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# Towards A Critical Theory of Communication with Georg Lukács and Lucien Goldmann

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## Abstract

This work contributes to the foundations of a post-Habermasian critical theory of communication. It uncovers and makes visible undiscovered, forgotten, repressed and hidden elements of Marxian theories that can contribute to grounding foundations of a critical theory of communication.

What elements for a critical theory of communication can we find in Lukács' major aesthetic work *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (*The Specificity of the Aesthetic*) and Lucien Goldmann's works? Lukács and Goldmann are two representatives of Hegelian humanist Marxism. Their stress on the importance of the human being and social production in society makes their theories particularly interesting for an analysis of the role of communication in society and capitalism. The quest for socialist humanism is a political task that unites Lukács, Goldmann and the Frankfurt School.

Taken together, Lukács and Goldmann provide perspectives on some of the most important foundational questions of a critical theory of communication. These include: The dialectical relationship of subject and object, communication as production, the dialectic of communicative production and the production of communication, communication as dialectic of thought and language and dialectic of nature and society mediated by three sign systems, ideology as the reduction of humans and society to the first sign system, ideology as contradiction of actual and potential consciousness, capitalist media as creators of reified consciousness, and the struggle for alternative communications.

**Keywords:** critical theory, humanist Marxism, Georg Lukács, Lucien Goldmann, *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, *The Specificity of the Aesthetic*, *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature* and *Cultural Creation in Modern Society*

## 1. Introduction

This article asks: What elements for a critical theory of communication can we find in Lukács' major aesthetic work *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (*The Specificity of the Aesthetic*) and Lucien Goldmann's works? It aims to show that socialist humanism unites the approaches of Lukács and Goldmann and can ground a critical, Marxian theory of communication.

When we hear someone talking about the critical theory of communication, most of us think immediately of Jürgen Habermas' (1984, 1987) theory of communicative action. But critical theory is to a significant degree associated with the works of Karl Marx, their influence, and the Marxian tradition at large. Rolf Wiggershaus (1995, 5) stresses in this context that the Frankfurt School

used the term critical theory as “a camouflage label for ‘Marxist theory’”. Habermas has over time become very critical of Marx. This also led to a discarding of dialectical thought. Habermas’ theory of communicative action is dualist (Fuchs 2016a, chapter 6): It separates communication and the lifeworld from labour and the economy as well as from power and politics.

Habermas (1987, 281) characterises his approach as a “media dualism” that identifies “two contrary” types of media – communicative action that enables social integration and the steering media of money and power that enable system integration. This assumption results in a sharp contrast between the lifeworld, language and communicative action on the one side and the economic and political system, money and power on the other side. Habermas (1987, 183) criticises the “transfer of action coordination from language over to steering media”. Steering media “may not be understood as a functional specification of language; rather, they are a substitute for special functions of language” (Habermas 1987, 263). The consequence of such a theorisation of communication is that it is conceived as inherently democratic and free of the logic of capitalism and domination. Lucien Goldmann (1977b, 43) characterises dualism as a mode of thought, where the object is “represented as a purely external objectivity, independent of or opposed to the subject”. For Habermas, the human subject is part of the lifeworld, whereas reified objectivity forms systems outside of communication.

The problem of Habermas’ approach is that a) communication is not inherently democratic, but is in corporate contexts also an instrumental strategy, which is why one also speaks of strategic communication or corporate communication; b) manipulative communication (e.g. “fake news”) aims at distorting political communication in an instrumental way; c) not all economic action is instrumental in the sense of aiming at profit-maximisation, but can in the case of non-profit self-managed organisations also be oriented on co-operation (Fuchs 2016a, 188). Marx (1867, 143) argues that a commodity’s value and price form “the language of commodities”. So other than Habermas, Marx suggests that language also operates within capital and power, not outside of it.

Habermas’ theory of communication is dualist because he situates communication on the progressive side of the contradiction between domination and democracy. An alternative approach sees communication as in itself contradictory so that in a capitalist society it is both a means of domination and democracy (Fuchs 2016a). The question that arises then is how to advance democratic communication. A critical theory of communication needs to transcend the Habermasian approach and consider communication in a critical and contradictory manner. We need an alternative, Marxist theory of communication (Fuchs 2016a).

Maeve Cooke (1997, 15) stresses that for Habermas, the lifeworld is “a background to everyday processes of communication”, forms a resource for communication that it enables, and that the lifeworld, “as an enabling condition of communicative action, is itself reproduced by the integrative mechanisms of communicative action”. Cooke argues that there is a

dialectical relationship of the lifeworld and communicative action. One can certainly agree with this view. But Habermas falls short of developing a truly dialectical theory. The distinction between lifeworld and communication alone does not make a critical theory because aspects of political economy need to be taken into account. For doing so, thinking about the relationship of economy/culture, work/communication, and production/language is necessary. Habermas externalises the category of work from culture, the lifeworld and communication and so does not apply the dialectic to this relation.

In the history of Marxist theory, we find authors who have engaged with elements of a theory of communication. Their contributions are today largely forgotten. Georg Lukács (1885-1971) and Lucien Goldmann (1913-1970) are two of these authors. Lukács' (1923/1971) book *History of Class Consciousness* has been one of the most influential Marxist books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has become an indispensable work for understanding ideology. Goldmann's works are today by and large forgotten. He is best remembered for work on the sociology of the novel (Goldmann 1975). The work at hand asks: What elements for a critical theory of communication can we find in Georg Lukács' aesthetic works and Lucien Goldmann's works? It aims to show that both authors made important contributions to the foundations of such a theory.

