

ROUTLEDGE

# CULTURE AND ECONOMY IN THE AGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

CHRISTIAN FUCHS

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Understanding social media requires us to engage with the individual and collective meanings that diverse stakeholders and participants give to platforms. It also requires us to analyse how social media companies try to make profits, how and which labour creates this profit, who creates social media ideologies, and the conditions under which such ideologies emerge. In short, understanding social media means coming to grips with the relationship between culture and the economy. In this thorough study, Christian Fuchs, one of the leading analysts of the Internet and social media, delves deeply into the subject by applying the approach of cultural materialism to social media, offering readers theoretical concepts, contemporary examples, and proposed opportunities for political intervention.

*Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media* is the ultimate resource for anyone who wants to understand culture and the economy in an era populated by social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Google in the West and Weibo, Renren, and Baidu in the East. Updating the analysis of thinkers such as Raymond Williams, Karl Marx, Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, Jürgen Habermas, and Dallas W. Smythe for the twenty-first century, Fuchs presents a version of Marxist cultural theory and cultural materialism that allows us to critically understand social media's influence on culture and the economy.

**Christian Fuchs** is Professor of Social Media at the University of Westminster. He is author of *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (Sage, 2014), *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (Routledge, 2014), *OccupyMedia!* (Zero Books, 2014), *Foundations of Critical Media and Information Studies* (Routledge, 2011), and *Internet and Society* (Routledge, 2008).

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# DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of the life and work of Raymond Williams and Dallas W. Smythe.

May Critical Political Economy of the Media/Communication and Critical Cultural Studies forever unite under the banner of Marxist Media, Communication, and Cultural Studies!

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a common term for signifying the usage of social networking sites, microblogs, blogs, (user-generated) content sharing sites, or wikis. The question of which media are social and which are not is often asked when people discuss social media. And how to answer it depends on how one defines what it means to be social—engaging with thoughts of others, communicating, engaging in communities, co-operative work, etc. (Fuchs 2014b, [chapter 2](#)). Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Baidu, Renren, Weibo, WeChat, or WhatsApp are some of the most well-known social media. Large, transnational corporations operate them: Facebook Inc. (Facebook, WhatsApp), Twitter Inc., Google Inc. (YouTube), Sina Corp (Weibo), Tencent (WeChat), Baidu Inc. (Baidu), and Renren Inc (Renren). Targeted advertising finances many of these online platforms. The companies that run them are the largest advertising agencies in the world that have access to millions or billions of users' personal data.

Understanding social media requires us to engage with the individual and collective meanings that users, platform owners/CEOs/shareholders, companies, advertisers, politicians, and other observers give to these platforms. It also requires us to analyse how the companies operating social media try to make profits; how and which labour creates this profit; the development, contradictions, and crisis tendencies of the social media market; who creates social media ideologies; the conditions under which such ideologies emerge, etc. Understanding social media means coming to grips with the relationship of culture and the economy.

This book takes a fresh look at how we can best think about the connection of culture and the economy. It provides theoretical concepts, application examples, and political interventions for understanding culture and the economy in times of social media.

## 2 Culture and Economy in the Age of Social Media

When observers such as consultants, managers, journalists, analysts, scholars, and intellectuals talk about “the economy”, they often focus on discussing the growth/stagnation/shrinkage of the gross domestic product, market developments, innovations, international competition, profits, revenues, prices, etc. and tend to care less about working conditions. This is partly because they assume that people are doing well if the economy is doing well. This can, however, not be taken for granted. The approach taken in this book and by critical political economists is different because they assume that all the just-mentioned phenomena are created by labour and that it therefore matters a lot to look at how people work and the conditions under which they do so. This book therefore has a special focus on the relationship of labour and culture. But talking about labour means in contemporary society that one also has to talk about non-labour—capital—and the relationship between the two—class. So we have to focus on culture and capitalism for understanding contemporary social media.

