiation produce groups, they do not give groups a substantive essence. There is no common nature that members of a group share. As aspects of a process, moreover, groups are fluid; they come into being and may fade away" (Young, 1990, p. 47). The assumption that there are no common features of humans results in incoherent social theory. Humans share capacities such as social production, social and societal relations, self-consciousness, moral reasoning and action, anticipatory thinking, creative action, communication, and co-operation.

A consistent typology has to be complete and its categories have to be non-overlapping. Young's concepts of marginalization and powerlessness are closely related. For her, powerlessness seems to be marginalization in the context of decision-making. But such an assumption results in quite narrow concepts of power, empowerment, disempowerment, powerfulness, and powerlessness that are limited to the political dimension of society. Power is the capacity of humans to influence and control their lives and its various dimensions. There is economic, political, and cultural power. Powerlessness is not

Table 1. A typology of theories of justice.

Logical principle	Theory of justice
Idealist monism	Idealist justice monism
Dualism	Justice dualism
Pluralism	Justice pluralism
Dialectics	Justice dialectics

Table 2. Axel Honneth's theory of recognition.

Form of justice	Type of recognition	Institutions
justice of needs	Love	Family, friendships
deliberative equality	Equality	civil society, legal system
justice of achievement	achievement, esteem	solidarity communities of value

Table 3. Nancy Fraser's theory of justice.

Realm of society	Form of justice	Form of injustice
Economy	distributive justice	maldistribution
Culture	Recognition	malrecognition
Politics	political justice, participatory democracy	misrepresentation

Table 4. Iris Marion Young's concept of the five faces of oppression (based on Young, 1990, chapter 2).

Type of oppression
Exploitation
Marginalization
Powerlessness
cultural imperialism
Violence

limited to decision-making but can also take on the form of poverty, voicelessness, invisibility, etc. In disempowerment, humans are robbed of the control of the conditions of their lives. Alienation is the state that results from such disempowerment. Empowerment is the tendency to overcome alienation.

Exclusion and marginalization are aspects of domination. Domination is defined as the process where one group in society arrives at benefits at the expense of others. The dominating group has advantages and excludes others from such advantages. And it has means at its disposal to defend its privileged position and to keep others disadvantaged. Exclusion is a process through which domination operates. Marginalization is the result of domination: one group has disadvantages, while another one benefits. Domination operates through a variety of processes and structures, including exclusion, the state, the law, surveillance, violence, warfare, and rules.

Cultural imperialism is one form of disrespect in society. Making other humans, their voices and bodies, invisible through asymmetric power of attention and visibility is one form of disrespect. Scapegoating certain groups is another one. Scapegoating is part of ideology. Ideology is a means and process through which one group portrays society or certain aspects of it (such as certain groups or individuals) in a false or distorted manner in order to legitimate and upholds its power and interests. Cultural imperialism is the privileging of the reputation, visibility, and way of life of one group at the expense of others. It is a unity without diversity that disrespects certain identities and ways of life. But there is also another form of disrespect, namely diversity without unity, where humans ignore each other and see each other as having nothing in common. Diversity without unity is the imperialism of difference and partiality that ignores commonality and universality. Unity without diversity and diversity without unity are two cultural processes that constitute disrespect. Disrespect is practiced through ideology, by denying other human beings' relevance, or by denying the cultural commons – i.e., common aspects of human life. Young disregards the complexity of disrespect, especially the oppression caused by difference without unity.
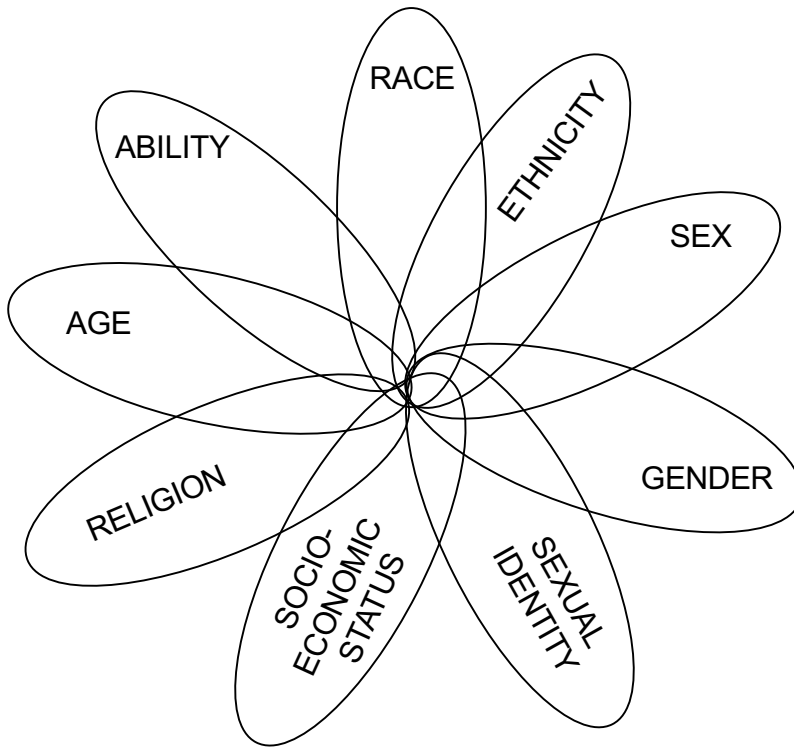
Figure 1. The matrix of domination in intersectional theories (based on Adams & Zúñiga, 2016, p. 162).