Lukács' book *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen (The Specificity of the Aesthetic)* and Goldmann's cultural writings contain insights into how to theorise communication. Therefore both authors matter for the development of a critical theory of communication. But their relevance has thus far been overlooked. In September 2017, 6,445 bibliographic references to Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* had been made, but only 215 to his major aesthetic book *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen (The Specificity of the Aesthetic)*<sup>1</sup> (Lukács 1963a, 1963b). The latter is a voluminous work consisting of two volumes with a total of 1,737 pages (volume 1: 851 pages; volume 2: 886 pages). One reason why the book has not received much attention is that just like Lukács' (1986a, 1986b) *Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins (Ontology of Social Being)*, also his book on aesthetics has thus far not been translated into and published in English. At the same time, the reception of Lukács has focused on *History and Class Consciousness* so much that his other works have been forgotten (see Fuchs 2016a, chapter 2). I have in a previous work shown that Lukács' *Ontology* is a key work in his oeuvre and that it is an important contribution to the foundations of a critical theory of communication (Fuchs 2016a, chapter 2). Section 2 of the work at hand asks what elements we find in Lukács' *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* that contribute to the clarification of elements of a critical theory of communication. János Kelemen (2014, chapter 2) argues that Lukács' in the *Ontology of Social Being* and *The Specificity of the Aesthetic* theorised language as part of an ontological and aesthetic theory.

Whereas Lukács' reception is reductionist, the reception of Goldmann does

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<sup>1</sup> Data source: Google Scholar, accessed on September 17, 2017.

today almost not exist at all. He is a forgotten Marxist theorist. Goldmann considered Lukács a main influence. He was a Lukácsian Marxian scholar, which is why it is feasible to discuss certain aspects of Lukács' and Goldmann's contributions to a critical theory of communication together.

The two books by Goldmann most relevant for the foundations of a critical theory of communication are *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature* (Goldmann 1980) and *Cultural Creation in Modern Society* (Goldmann 1977). Until September 2017, these two books had received 134 and 131 citations respectively<sup>2</sup>. This relatively small number indicates how undiscovered Goldmann's approach is. By engaging with undiscovered, forgotten, repressed and hidden Marxist theories today, we can try to put the richness and importance of the Marxian theory tradition on the agenda of the contemporary social sciences and humanities and of critical communication theory (see also Fuchs 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d).

Section 2 of the work at hand asks what elements of communication we can find in Lukács *Eigenart des Ästhetischen*. Section 3 engages with elements in Goldmann's work that contribute to the foundations of a critical theory of communication. The conclusion (section 4) summarises the main and points out the relevance of the two thinkers' humanist Marxism.

## **2. Aspects of Communication in Georg Lukács' *Eigenart des Ästhetischen***

For Lukács (1963a, 13), everyday life is the "starting and end point of all human activity"<sup>3</sup>. Everyday life has to do with the "practice and habit of work, traditions and manners of humans living and producing together and fixing these experiences in language"<sup>4</sup>. Language is the "indispensable medium of communication" that enables "working together and living together in the everyday life of societal being"<sup>5</sup> (1986a, 187). "This means that if we imagine everyday life as a large river, then science and art branch out as higher forms of reality's reception and reproduction that differentiate themselves, develop according to their specific aims, reach their pure form in the peculiarity that emerges from societal life's needs in order to then, because of their effects on human life, flow again into the river of everyday life. So the latter constantly enriches itself with the human mind's highest results that it assimilates to its everyday, practical needs, whereof then again new branches of higher

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<sup>2</sup> Data source: Google Scholar, accessed on September 17, 2017.

<sup>3</sup> „Das Alltagsverhalten des Menschen ist zugleich Anfang und Endpunkt einer jeden menschlichen Tätigkeit“.

<sup>4</sup> „Übung und Gewohnheit in der Arbeit, Tradition und Sitte im Zusammenleben und Zusammenwirken der Menschen, Fixieren dieser Erfahrungen in der Sprache“.

<sup>5</sup> „Die Sprache, als unentbehrliches Medium der nur gesellschaftlich möglichen Kommunikation, des Zusammenwirkens und Zusammenlebens schon im Alltag des gesellschaftlichen Seins, ist gerade in dieser letzthinigen Einheitlichkeit ein Zeichen der gleichfalls letzthinigen Einheitlichkeit des neuen, nicht mehr stummen Gattungsprozesses selbst“.

organisational forms emerge as questions and demands”<sup>6</sup> (Lukács 1963a, 13). So for Lukács, the world is a dynamic flow of everyday life, the life of production, from which alternative streams flow out and back and enrich production. He uses the river as metaphor for describing how human production and the organisations and institutions that are realms of mental production relate to each other. The traditional Marxist metaphor has been a building in which the economic basement is the foundation of and carries the upper political and cultural floors. The building metaphor is, however, too static and cannot take the constant processes of human production into account. The building is only a spatial metaphor, whereas the river is a spatio-temporal metaphor.

In dialectical philosophy, the world is contradictory and contradictions are productive in that they are the potential for and source of change. Lukács uses the metaphor of the river for dialectics in order to stress this dynamic character of everyday life. At the same time, he also stresses that rivers can branch out to create new stream, which stresses the productive and contradictory nature of dialectics. An alternative metaphor for dialectics that Heraclitus used is a fire that extinguishes and kindles itself (Fuchs 2014).

In his final work *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins (On the Ontology of Societal Being)*, which like *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* is a neglected book, Lukács systematically works out an ontology of society that is based on the concept of teleological positing (see chapter 2 in Fuchs 2016a for a detailed discussion of the importance of Lukács’ *Ontology* for a critical theory of communication): Human activity is teleological because humans in it consciously create with a purpose, orientation and goal (Lukács 1986a, 5) so that intentions take on an objective form as products of human activity. Lukács’ notion of teleological positing stresses that human production is a key aspect of all social systems. So one can say that all systems have common economic foundation. Lukács argues that work’s teleological positing structurally changed the subject-object-relationship so that the relations of the individual and the totality brought about transformations such as the emergence of language (Lukács 1986a, 52).