**Part I** focuses on theoretical foundations. **Part II** is about specific questions that concern social media’s temporalities. It focuses on social media’s cultural political economy of time. **Part III** takes a global view on the world of social and digital media. Its focus is on social media’s cultural political economy of global space. **Part IV** talks about alternatives to social media controlled by private companies and state institutions.

Each part consists of two chapters that each discuss a specific question:

### Part I: Theoretical Foundations

**Chapter 2:** How are culture and labour connected?

**Chapter 3:** How are ideology and labour connected?

### Part II: Social Media’s Cultural Political Economy of Time

**Chapter 4:** What is the role of labour time in the value creation on social media?

**Chapter 5:** How is value created on social media?

### Part III: Social Media’s Cultural Political Economy of Global Space

**Chapter 6:** Which forms of digital labour are there and how are they connected on a global level?

**Chapter 7:** What does the political economy of social media platforms (e.g. Baidu, Weibo, Renren) look like in China?

### Part IV: Alternatives

**Chapter 8:** What are alternatives to the existing problems of social media and can the notion of the public sphere help us to better understand social media alternatives and their requirements?

**Chapter 9:** What conclusions can we draw from the presented chapters for understanding social media’s culture and economy?

In his book *Culture & Society: 1780–1950*, Raymond Williams studies British literature in the context of the rise of capitalism, which is framed by the fact that

“the concept of culture, in its modern senses, came through at the time of the Industrial Revolution” (Williams 1958, ix). Whereas Williams focused on an analysis of the works of authors such as George Eliot, George Bernard Shaw, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, or George Orwell, this book is about contemporary social media such as Google, Baidu, Twitter, Weibo, Facebook, and Renren. Literature is as alive today as it was in the nineteenth century and written expression has taken on additional forms such as the blog. What has not changed, however, is that just like in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that Williams studied, in the twenty-first century, which is the temporal context of this book, we still live in a capitalist society. Capitalism is the major context for twenty-first-century social media just like it was for eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century British literature and communication that Raymond Williams studied. We therefore require a critical political economy of media and culture for understanding historical and contemporary modes of communicative expression.

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**PART I**

**Theoretical Foundations**

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# 2

## CULTURE AND WORK

*Christian Fuchs and Marisol Sandoval*

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the relationship between culture and work. It applies a materialist perspective that is especially inspired by Raymond Williams's works that he characterized as cultural materialism. Williams has been described by observers as "the greatest cultural theorist of modern Britain" (McGuigan 2014, xv) and "the first to see the essential interconnectedness of economic, political, social and cultural developments" (Scannell 2007, 111). "Williams's importance lies precisely in his at times highly critical but nonetheless lifelong allegiance to socialism as a political movement and to historical materialism as an intellectual project" (Garnham 1988, 130).

[Section 2.2.](#) introduces a cultural-materialist perspective on theorising culture. [Section 2.3.](#) discusses a materialist concept of cultural work based on this approach. [Section 2.4.](#) draws a distinction between cultural work and cultural labour. [Section 2.5.](#) introduces a typology of the dimensions of working conditions. [Section 2.6](#) discusses the anti-work philosophy and argues against it to revive William Morris and Herbert Marcuse's understandings of work. We draw some conclusions in [section 2.7.](#)

There is a latent debate between Vincent Mosco and David Hesmondhalgh about how to define cultural and communication work and where to draw the boundaries. According to Hesmondhalgh cultural industries "deal primarily with the industrial production and circulation of texts" (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 16). Thus cultural industries include for him broadcasting, film, music, print and electronic publishing, video and computer games, advertising, marketing and public relations, web design. Cultural labour is therefore according to this understanding all labour conducted in these industries. Cultural labour deals "primarily with the industrial production and circulation of texts" (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 17).

Following this definition Hesmondhalgh describes cultural work as “the work of symbol creators” (Hesmondhalgh 2013, 20).