Violence is the intentionally caused harm of a human being (Walby, 2020). Violence turns the human being "into a thing in the most literal sense: it makes a corpse out of him" (Weil, 2005, p. 183). Violence is not the same as power. It is a dimension of coercive societies and a social relation, where humans try to intentionally cause physical harms to other humans who don't agree to the cause of that harm (see Walby, 2020 for a detailed discussion). The harm caused is usually "a physical injury" (Walby et al., 2017, p. 33), but can also in addition involve mental or psychological harm. Physically injuring others can take on a variety of forms such as assault, torture, rape, killing, murder, war, genocide, enslavement, etc. Violence is a means toward an end such as gaining control of resources (e.g. land, humans), exterminating certain humans – i.e., the absolute exclusion from society through death, gaining pleasure or reputation, etc. Violence is a means for creating alienation, but it is not in itself an alienated system or condition as Young's typology implies.

Intersectional theories are pluralistic theories of justice. Patricia Hill Collins (2000, 299) defines intersectionality as matrix of domination, whereby she understands "the overall organization of hierarchical power relations for any society. Any specific matrix of domination has (1) a particular arrangement of intersecting systems of oppression, e.g., race, social class, gender, sexuality, citizenship status, ethnicity and age; and (2) a particular organization of its domains of power, e.g., structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal." Figure 1 visualizes the matrix of domination. It identifies nine plural levels of human identity that are sources of domination. These realms are articulated, but independent.

The problem of pluralistic theories of justice is that they consider society as consisting of independent spheres. Forms of (in)justice are articulated but it remains unclear why there is a particular number of realms and forms of (in)justice. Such categories are often not distinct but overlapping,

which makes the resulting typologies inconsistent. Eve Mitchell (2013) argues that intersectional theories only stress the difference of identities and lack a focus on the common features of humans and a focus on humanity as the common aspect. According to Mitchell, intersectionality theories often advance relativist theories of (in)justice. The present author is interested in helping to advance dialectical approaches to studying (in)justice as alternative to idealist monism, dualism, and pluralism. What follows is a proposed conception of injustice.

Alienation as injustice

The approach taken in this article starts from a Marxist-Humanist concept of society (Fuchs, 2020a) that stresses human beings' common characteristics and needs in society. Based on Karl Marx, Georg Lukács (1984, 1986) argues that work and social production form the models of human activity in society. He speaks in this context of teleological positing, which is a reference to Aristotle's concept of the teleological cause. Aristotle (2002, §1139b) defines the teleological cause the following way: "one who makes something always makes it for the sake of something." In teleological positing, humans produce active and consciously to try to attain defined goals. The dialectic of production and communication is another core common feature of humans: social production is organized through communication and communication is a particular production process, namely the process of the production of sociality, social relations, social structures, social systems, institutions, and society.