In *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, Lukács describes the commonality of all societies and all social systems metaphorically as the river of everyday life, the flows, networks and processes of everyday production. Communication is the production of sociality and social relations. Humans do not produce alone, but in relation to and together with (and in class societies also *against*) others. Everyday life is always production, which requires communication, the

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<sup>6</sup> „D. h. wenn man sich den Alltag als einen großen Strom vorstellt, so zweigen in höheren Aufnahme- und Reproduktionsformen der Wirklichkeit Wissenschaft und Kunst aus diesem ab, differenzieren sich und bilden sich ihren spezifischen Zielsetzungen entsprechend aus, erreichen ihre reine Form in dieser – aus den Bedürfnissen des gesellschaftlichen Lebens entspringenden – Eigenart, um dann infolge ihre Wirkungen, ihrer Einwirkungen auf das Leben der Menschen wieder im Strom des Alltagslebens zu münden. Dieser bereichert sich also andauernd mit den höchsten Ergebnissen des menschlichen Geistes, assimiliert diese seinen täglichen, praktischen Bedürfnissen, woraus dann wieder, als Fragen und Forderungen, neue Abzweigungen der höheren Objektivationsformen entstehen”.

production of communication as well as communicative production. Communication and work, the social and the economic, are identical and non-identical at the same time. There is a dialectic of work and communication – the dialectic of the production of communication and communication in production – that is grounded in humans’ teleological positing. The social production of communication is the creation and reproduction of social relations that enable different forms of production. These different forms branch out of the river of everyday life as dialectical spirals, in which humans produce new qualities of society that flow back into the stream of everyday life and take effect there. Lukács (1963a, 38, 86) argues that work and language are inseparable: That humans have to say something to each other develops in and through the complexity of work. Work and language are the “basic forms of the specifically human mode of life”<sup>7</sup> (39). Both are based on the “teleological principle”<sup>8</sup> (40), namely that humans can imagine the result of production before they produce something.

Lukács described how during human evolution society became increasingly disembedded from nature, which means that the level of immediate interaction with nature in production decreased. The natural barriers of human behaviour decreased, although humans always remain connected to nature in metabolisms as social beings who are also natural beings (Lukács 1963a, 470). Relatively autonomous spheres of society emerge from human production that are dialectically part of, related to, and different from everyday life. These spheres flow out of and into society (Lukács 1963a, 207, 362). In *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen*, Lukács analyses science and the arts as two such institutions, in *Zur Ontologie des gesellschaftlichen Seins* the economy and ideology. In capitalism, the expansion of the productive forces and with it of science does not have natural limits (Lukács 1963a, 165), but only socio-economic ones (the crisis). Science strongly shapes everyday life. But in a negative dialectic, scientific and technological progress under conditions of capitalist profitability turns into inhumanity and anti-humanism (Lukács 1963a, 197). Lukács argues that the role of art in capitalism’s fetishised world of commodities is the tendency that it has de-fetishising character.

Lukács (1963a) argues that communication does not just communicate content, but also aims at appealing to and evoking feelings: “Every societal communication goes from the total human to the total human and therefore cannot content itself with the simple transmission of conceptually clarified content, but rather also appeals to the partner’s emotional life”<sup>9</sup> (Lukács 1963a, 377). Communication has an evocative character, it tries to evoke “some kind of action, behaviour, etc.”<sup>10</sup> in the communication partner (Lukács 1963a, 378). Language is “the decisive medium and [...] main regulator of the

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<sup>7</sup> „Grundformen der spezifisch menschlichen Lebensweise“.

<sup>8</sup> „teleologischen Prinzips“.

<sup>9</sup> „daß jede gesellschaftliche Kommunikation vom ganzen Menschen zum ganzen Menschen geht und darum sich nicht mit dem einfachen Weitergeben von begrifflich geklärten Inhalten begnügen kann, sondern auch an das Gefühlsleben des Partners appelliert“.

<sup>10</sup> „sie zu irgendeinem Handeln, Verhalten etc. veranlassen“.

intercourse of humans" (1963b, 39)<sup>11</sup>. It creates a distance between humans and the world of objects (1963b, 48, 66).

Communication is a process of symbolic interaction that is based on information from the external world that acts as signal for cognition and communication. One of the aspects of Lukács' aesthetic writings that matters for a theory of communication is his concept of signal systems. Lukács (1963b) deals with human information processes in detail in the chapter *Das Signalsystem 1'* (*The Signal System 1'*) of *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* (Lukács 1963b, 11-192). He argues that humans have three signal systems. Based on Ivan Pavlov's work, he distinguishes between the reflex system that reacts to natural input signals (signal system 1) and language that reacts to the social world (signal system 2). The second signal system that uses spoken and visual words would be specifically human. Lukács (1963b, 21) criticises that Pavlov does not see a generic connection between work and language. Lukács introduces the signal system 1' that just like signal system 2 is a system dealing with signals of signals (1963b, 73). It generalises and makes conscious signals of signals (1963b, 27). It identifies typical aspects of relations (1963b, 58). Lukács discusses examples of phenomena created by signal system 1': Phantasy, thoughts, creativity, knowledge of human nature, love, comprehension, spontaneous decision-making, tactics, the aesthetic reception of art and culture. When Lukács says that "signal system 1' especially serves human cognition"<sup>12</sup> (1963b, 68) and determines psychological life (108), it becomes evident that by signal system 1' he means the system of human cognition and psyche that is located in and organised by the brain.

