sophisticated. Computer 'gamers' (sic) at a US military base can now safely kill in distant countries using drones. Mirrlees concludes 'that games are sometimes met with smug reminders that they are just games and shouldn't be taken so seriously' (p. 235), which might just indicate how much the US military–PR empire has been able to produce exactly the attitude that propaganda seeks to establish.

It remains imperative to comprehend that the purpose of the global culture industry is to 'support an ideological environment in which capitalism and consumerism may appear as the ideal' (p. 239) world. Once this is linked to TINA (there is no alternative), hegemony is established, capitalism is secure, alternatives are deleted, radicals are eliminated, and democracy can no longer challenge the media, the military, or capitalism. Beyond that, Mirrlees concludes, 'this book has explained why and how empire-affirming cultural commodities flourish and flow. The lion's share of the US culture industry is controlled by corporations' (p. 248). While Mirrlees' book is most insightful and illuminating, it is also devastatingly pessimistic, perhaps even dystopian. Nonetheless, the US military–propaganda empire has not (yet) won totally. To avoid the manipulating powers of the US cultural industry, one might consider looking at these websites:

www.alternet.org;	www.indymedia.org;	www.socialistproject.ca;
www.commondreams.org;	www.inthesetimes.com;	www.socialmediacollective.org;
www.corporatewatch.org;	www.libcom.org;	www.spinwatch.org;
www.countercurrents.org;	www.mediachannel.org;	www.theintercept.com;
www.counterpunch.org;	www.medialens.org;	www.tomdispatch.com;
www.dcreport.org;	www.newmatilda.com;	www.truth-out.org;
www.democracynow.org;	www.opensecrets.org;	www.truthdig.com;
www.freepress.net;	www.politico.com;	www.zcomm.org.
www.guerrillanews.com;	www.salon.com;	

Christian Fuchs
Critical Theory of Communication, University of Westminster Press: London, 2017; 230 pp.: £18.99

Reviewed by: Claude Mangion, *University of Malta, Malta*

Fuchs' *Critical Theory of Communication* aims to provide a cultural materialist position that would serve as the foundation for a dialectical critical theory of communication that goes beyond the writings of Habermas. His strategy for implementing this is by setting into play the Frankfurt School – that does not, except for Habermas, say much about communication – with the broader Marxist tradition whose key figures have contributed to a critically engaging theory of culture. The further work that needs to be done is to address with the world of digital communication insofar as these form part of the contemporary capitalist landscape of exploitation and repression.

Lukács plays a central role in Fuchs' project because he outlines a critical theory of society and capitalism that examines the relationship between work and culture, labour and ideology and, in relation to the media, an analysis of communication and language. Central to understanding, Lukács is the concept of 'conscious teleological positing' whereby subjective intentions bring about changes in the objective world. These changes occur in the spheres of both the economy and culture, but, in particular, they enable us to understand how cultural work has also branched out into digital work (digital media technologies, digital content, digital data organise into specific social relations) with digital labour as the alienation of those involved in digital work.

Fuchs also draws attention to Lukács' concept of ideology showing how cultural work entails the production of ideologies, that is, ideological labour. The basis of an ideological production is the experience of humans within specific labour processes and work conditions. Fuchs argues that a new ideology has been produced by the 'capitalist Internet' where the apparent accessibility and use by people masks its function as a commodity and medium for the accumulation of capital.

In his treatment of Adorno, Fuchs' point of departure is the rejection of the commonplace view that Adorno was a pessimist who saw no alternative to instrumental reason with the result that political activism is rendered pointless. The further aim of this chapter is to show that Adorno's texts can be utilised to provide the foundations of a critical theory of knowledge.

Adorno is critical of Lukács' aesthetics that conceived of true art as socialist realism because it mirrored an objective reality that described social problems in a specific form. Adorno rejected this view of art as instrumental, favouring instead abstract, experimental art forms as well as the notion of an autonomous knowledge of art. The generalisation from aesthetics to knowledge is formulated by Adorno's concept of aesthetics as a dialectical relationship between art and reality. Likewise, knowledge involves a relationship between subject/object, society/nature, economic/non-economic work and so on. In the constitution, production and reproduction of knowledge, the dialectic unfolds as a process of identity and non-identity, with an identity defined in relation to an Other but the Other is also, defined in relation to another Other.

In contemporary society, the dialectic is played out in the conflicts between those forces of ideology/domination and the forces of emancipation. The problem is that the imbalance between them in terms of access to resources makes the diffusion of emancipatory knowledge very difficult. The value of Adorno, for Fuchs is that in his texts, we find a way of challenging the instrumental logic of the capitalist world by developing a dialectical critical knowledge of society.

In relation to other critical theorists, Marcuse seems neglected, even though his Marxist theory of society analysed conflicts in the spheres of politics, economics and culture. For Fuchs, Marcuse is an especially vital thinker for the analysis of the Internet and digital media, given that the more celebrated of the Frankfurt School members did not sufficiently engage in questions concerning the relationship between technology and society.