A truly materialist analysis of society does not assume that there is an economic base and a political and cultural superstructure that can be reduced to the base. The materialist analysis of society rather stresses that social production is an economic process that operates in all social relations and social systems, including politics and culture, and takes on emergent qualities in particular systems. There are humans as social producers in the economy, politics, and culture, as well as in all social systems organized in these three realms of society. In the economic system, humans produce use-values that satisfy human needs. In the political systems, they produce collective decisions and rules that govern society's organization. In culture, they produce meanings and definitions of the world.

A dialectical concept of justice can be based on such a framework of society. It conceives of injustice as alienation and justice as humanism. Alienation is the unifying principle of injustice. Humanism is the unifying principle of justice. Alienation and humanism take on different forms in society's various spheres. Marx's notion of alienation is based on the concept of economic alienation but also has a more general meaning. Economic alienation is the class relation, where workers do not own the means of production and the products they are compelled to produce. David Harvey (2018) argues that alienation has a universal character in class societies. The universalization of alienation is the extension of alienation beyond economic production, the economy and bounded spaces into realms such as circulation, consumption, culture, politics, globalization, the relation of nature/society, etc.

Marx sees alienation besides economic exploitation also as the universal form of injustice, in which humans are not in control of the structures that affect their everyday lives (Fuchs, 2020b, chapter 7). Under alienated conditions, humans (re)produce social relations in everyday life and are not in control of the conditions of these social production processes. Alienation is the "production of the object as loss of the object to an alien power, to an *alien* person" (Marx, 1844b, p. 281). Marx characterizes alienation in the following words:

> Under alienated conditions, the human being's "own creation [. . .] [is] an alien power, his wealth [. . .] poverty, the *essential bond* linking him with other men [. . .] an unessential bond, and separation from his fellow men, on the other hand, as his true mode of existence, his life as a sacrifice of his life, the realisation of his nature as making his life unreal, his production as the production of his nullity, his power over an object as the power of the object over him, and he himself, the lord of his creation, as the servant of this creation (Marx, 1844a, p. 217).

Alienation is inhumanity. Alienation implies that humans are robbed of humane living conditions. They are denied parts of their humanity. Given that humans are social beings who depend on each other and produce and communicate in social relations, they all deserve to lead a good life. The need,

wish, and desire for a good life is a common feature of humanity. Alienation is the creation of inhumanity and inhuman conditions. Marx and Engels argue that the "conditions of life of the proletariat sum up all the conditions of life of society today in their most inhuman form" (Marx & Engels, 1845, pp. 36–37). The proletariat "cannot abolish the conditions of its own life without abolishing *all* the inhuman conditions of life of society today which are summed up in its own situation" (Marx & Engels, 1845, p. 37). In a class society, there is an "'inhuman' way in which the oppressed class satisfies its needs" (Marx & Engels, 1845/1846, p. 432).

The argument that ethical foundations of a just society that advances the good life for all as the common good are grounded in human nature as social beings can also be found in the communitarian philosophy of Charles Taylor and the Aristotelian philosophy of Alasdair MacIntyre. Taylor stresses that humans are social beings and that advancing justice as the common good follows from this social character: Because "of a common good which in fact is sustained by the common life of our society, we ought to accept certain principles of distribution which take account of the real balance of mutual indebtedness relative to this good. For instance, that we owe each other much more equal distribution than we might otherwise agree to on economic criteria, because in fact we are involved in a society of mutual respect, or common deliberation, and this is the condition for all of us realizing together an important human potential" (Taylor, 1985, p. 298). MacIntyre (1999) argues that humans are dependent, rational, communicative animals who depend on each other to survive. "As a practical reasoner, I have to engage in conversation with others, conversation about what it would be best for me or them or us to do here and now, or next week, or next year" (110–111). For achieving the common good, it does not suffice that humans communicate, they also need to co-operate (114). For MacIntyre, the interest to advance the common good for all follows from the social character of humans that makes them depend on each other.