Signal system 1' creates novelty based on existing foundations (Lukács 1963b, 33), a dialectic of continuity and discontinuity (35). There is "complex, contradictory co-operation of signal systems 1' and 2"<sup>13</sup> (1963b, 64). Signal system 1' transforms the signals (forms and contents) obtained via signal system 2 (1963b, 91). There is a dialectic of human cognition and communication: Humans act in and perceive the natural and social world. The perceived signals are transformed by and processed in the human brain. The interaction with other humans and the social and natural environment is co-ordinated by the human brain. In the communication process, humans externalise parts of their thoughts and internalise parts of the thoughts of others. Humans in the cognition process through signal system 1' produce knowledge of the world. In the communication process, humans engage with each other and produce and reproduce social relations and their own sociality, i.e. their existence as social and societal beings. Both cognition and communication are according to Lukács grounded in human work, which means that they are purposeful production processes creating novelty. Lukács (1986a, 1986b) speaks in this context of teleological positing. In the

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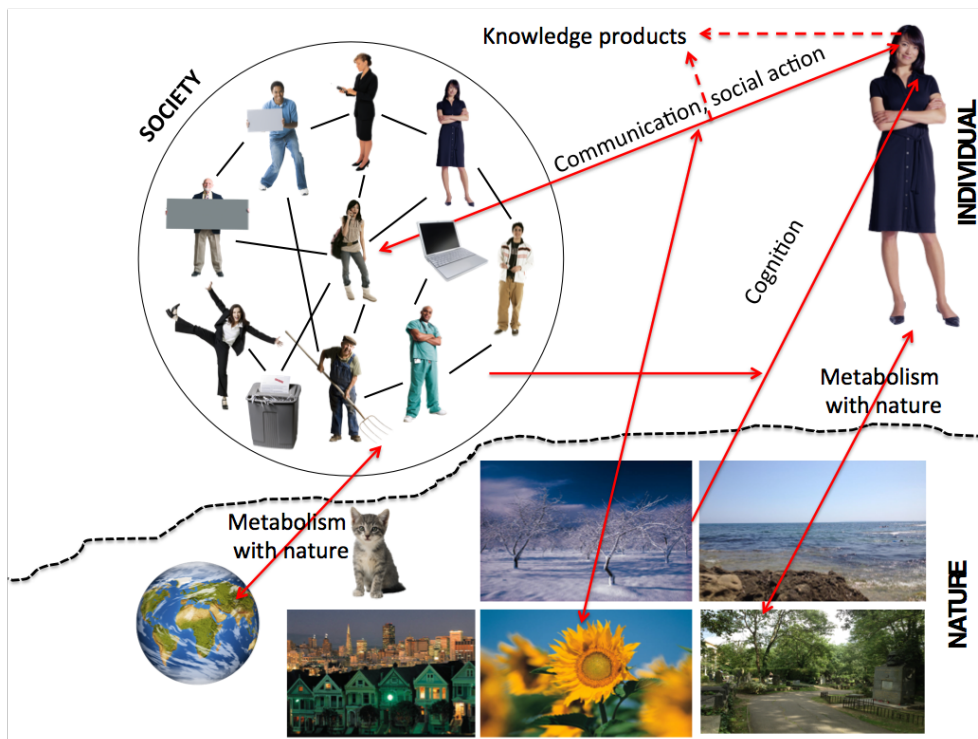
<sup>11</sup> „So wird die Sprache zum entscheidenden Medium und zum Hauptregulator des Verkehrs der Menschen miteinander“.

<sup>12</sup> „Signalsystem 1' vor allem der Erkenntnis des Menschen dient“.

<sup>13</sup> „So sehen wir überall auf relativ entwickelter Gesellschaftsstufe, eine komplizierte, widerspruchsvolle Zusammenarbeit der Signalsysteme 1' und 2“.



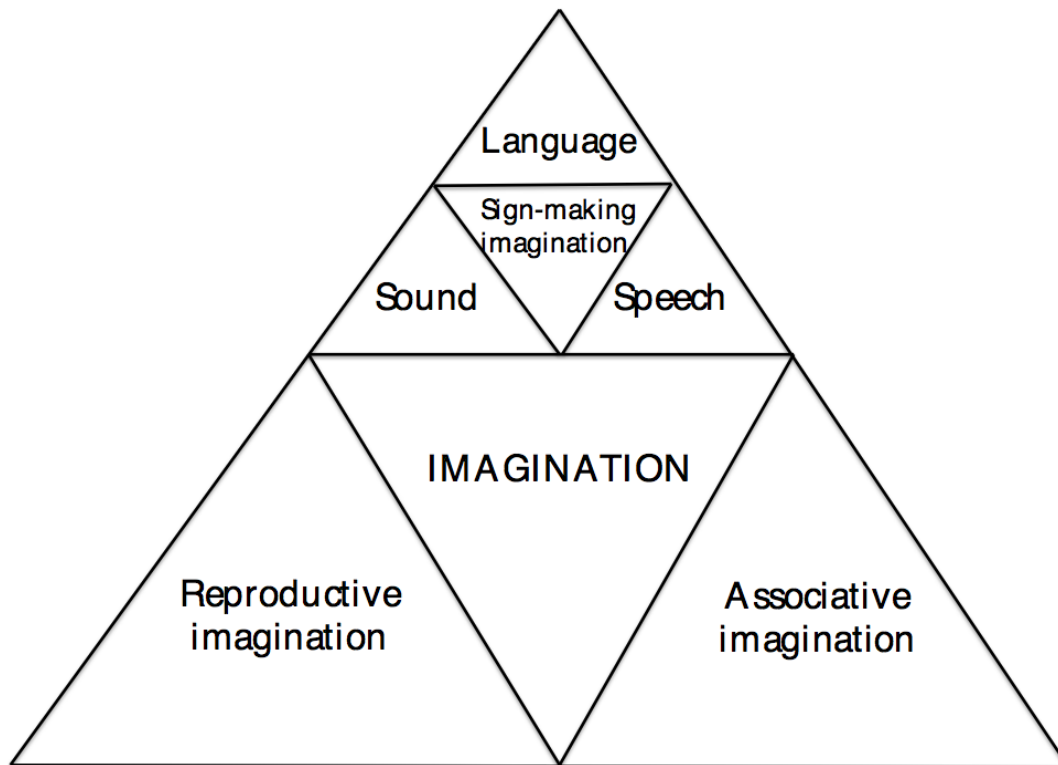
metabolism with nature and the communication with other humans, humans re-produce themselves naturally and socially and thereby society. In the work process, humans create through bodily and cognitive activity and communication physical and non-physical use-values that satisfy human needs. Work requires communication, communication is work of human sociality, and cognition is work of the human brain. Figure 1 visualises these processes. The three signal systems that Lukács identifies allow humans to automatically react to influences according to their instincts (signal system 1), to reflect on the world (signal system 1'), and to communicate with each other (signal system 2).