While Marcuse's writings antedate the arrival of social media platforms, Fuchs utilises his concepts to reveal the contradictions, class struggles and ideologies taking place within the current capitalist appropriation of social media. The interesting point is that

social media can also remind us of an alternative socialist way of life that emphasises co-operation rather than competition. In addition, at an ideological level, the ruse of capitalism is such that the models of co-operation and sharing that the social media loudly proclaim only serve to hide systems of domination and exploitation. This is why within a capitalist society that is structured along class lines, social media can never achieve the ideal of being truly social and co-operative.

For Fuchs, it is important to realise the dialectics of social media where, on one hand, these media are invaluable tools for social activism, but, on the other hand, these same media are tools for the surveillance and control of activists. The best solution would be that of creating alternative media – in opposition to Google, Facebook and so on – where it is the users who manage and control them. Media reforms, for Fuchs, constitute the urgent task for our times.

The central concept in Honneth's critical philosophy is that of recognition and this is manifested in the relations of love, equality and achievement. When humans in a society are recognized, they feel respected, and if not, disrespected: family and friends provide emotional support, legal rights provide cognitive respect and communities of solidarity provide social esteem. In his later work, Honneth replaces the third realm of value with that of the economy.

Fuchs points out Honneth's principle of 'moral monism' is crucial insofar as moral recognition operates as an underlying principle for all spheres of society. This is important because it provides a yardstick for measuring whether existing forms of recognition are adequate or not. What Honneth's account teaches us is that humans are both social and moral beings.

Honneth's theory of recognition is derived from his reformulation of Lukács theory of reification and alienation, but Fuchs argues that in the world of digital media, alienation has become more complex and subtle. He takes Facebook as his example given that it is one of the most popular social media sites with users interacting with their contacts, sharing and commenting on their and other posts. One of its key features is that different people who participate in various activities are brought together. But, as Fuchs points out, Facebook is not an innocent platform that promotes solidarity and collaboration: it is in fact an advertising agency that seeks to maximise its profits. In addition, Fuchs shows how Facebook can be understood from the perspective of Honneth's subjective, intersubjective and objective forms of alienation that cut across the three spheres of society.

For Fuchs, the only solution to reversing digital exploitation and exploitation in contemporary digital culture is through social struggles that aim to appropriate the Internet and return it to its users.

The influence of Habermas upon critical theory and in particular his identification of communication as a key resource towards the formulation of a critical theory of society has been extensive. Fuchs argues that Habermas' distinction between purposive action that is oriented towards success and communicative action that is oriented towards understanding is not as sharp as Habermas believes. When later, Habermas introduces the concept of teleology and distinguishes between strategic action and instrumental action with the former describing actions that have a purpose within a social context, and the latter as having a purpose in a non-social context, their opposition to communicative action is retained as foundational for a fair society based on mutual understanding.

Fuchs' central disagreement with Habermas is that communication is idealised as though it is the panacea for all the ills within the capitalistic system. Communication is neither morally pure nor necessarily emancipatory and it has also been utilised to support an entrenched system of domination.

Taking Habermas as a point of departure, Fuchs develops the concept of communication to distinguish between communication at work and the work of communication: the former describes communication as a mode of understanding the world and others, while the latter describes the productive aspect of communication, that is, humans as social beings who produce meanings together that become sentences, texts, discourses and so on.

While many celebrate the contemporary digital world as an exciting new world of freedom without limits, Fuchs' text is a timely wakeup call that should alert us that such an understanding is superficial at the very least. The popularity of digital culture and, in particular, social media sites ignores the fact that digital culture is still predominantly a capitalist culture of domination and exploitation that is grounded in social class. Reading Fuchs is therefore a source of hope that runs counter to the (ideological) view perpetuated by some that there is no alternative to capitalism.

Florian Zollmann
Media, Propaganda and the Politics of Intervention, Peter Lang: New York, 2017; 276 pp.: £64

Reviewed by: Tabe Bergman, *Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China*

Florian Zollmann's *Media, Propaganda and the Politics of Intervention* presents a thorough, amply documented extension of Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's original Propaganda Model (PM) of the British and German press while also adding findings for the American press. Not only does Zollmann extend the PM geographically, he also updates it with detailed examination of double standards in elite newspaper reporting of recent atrocities in Syria, Libya and Egypt, as well as less recent ones in Kosovo and Iraq.

Excluding the Introduction and Conclusion, both brief, the book consists of five chapters. Chapter 2, entitled 'Liberal, Hegemonic and Gatekeeper Theories: A Reassessment', sets the stage for the original case studies and justifies the hegemonic perspective on foreign affairs reporting that the author adopts. This chapter is a gem. It shows the large extent to which much mainstream research, typically based on liberal assumptions, supports a *critical* analysis. For instance, Zollmann writes in reference to the classic *Four Theories of the Press*:

> In their study, Siebert, Peterson and Schramm … summarise the 'general' findings of 20th century press assessments. One of the major findings warned that 'the press is controlled by one socioeconomic class, loosely the 'business class', and access to the industry is difficult for the newcomer; therefore, the free and open market of ideas is endangered. (p. 11)

Indeed, in Chapter 3, a brief discussion of the PM, Zollmann usefully reminds us that its five filters 'were deduced from earlier work within the political economy and