Alienation is a gap between the actuality and the potentials of humans and society. They are hindered in what they could be, in developing to the full extent enabled by society. There are certain parallels between Marx's notion of alienation and the notion of capability development by Sen and Nussbaum. Class societies such as capitalism undermine their own universal promises; there is a

> discrepancy between the rhetoric of universal interests and the reality of particular class interests within the limits circumscribed by particular systems of production and the boundaries of the concomitant social and political institutions and cultural ways of life. The problem can be solved only when the rhetoric/reality discrepancy is overcome, that is, when a particular system of production is established which permits the coincidence of the universal interests of society with the particular interests of a class, and when the concomitant social and political institutions and cultural lifestyles promote and encourage this coincidence. This coincidence results for Marx in the self-realization and self-development of *all* individuals within a society: this outcome has truly become the common good (West, 1991, p. 92).

In a humanist society, all humans and society can realize their potentials and lead a life that is adequate to humans, a humane life. Power differentials in the economy, politics, and culture that privilege the few at the expense of the many have to be overcome for creating a just society. Table 5 presents a typology of injustice as alienation.

Alienation is the unifying principle of injustice that takes on specific forms in the economy, the political system, and culture: exploitation in the economy, domination in the political system, and disrespect and ideology in culture.

For Marx, alienation is a feature of capitalism and at the same time older than capitalism. Particular forms of alienation such as war, violence, classes, ideology, or patriarchy are older than capitalism, but have in capitalist society been sublated (*aufgehoben*) in a Hegelian sense: they have been preserved but at the same time transformed into phenomena such as imperialism, the capitalist class, commodity fetishism, reproductive labor that reproduces wage-labor, etc. Alienation is not limited to the economy, but connects inequalities across society's different realms. David Harvey (2018) therefore speaks of universal alienation. Alienation is both a condition and a process, a structure and a practice, a state and a relation. Alienation In a dialectical process, alienation interconnects the levels of objects and human subjects in societies that are shaped by domination.

Table 5. A typology of injustice as alienation in the economy, politics, and culture.

Realm of society	Injustice as alienation	Definition	The alienated	The alienators
Economy	exploitation	Exploitation is a process where one economic group is capable of and controls means for forcing another economic group to produce goods that are transferred to the dominant class so that it owns and controls these resources.	exploited class	exploiters, exploiting class
Politics	domination	One group in society benefits at the expense of others, who are excluded and marginalized. The dominative group has means at its disposal to defend its privileged position and to keep others disadvantaged. Domination operates through a variety of processes and structures, including exclusion, the state, the law, surveillance, violence, warfare, and rules.	The excluded, marginalized, subalterns	dictator, dictatorial group
Culture	disrespect, ideology	When they are disrespected, humans are denied humanity, visibility, attention, recognition through ideology, unity without diversity (imperialism of cultural homogenization), diversity without unity (cultural relativism, imperialism of cultural difference), cultural asymmetries of voice/visibility/recognition, etc. Ideology is a means and process through which one group portrays society or certain aspects of it (such as certain groups or individuals) in a false or distorted manner in order to legitimate and uphold its power and interests. Disrespect is practiced through ideology, by denying other human beings' relevance, or by denying the cultural commons, i.e. common aspects of human life.	the disrespected	ideologues, demagogues, influencers

The capitalist economy is a system in which workers produce commodities with the help of means of production that are the private property of companies. These commodities are sold on commodity markets so that profit is achieved and capital can be accumulated. In capitalist society, the logic of accumulation also extends into the political and cultural system where we find the accumulation of decision-power and influence in the political system and the accumulation of reputation, attention and respect in the cultural system. Table 6 gives an overview of injustices in capitalist society. The accumulation of capital, influence, and reputation results in the asymmetrical distribution of economic, political and cultural power and creates the injustices of exploitation of labor in the capitalist economy, domination of citizens in the political system, and disrespect of human individuals and groups in the cultural system.

Communication/media injustice

Aristotle stresses that justice has to do with the common good, the common benefit for all. "And the proverb 'the things of friends are common' is right, since friendship consist in community. All things are common to brothers and comrades" (Aristotle, 2002, §1159b). In a just society, all humans are friends and are enabled to treat each other as friends. There are joint etymological roots of the words "communication," "community," and the "commons." To "communicate" meant originally to make something "common to many" (Williams, 1983, p. 72). A true communication society is a society of the commons where everyone benefits (Fuchs, 2020a). But communication has just like society taken on alienated forms.