**Figure 1: Human interactions in society and with nature**

For explaining the relationship of signal systems 1' and 2, Lukács (1963b, 31-32) refers to the third part of Hegel's *Encyclopaedia*, the *Phenomenology of Mind*. Imagination is for Hegel, as part of the subjective mind, an important aspect of representation (*Vorstellung*). Representation is the dialectic of recollection, imagination and memory (Hegel 1830/2007, §451). Imagination for Hegel is the dialectic of reproductive imagination, associative imagination and sign-making imagination (§§455-459, see also figure 2): Humans have the capacity to produce and reproduce mental images in their engagement with the world. They can mentally relate different mental images to each other. Hegel mentions the following example: "For example, I have before me the image of an object; this image is connected quite externally to the image of persons with whom I have spoken about this object, or who possess it, etc." (Hegel 1830/2007, §455 [Zusatz]). Based on images and relations of images, humans create signs, new representations of the world: "The *sign* is some immediate intuition, which represents a wholly different content from that it has for itself" (§458). The production of signs is the dialectic of sound, speech

and language (§459). “Sound articulating itself further for determinate representations, *speech*, and its system, *language*, give to sensations, intuitions, representations a second, higher reality than their immediate one, in general an existence that carries weight in the *realm of representation*” (§459).



**Figure 2: Hegel's dialectic of imagination (visualisation based on Hegel 1830/2007, §§455-459).**

For Hegel, human imagination is where what Lukács' terms signal systems 1' and 2 are connected. For Hegel, both thought and communication are part of the subjective and theoretical mind. In his idealist manner, Hegel sets the human mind as an absolute substance of the world, something that exists and does not need to be grounded and explained. Cognition and communication are therefore reduced to the mind.

Whereas cognition and communication are for Hegel aspects of the subjective mind, he sees work as a dimension of the objective mind. He locates work as part of ethical life, civil society and the system of needs (Hegel 1830/2007, §524). So Hegel separates work and communication as two very different dimensions of the human mind. He cannot answer the question what communication and work have in common. Lukács (1963b, 33) in contrast stresses that the human being is “a product of his own work”<sup>14</sup>. Humans mentally conceive reality in the form of concepts and communicate with each other because “of the necessity the form concepts for work in the work

<sup>14</sup> „Produkt seiner eigenen Arbeit“.

process”<sup>15</sup> (1963b, 81). Teleological positing means that human production is a form that is based on human work and shapes human activities, including cognition and communication that produce thoughts and sociality.

In *Das System der spekulativen Philosophie (System of Speculative Philosophy)*, one of his philosophical systems developed in Jena, Hegel (1803/1804, 185-232) argues that spirit is expressed as language and work. Spirit results for Hegel on the one hand in language (226) and on the other hand in work and property (227). Language and work have for Hegel in common that they relate individuals (227, 229).

In the article *Arbeit und Interaktion (Work and Interaction)*, Habermas (1968) builds on Hegel’s Jena philosophy and introduces a differentiation between work as strategic action and communication as non-strategic action aimed at achieving understanding. His later differentiation between system and lifeworld goes back to this earlier work and Hegel’s differentiation of work and interaction in the Jena system of philosophy.

Hegel in his Jena philosophy and based on him Habermas fall back behind Hegel’s later dialectical *Logic*, in which a contradiction does not simply mean two separate entities, but two entities that are separate and identical at the same time and therefore “overgrasp” into each other (for a detailed discussion, see Fuchs 2015, chapter 3; Fuchs 2016b, 36-38). Hegel uses in this context in his *Logic* the term “übergreifen” that has been translated as “overgrasping”. “Hegel uses übergreifen to express the positive aspect of the process of *Aufhebung*. The concept that results from speculative ‘comprehension’ (*begreifen*) reaches back and ‘overgrasps’ the opposition of the moments produced by thought in its dialectical stage” (Translators’ Introduction, in: Hegel 1830/1991, xxvi). Hegel (1830/1991, §20) for example says that “thought is itself and its other, that it overgrasps its other and that nothing escapes it”.

Applied to the relationship of work and communication, this means that work and communication overgrasp into each other: Communication is a form of work, work only acquires a social character through communication. Work has a communicative character just like communication has work character. Habermas cannot adequately analyse this dialectic.

Marx (1867, 284) describes human production as “purposeful activity”. He argues that “what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes [*verwirklicht*] his own purpose in those materials” (Marx 1867, 284). Human

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<sup>15</sup> „Wir glauben – gerade von den Darlegungen Engels überzeugt -, daß die Ausbildung der artikulierten Sprache bei den Menschen mit der Notwendigkeit, in der Arbeit, für die Arbeit Begriffe auszubilden, zusammenhängt, und daß dieses imperative Bedürfnis der menschengewordenen Existenz die Artikulation allmählich durchgesetzt hat“.

self-consciousness and complex reflection enables us to anticipate the potential result of our action and production. From this feature of purposeful, reflective action follows that humans have the capacity for ethical reflection, forming moral values about what is good and evil, organising a political system, struggling for what they consider as injustices, and potentially establishing a just society without domination, classes and exploitation.