For both Nancy Fraser and Iris Marion Young, communication is a cultural phenomenon (see Fraser, 1997, pp. 13–14; Young, 1990, pp. 23, 38). They leave open the relationship of communication and work. One can clearly see the influence of Habermas on Fraser's and Young's approaches. Habermas separates work and interaction, which resulted in his dualism of system and lifeworld

(Fuchs, 2020a). The basic problem of this dualism is that communication is not limited to a specific realm of society but is together with production constitutive of all social relations. Production is communicative just like communication is a specific production process. The dialectic of communication and production shapes all realms of society. Communication is therefore not limited to culture.

As a particular type of production and teleological positing that (re)produces sociality and social relations, communication is an inherent feature of social relations of humans in society. Alienation therefore always has a communicative dimension. Table 7 provides an overview of communication's roles in alienation. In class relations, humans are compelled to act and communicate to produce goods that are owned by the ruling class. In alienated politics, humans are excluded from influential political communication that makes a political difference (exclusion), or their voices are marginalized (marginalization), or their communication and information is monitored (surveillance), or their minds and bodies, including their communication, are absolutely silenced through genocide, murder, war, etc. (violence). In alienated culture, there are asymmetries of reputation, which means that culturally marginalized individuals and groups might be able to speak, but they are not heard, or they are hardly or seldomly heard, or what they say and do is through ideologies presented in distorted ways in the public so that their reputation is harmed and what they think, say, and do is perceived in false ways.

Communication is the process where two or more humans interact symbolically to make meaning of each other and the world. Media are means of communication, means that mediate, i.e. enable and support, communication. Communication is a human practice. Media are mediating structures. There are media wherever there is interaction of moments. For example, the blood system and the brain are mediating systems of the body. In society, media are means of communication. Wherever humans communicate, there is some form of mediation. Wherever there are media in society, there are human information and communication processes. There is a dialectic of communication and the media. In alienated societies, media and communication tend to take on alienated forms. Just like communication is an aspect of

Table 6. Alienation as injustice in capitalist society.

Sphere	General features	Structure	Process	Antagonism	Injustice
Economy	production of use-values	class relation between capital and labor	capital accumulation	capital VS. labor	Capitalist exploitation: capital's private ownership of the means of production, capital, and created products implies the working class' non-ownership and exploitation
Politics	production of collective decisions	nation-state	accumulation of decision-power and influence	bureaucracy VS. citizens	Domination: citizens' lack of influence on political decisions as consequence of the asymmetric distribution of
Culture	production of meanings	ideologies	accumulation of reputation, attention and respect	ideologues and celebrities VS. everyday people	Invisibility, disrespect: lack of recognition as consequence of an asymmetric attention economy

Table 7. The communicative dimension of different forms of injustice.

Type of injustice	Communicative dimension
Economic alienation: exploitation	class communication: communication in class relations that organize exploitation
Political alienation: domination	exclusion from political communication
Cultural alienation: disrespect, ideology	invisibility of voice: what certain individuals and groups say and do is presented in distorted manners or is marginalized

Table 8. Forms of alienated communication and alienated media/means of communications.

Dimension of injustice	Alienated communication	Alienated media/means of communication
Economic injustice	exploitation of communication workers; humans are economically disabled from or limited in producing, disseminating, or consuming information	private ownership of the means of communication
Political injustice	exclusion of humans and their voices from political communication that influences political decisions	dictatorial governance of the means of communication
Cultural injustice	the production and dissemination of ideology and the (re)production of asymmetries of attention and visibility of communication	ideological means of communication that advance malrecognition

Table 9. The interaction of class, racism, gender oppression.

	Class	Racism	Gender-related oppression, patriarchy
Class	exploitation	racist exploitation	gender-structured exploitation
Racism	racist exploitation	racism	discrimination of racialized individuals or groups of a particular gender
Gender-related oppression, patriarchy	gender-structured exploitation	discrimination of racialized individuals or groups of a particular gender	gender-based discrimination

alienation, alienation is also an aspect of communication. In alienated societies, there is a dialectic of alienation and communication. There is communicative alienation and alienated communication. Table 8 provides an overview of the dimensions of alienated communication and alienated media.