Ideologies are attempts to reduce humans to the status of machines that think, communicate and act reflex-like and in an automated manner. An ideology is a particular form of communication that aims at manipulating humans in such a way that they think and act in the particular interest of a dominant class or group. As a consequence, not all, but only that particular class of humans benefits. And it does so at the expense of others. Ideology is what the Frankfurt School called instrumental reason and technological rationality (Horkheimer 2004, Marcuse 1941). Ideology tries to instrumentalise humans and to turn their consciousness and behaviour into automatic machines. It is of course not self-evident that this always works, but what is decisive is that in class and dominative societies, there is constant production and dissemination of ideologies which attempts to stabilise and reproduce the system.

Exploitation, ideology and domination are specific types of purposeful action, namely instrumental actions that instrumentalise humans for the benefit of the few. Socialism in contrast is based on a different sort of purposeful action that overcomes instrumentalisation and creates benefits for all/the many. Such action can be termed co-operative action or commons-based action.

The notions of ideology and instrumental reason and technological rationality build on Lukács' (1923/1971) idea of reified consciousness that he bases on Marx's notion of fetishism. Ideologies try to create reified consciousness by presenting society in a thing-like, immutable, unchangeable and naturalised way. It is the attempt to turn consciousness into a thing. Lukács' distinction between signal systems 1, 1' and 2 allows us to understand ideology as a reduction: Ideology tries to reduce human communication and cognition to signal system 1 so that humans think and act in a pre-determined and instrumental manner just like machines and Pavlov's dog do. Society is created in social relations. Because social relations are variable, humans can change social situations and society. Ideology tries to present social relations as thing-like and unchangeable.

Ideologies for example advance the idea that immigrants are by nature lazy "parasites" and that their lifestyle is by nature incompatible with the national one. The behaviour of "foreigners" is presented as being determined by their nationality, not by the totality of social relations. If one assumes the latter, then it is clear that no individual has by nature certain features and that human beings in a society can therefore manage and find ways to live together, learn from each other and become friends. Racist ideology reifies humans and reduces them to a specific nature with the aim of fostering division, hatred, exclusion, discrimination, conflict, war and in the last instance, annihilation.

Signal system 2 organises communication and therefore the production of social relations. Signal system 1' organises reflection. Ideology aims at humans "switching off" or reducing the activity of signal systems 1' and 2. In the example, racism aims at human beings encountering others through ideologically formed prejudices, not through reflection on society's complexity and communication with immigrants that encounters them as fellow human beings and potential friends. Ideology tries to reduce human thought and action to automatic reflexes of signal system 1 that lack reflection and communicative encounter. All ideology in the last instance, through the reduction of the complexity of humans and society to signal system 1, tries to dehumanise society and humans. Dehumanisation means that ideology denies certain groups and individuals being human. It denies its victims humanity and wants to see them suffer and being excluded or even exterminated. It it tries to deny those whom it tries to convince to act against the scapegoat full human complexity by aiming at reducing the complexity of cognition and communication to a one-dimensional pattern. Ideology is a non-dialectical form of consciousness, communication and practice that reduces the dialectical complexity of thought, communication, action and society to naturalised prejudices, stereotypes and other irrationalities.

### **3. Aspects of Communication in Lucien Goldmann's Works**

Lucien Goldmann tried to combine Hegel, Kant, Marx, Lukács, Piaget and Heidegger. Goldmann adopted "Piaget's vocabulary to reformulate Lukács' holism" (Jay 1984, 320). After Goldmann's death, Raymond Williams (2005, 11-30) wrote a contribution that commemorated the French thinker. Williams (2005) argues that Goldmann's interpretation of Lukács was a "critical sociology" (17) that acted as "a critical weapon against this precise deformation" that advances the reification of "life and consciousness" and as a critical weapon "against capitalism itself" (21).

The books of Goldmann most relevant for a critical theory of communication are the two collections *Essays on Method in the Sociology of Literature* (Goldmann 1980) and *Cultural Creation in Modern Society* (Goldmann 1977a).

Goldmann opposes both structuralism and individualism. What he terms genetic structuralism is a form of social theory that foregrounds the dialectics of "structure-process, fact-value, subjectivity-objectivity, comprehension-explanation and determinism-freedom" (Goldmann 1980, 36). There is "continuity in discontinuity, freedom in determinism, the presence of values in the establishing of facts, and so on" (Goldmann 1980, 37). Structuring and production constitute a dynamic process in society (93). Structuralism denies humans' "creative role and transfers the creativity factor to structures alone" (149).

Goldmann opposes linguistic structuralism that proclaims the death of the subject and sees language and communication as pure discourse structures.

One “cannot simply imagine that [linguistic] structures effect transformations, through a mere internal process of change. There are subjects and it is they who make history, i.e., transform structures” (Goldmann 1980, 39). This includes that humans make “the history of ideas and thought” (Goldmann 1980, 43). Goldmann is opposed to structuralist French theory in the tradition of Althusser and Foucault and to structural linguistics in the tradition of Saussure and Roland Barthes. We can here see a clear parallel between Goldmann and Lukács’ stress that communication and thought are forms of teleological positing and human production. For Goldmann (1980, 45), there is a dialectic of the subject and object of knowledge: “The subject is also part of the object of thought and, conversely, the object (capitalist society) is part of the mental structure of the subject”. Goldmann’s key argument against structural linguistics is that linguistic structures do not act and that rather humans act and communicated mediated by language. “Language does not love or hate, it is neither pessimistic nor optimistic because its function is to permit love or hate, hope or despair” (Goldmann 1980, 51). “Contrary to linguistically based structuralism, genetic structuralism asserts that in no instance could structures replace man as historical subject, even if they do characterize human thought, behaviour and emotions. [...] I do not believe that language produces, interprets, governs or creates. It is men who do so, through language and by using it as a privileged instrument” (Goldmann 1980, 149).