In the communication and media economy, alienation is the exploitation of communication workers and private control of means of communication so that others are excluded from owning and using these means of production. In communication and media politics, alienation is the exclusion of certain groups' and individuals' voices from influential political communication and the existence of dictatorial decision-making processes in media organizations. In communication and media culture, alienation is the production and dissemination of ideology via means of communication and the production and reproduction of asymmetries of attention and visibility. There is an asymmetric attention economy.

Capitalism, racism, and patriarchy are three modes of power relations that each combine economic alienation, political alienation, and cultural alienation. Capitalism, racism, and patriarchy involve specific forms of exploitation, domination, and ideology. The three forms of alienation are interacting in particular forms of power relations. Capitalism, racism, and patriarchy/gender-related oppression are inherently connected and interacting. The economy plays a particular role in this interaction because these power relations are relations of production and accumulation of power. Table 9 provides an overview of the interactions of capitalism, racism, and patriarchy.

The capitalist economy creates forms of highly exploited, insecure, precarious labor, including racialized labor, unpaid labor, reproductive labor, and gender-defined labor, in order to maximize profits. Racism and patriarchy have economic, political, and ideological dimensions. In capitalism, these dimensions are united by the logic of accumulation. Class, racism, and gender oppression/ patriarchy are the three main forms of power relations that advance alienation, deny humans their humanity, and create damaged lives. The interaction of class, racism, and gender oppression matters in the context of communication and media injustices. Any intersection of these power systems has communicative features and shapes communication(s) in societies structured by exploitation and

Table 10. Types of digital alienation.

Dimension of Society	Form of digital alienation	Antagonism	Example
Digital economy	digital exploitation, digital destructive forces	digital capital/digital labor	Exploitation of digital workers such as Foxconn assemblers or Uber's platform workers; the monopoly power of Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, etc.; the destructive effects of digital technologies on nature and humans (e.g. the poisoning of soil, water and humans by e-waste)
Digital politics	digital domination	digital dictators/digital citizens	Donald Trump's use of Twitter and other social media; dictatorial regime's digital surveillance of citizens; digital warfare
Digital culture	digital ideology, digital disrespect	digital ideologues & influencers/digital human beings: asymmetrical attention economy, ideology on and about the Internet	popular culture on social media: the cultural power of online-influencers such as PewDiePie (> 100 million followers on YouTube); the communication of racist and nationalist ideology on the Internet

domination. For example, the intersection of capitalism and racism in the context of communication and the media takes on the form of the super-exploitation of communication workers (e.g. call center agents) of color and immigrant communication workers, who are forced to work for lower wages than others and are the first to be fired.

Digital injustice

Digital communication and digital media are particular forms of communication and the media. A central feature of digital technologies is that the computer and digitalization enable the convergence of information-, communication- and production-technologies. The computer is not just a digital communication medium, but also a digital machine, i.e. an instrument of work and a technology of co-operation. The networked computer enables the prosumption of information, where consumers and users are enabled to produce user-generated content.

Table 10 gives an overview of three forms of alienation in digital society – i.e., of forms of digital injustice.

Digital exploitation and digital destructive forces constitute economic forms of digital alienation. Digital capital's exploitation of digital labor plays an important role in economic digital alienation. But digital production can also have negative and destructive effects on nature and the health of human beings. In such cases, the digital productive forces become digital destructive forces. In the realm of digital politics, alienation takes on the form of digital domination: digital technologies are used as means of dictatorship, surveillance, exclusion, control, war, and violence. In digital culture, alienation is digital ideology and digital disrespect: ideologies such as online nationalism or online racism are spread via digital networks; humans are disrespected in Internet communication, for example by asymmetries of online voice, attention and visibility; there are ideologies about the Internet (such as digital techno-determinism, digital techno-optimism, digital techno-pessimism).

Conclusion

In theorizing justice, dialectical theories of justice are alternatives to idealist monism, dualism, and pluralism. The approach outlined here is a contribution to dialectical concepts of justice, communication justice, media justice, and digital justice. It utilizes the theoretical approach of Marxist Humanism. Marxist Humanism argues that there is an essence of human beings – i.e., common features such as social production and the dialectic of communication and production. Table 9 Alienation is a key concept of

Table 11. Dimensions of a humanist society.