Groups are transindividual subjects (Goldmann 1980, 97) that produce worldviews, i.e. collective consciousness (60). “By ‘world view’ we mean a *coherent* and *unitary* perspective concerning man’s relationships with his fellow men and with the universe” (111). Goldmann terms the actual consciousness of a group real or effective consciousness. In contrast, he speaks of possible consciousness as consciousness that conforms to reality (65). Possible consciousness is “an adequate and coherent consciousness” (87). Goldmann applies Hegel’s notions of essence and existence to collective consciousness and argues that today real and possible consciousness rarely match (66). “The possible is based on the real, but the possible only becomes real insofar as it is an overcoming and a modification of the real as it exists” (118). Goldmann criticises positivism as only focusing on real consciousness and ignoring potential consciousness (68). Reification involves in general the “replacement of the qualitative and human by the quantitative” (99).

Goldmann (1980, 118) sees the major problem of contemporary Western societies in the “danger of reduction or even elimination of man’s possibilities”. He stresses that he shares this insight with the Frankfurt School. What Goldmann formulates in abstract terms means that exploitation destroys the possibility for workers’ wealth and for equality, political domination destroys the possibility for participation and democracy, war destroys the possibility for life, and ideology destroys the possibility for a public sphere, in which humans on equal grounds together interpret and make meaning of the world.

For Goldmann (1977a), the creation of actual and potential consciousness is a communication process. He argues that there can be certain forms of manipulation of communication and speaks in this context of “distortion” and

“obstruction”: Certain messages are “developed and transmitted”, others are “distorted, [...] the elaboration and transmission of whole series of messages” are “obstructed” (37). Although Goldman speaks of obstruction and distortion, he does in these cases not term the communication process “ideology”. He does not work out a clear critical understanding of ideology.

Lukács (1923/1971) based on Marx’s notion of fetishism characterises ideology as reified and false consciousness that “obscures the historical, transitory character of capitalist society” by making its determinants appear as “timeless, eternal” and “valid for all social formations”. Ideology ignores dialectic totalities and sees a whole just as a “‘sum’ of the parts” so that “isolated parts” appear as “a timeless law valid for every human society” (Lukács 1923/1971). Ideology exists for Lukács only in class societies: “Ideology presupposes ‘societal structures, in which different groups and conflicting interests act and strive to impose their interest onto the totality of society as its general interest. To put it shortly: The emergence and diffusion of ideologies appears as the general characteristic of class societies’<sup>16</sup> (Lukács 1986b, 405).

Goldman shared Lukács’ concept of ideology, but applied it without developing his own theory of ideology. He conducted applied sociological Lukácsian work without engaging in theorising the underlying categories of ideology and reification that he took for granted from Lukács’ works. That he shares Lukács’ concept of ideology as reified and false consciousness and society becomes evident from the way Goldman uses the term. Let us look at some examples.

In his book *Lukács and Heidegger*, Goldman explains that for Lukács reification means “the separation between subject and object, between judgment of fact and value judgment” so that the world and psychic structures “appear as the property of things” and “practical human relations no longer exist except through the price, on the market, between buyer and seller, between individuals apparently free, isolated, and equal” (Goldman 1977b, 33). Reification creates “a world of spectacle where [...] social relations are hidden as such and appear as the property of things outside of them” (43).

Goldman does not provide his own or Lukács’ definition of ideology. But he makes clear that for Lukács, there is a difference between the “falseness or truth of consciousness, its ideological or non-ideological character” (Goldman 1977b, 55), which is an understanding of ideology as a process that tries to distort, misrepresent, one-dimensionally present or dissimulate reality in order to legitimate or hide the interests of a ruling class or group (Fuchs 2015, chapter 3). Such a critical concept of ideology differs from general theories of ideology that equate ideology with consciousness or worldviews.

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<sup>16</sup> Translation from German: ‘Die Hauptfrage ist demnach, daß das Entstehen solcher Ideologien Gesellschaftsstrukturen voraussetzt, in denen verschiedene Gruppen und entgegengesetzte Interessen wirken und bestrebt sind, diese der Gesamtgesellschaft als deren allgemeines Interesse aufzudrängen. Kurz gefaßt: Entstehen und Verbreitung von Ideologien erscheint als das allgemeine Kennzeichen der Klassengesellschaften’.

Goldmann (1973, 62) characterises individualism as “the ideology of a rising class”. In his book on Kant, Goldmann (1971, 199) speaks of the Enlightenment as an “ideology”, in which “progress had become a natural law” that suppressed “qualitative difference between present and future, and the need for action”. Jansenism was a Catholic movement that believed in predestination, the original sin and divine grace. It had influence during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, especially in France. In *The Hidden God*, Goldmann (1964/2013) analyses Jansenism and how Pascal and Racine related to it. He analyses Jansenism as “the only ideology that was peculiar to [...] [the] nobility” in France (104) and argues that the works of Pascal and Racine were the “most important philosophical and literary expression of this ideology” (142).

The positive aspect of the mass media is for Goldmann (1977a, 41) that there has been “an increase in the number of people actually having access to culture”. But one has to go beyond quantity and must also look at the qualities of communication (42). Based on Lukács, Goldmann defines the reification of consciousness as the disappearance of “transcendence and totality”, “the entire social structure, the global character of interhuman relations [...] from the consciousness of individuals. [...] an individualistic, atomized vision of men’s relations with other men and with the universe is created. Community, positive values, the hope of transcendence [*dépassement*] and all qualitative structures tend to disappear from men’s consciousness, yielding to the faculty of understanding [*l’entendement*] and the quantitative. Reality loses all transparency and becomes opaque; man becomes limited and disoriented” (43).

Monopoly capitalism has destroyed independent spheres of human activity that “permitted the organization of a public opinion functioning as significantly in political and social life as in cultural life” (Goldmann 1977a, 44-45). Monopoly capitalism negatively impacts the public sphere. Reification also takes place through the media system. The “mass of information” bombarding us “can be disorienting” (47). Consumer culture tries to focus human activities on commodities (85). In politics, an elite of technocrats dominates decision-making (45, 88). Goldmann distinguishes between active and passive reception (47) and argues that media use is contradictory and dialectical (49). The political task is according to Goldmann overcome one-dimensional media and follow a “strategy which would permit efficacious action by those trying to use mass media toward effectively creative, cultural ends” (49). Humans face two tendencies, namely “the tendency to adapt to the real, and the tendency to overcome the real toward the possible – toward a beyond which men must create by their behaviour” (57). Social struggles determine which tendency asserts itself over the other in a particular event or situation. The alternative that Goldmann envisions is “economic democracy and self-management” (47). In the realm of the media this means democratic, self-managed media that replace capitalist media. At the level of communication and consciousness, the struggle for alternatives involves dialectical thought that aims at understanding the totality and is a “radical critique of all positivism” (112).



It is noticeable that Goldmann in the same way as Lukács uses Hegelian dialectical language for ascertaining that capitalism constitutes a gap between actuality and possibility and between existence and essence. But Goldmann, other than Lukács, avoids speaking of ideology as a form of communication that aims at creating false consciousness. Ideology is a term that Goldmann hardly uses. He completely avoids to speak of false consciousness. So Lukács' categories could in a way be said to be more critical than the categories of actual and potential consciousness that do not immediately imply a critique of domination, although Goldmann of course gives them a critical content. Goldmann goes a step further than Lukács in that he advances a critique of capitalist media based on Lukács.

#### 4. Conclusion

We can summarise some of the main findings of this work, whose task has been to find out what elements there are in Lukács' *Eigenart des Ästhetischen* and Lucien Goldmann's works that contribute to the foundations of a critical theory of communication.

Lukács describes everyday life metaphorically as a river that produces new qualities. Production is for him a flow, from which emergent qualities and novelty arise. The metaphor of society as a river is much more dynamic than the one of a building. In a building, there is a basement and there are floors that sit on top of the basement. The river in contrast is a productive flow that constantly produces something new through which the flow and the river as a system reproduce themselves. Based on Lukács, we can see the importance of the production of communication and communicative production in society: Communication is one of the processes of production in society's everyday flows. It produces social relations, social systems, sociality and society. Lukács grounds communication as a phenomenon of flows and production that helps us to overcome static and mechanistic base/superstructure conceptions of society.

Lukács in *Die Eigenart des Ästhetischen* also theorises the communication process itself. He in this context distinguishes between the signal systems 1, 1' and 2. He conceives of these systems not in a mechanistic manner, as Pavlov did, but in a dialectical way. For Lukács, communication is based on a dialectic of thought and language and a dialectic of nature and society. The three signal systems (instincts, cognitive capacity/the brain, language) are media that help organising these dialectics. What Lukács describes as teleological positing, by which he means human production, is the common feature of instinctual behaviour, cognition and communication. The unconscious is the process that produces instinctual behaviour. Cognition is the process in the brain that produces thoughts. Communication is the human social process that produces social relations and sociality.

Lukács' *Eigenart des Ästhetischen* also allows us to better understand how ideology works. Ideology tries to reify consciousness by reducing human

activities to the automatism of signal system 1 and by reducing the activities of signal systems 1' and 2 to signal system 1 so that social relations are presented as thing-like. Based on ideology, complex reflection about society and the causes of its problems are reduced to one-dimensional patterns. Ideological judgements are based on irrational prejudices and naturalisations and not on communicative encounters. Ideology is a practice, discourse and form of consciousness that tries to reduce society and humans to a thing- and machine-like automatism and instrumentalism. Ideology denies humans their humanity. It is the attempt to create inhumanity by communicating to humans that other humans are not like them, but are lower forms of humans, and that society is not a complex, dialectical whole, but a form of unchangeable and thing-like nature.

Goldmann opposes structuralism and structural linguistics for their neglect of the human subject. He argues for a dialectic of subject and object and stresses that language does not act, but that rather humans act mediated by language.

Goldmann took up Lukács' notion of the reification of consciousness and formulated it as a contradiction between real consciousness and potential consciousness. Reified structures would limit human potentials and potential consciousness so that which exists appears as the only possible reality.

Goldmann in a manner comparable to Marcuse, Horkheimer and Adorno applies Lukács' notion of reification to capitalism's media system. He argues that capitalist media in manifold ways limit potential consciousness. Goldmann tends in contrast to Lukács to avoid the terms "ideology" and "false consciousness". He criticises capitalist media as aiming at the reification of consciousness and argues for alternative, self-managed democratic media and dialectical communication in order to strengthen the public sphere. The quest for socialist humanism is a political task that unites Lukács, Goldmann and the Frankfurt School.

Taken together, Lukács and Goldmann provide perspectives on some of the most important foundational questions of a critical theory of communication, such as the dialectical relationship of subject and object, communication as production, the dialectic of communicative production and the production of communication, communication as dialectic of thought and language and dialectic of nature and society mediated by three sign systems, ideology as the reduction of humans and society to the first sign system, ideology as contradiction of actual and potential consciousness, capitalist media as creators of reified consciousness, and the struggle for alternative communications (see also Fuchs 2016a).

There are profound parallels and complementarities between Lukács' and Goldmann's works. This is no surprise because Goldmann understood himself as a Lukácsian. Both approaches contribute to the foundations of a critical humanist theory of communication.

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