Realm of society	Forms of justice	Meaning of justice
Economy: economic justice	socialism	self-managed economic organizations where the means of production are collectively owned and controlled, wealth for and self-realization of all humans
Politics: political justice	participatory democracy	all humans are enabled to participate in the decision-making processes that concern their lives
Culture: cultural justice	respect, recognition	human beings and groups are welcomed and their interests, identities, worldviews and lifestyles are recognized, there is unity in diversity of identities, worldviews, interests, and lifestyles.

Table 12. Forms of humanist and just communication/media.

Dimension of justice	Humanist, just communication	Humanist, just media/means of communication
Economic justice	socialist communication: worker self-management of communication companies; enablement of humans to produce, disseminate, and consume information;	socialist media: collective ownership of the means of communication (public service media, citizen media); information and information technologies as common and public goods
Political justice	democratic communication: participation of humans in political communication so that their voices are heard and make a collective difference	democratic media: democratic governance of the means of communication
Cultural justice	respectful communication: the production and dissemination of respect and an inclusive culture that enables everyone to be visible in the public sphere; unity in diversity of voices; education in how to argue in complex and intelligent ways and make one's critical voice heard; respectful, complex, controversial, critical debate and constructive disagreement	media of recognition: friendly and inclusive means of communication that make humans' interests and voices heard and respected by others

Table 13. Forms of humanist and just communication/media.

Realm of society	Type of humanist, digital justice	Meaning of humanist, digital justice
Economy	digital socialism:	network access for everyone, community is in control of technology, digital resources as common goods, green computing/ICTs
Politics	digital democracy: participation and democracy in decision-making	Ddgital technologies support participatory and deliberative democracy and inclusive political communication in the public sphere
Culture	digital recognition	digital media/communication support making the voices of all heard, recognition of all; the unity of diversity of identities, lifestyles and worldviews; education in obtaining digital skills that help practicing unity in diversity socialism, and democracy

Marxist Humanism. Using this approach, injustice can be characterized as alienation. Alienation is the common aspect of injustice. Alienation destroys the realization of the potentials of humans and society. It creates power asymmetries and a gap between potentiality and actuality in society.

Injustice as alienation takes on economic, political, and cultural forms in society in unjust, alienated societies in general and in communication processes, media organizations/systems, and in the context of digital technologies that are part of alienated societies. Alienation creates inhumanity. It denies human beings their humanity by limiting their human capacities and the realization of society's potentials. To overcome alienation, social struggles for a just society and just societal conditions are needed. Progressive social movements are the practical dimension and expression of struggles for justice and protests against injustices. Protest movements utilize means of communication for protest

organization and public mobilization. Table 10 And there are also movements for communicative justice that make political demands to change the conditions of communication in society while trying to advance democratic, humanist communication and democratic, humanist means of communication. Humanism is the negation of the negation of alienation. Humanist communication and means of communication are the negation of the negation of alienated communication(s).Table 11 provides an overview of the humanist organization of society's various realms.

Table 12 provides an overview of forms of communication and media justice.

Humanist, just communication is socialist media/communication in the economy, democratic media/communication in politics, and respectful communication and media that are a source of the recognition of everyone. Humanist, just communication stands in an antagonism to class-based, exploitative media/communication, dictatorial media/communication, and ideological media/communication that advance misrecognition and asymmetries of voice.

Table 13 provides an overview of just digital communication(s).

Contemporary societies are capitalist societies. Capitalism signifies the negativity of accumulation: the existence of injustices. Communicative and digital capitalism are unjust societies with large power asymmetries. The alternative is a just, humanist communicative and digital society of the commons, where communication's original meaning as making something common is realized so that all humans benefit. Attaining a true communication society requires first and foremost praxis, i.e. social struggles against the injustices of alienation, namely exploitation, domination, ideology/disrespect/misrecognition. For Marxist Humanism, justice, communication justice, media justice, and digital justice are not abstract ideas. Ethics and justice are only material and humanist if it they not limited to the realm of concepts and interpretation, but take on the form of praxis in social movements. Communication justice has to be part of broader struggles for a democratic society of the commons, a participatory democracy.

Disclosure statement

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