Vincent Mosco and Catherine McKercher argue for a much broader definition of communication work, including “anyone in the chain of producing and distributing knowledge products” (Mosco and McKercher 2009, 25). In the case of the book industry, this definition includes not only writers but equally librarians and also printers.

Hesmondhalgh’s definition of cultural industries and cultural work focuses on content production. Such a definition tends to exclude digital media, information and communications technology hardware, software, and Internet phenomena such as social media and search engines. It thereby makes the judgment that content industries are more important than digital media industries. It is idealistic in that it focuses on the production of ideas and excludes the fact that these ideas can only be communicated based on the use of physical devices, computers, software, and the Internet. For Hesmondhalgh (2013, 19) software engineers for example are not cultural workers because he considers their work activity as “functional” and its outcomes not as text with social meaning. Software engineering is highly creative: it is not just about creating a piece of code that serves specific purposes, but also about writing the code by devising algorithms, which poses logical challenges for the engineers. Robert L. Glass (2006) argues that software engineering is a complex form of problem solving that requires a high level of creativity that he terms “software creativity”. Software is semantic in multiple ways: (a) when its code is executed, each line of the code is interpreted by the computer which results in specific operations; (b) when using a software application online or offline our brains constantly interpret the presented information; (c) software supports not only cognition but also communication and collaboration and therefore helps humans create and reproduce social meaning. Software engineers are not just digital workers. They are also cultural workers. Considering software engineers as functional dupes, as Hesmondhalgh does, is a form of Arnoldian elitism that separates the realm of digital work from the activities performed by the creators of popular culture who are considered as higher beings performing higher forms of work.

Hesmondhalgh opposes Mosco’s and McKercher’s broad definition of cultural work because “such a broad conception risks eliminating the specific importance of *culture*, of *mediated communication*, and of the *content* of communication products” (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011, 60). Our view is that there are many advantages of a broad definition as

- It avoids “cultural idealism” (Williams 1977, 19) that ignores the materiality of culture;
- It can take into account the connectedness of technology and content; and
- It recognizes the importance of the global division of labour, the exploitation of labour in developing countries, slavery, and other blood and sweat inducing forms of labour.

Probably most importantly, a broad conception of cultural work can inform political solidarity:

A more heterogeneous vision of the knowledge-work category points to another type of politics, one predicated on questions about whether knowledge workers can unite across occupational or national boundaries, whether they can maintain their new-found solidarity, and what they should do with it.

*Mosco and McKercher 2009, 26*

The creation of many cultural and digital goods and services depends on a global division of labour. If there is a strike in one place, then transnational corporations may move one production step to another place. If workers in all or several places involved in the division of labour of a specific commodity protest or go on strike, then they can seriously challenge and put transnational corporations under pressure. A broad concept of cultural work foregrounds the need for transnational struggles in order to challenge global capitalist rule.

Also Eli Noam opposes the separation of hardware and content producers and argues for a broad definition of the information industry: “Are the physical components of media part of the information sector? Yes. Without transmitters and receivers a radio station is an abstraction. Without PCs, routers, and servers there is no Internet” (Noam 2009, 46). Noam argues for a materialist unity of content and hardware producers in the category of the information industry.

While some definitions of creative work and creative industries are input- and occupation-focused (Caves 2000; Cunningham 2005; Hartley 2005), the broad notion of cultural work we are proposing focuses on industry and output. Input- and output-oriented definitions of cultural work/industries reflect a distinction that already Fritz Machlup (1962) and Daniel Bell (1974) used in their classical studies of the information economy: the one between occupational and industry definitions of knowledge work. Our approach differs both from input-oriented definitions and narrow output-oriented definitions.

We argue that cultural workers should be seen as what Marx termed *Gesamtarbeiter*. Marx describes this figure of the collective worker (*Gesamtarbeiter*) in the *Grundrisse* where he discusses labour as communal or combined labour (Marx 1857/58, 470). This idea was also taken up in *Capital, Volume 1*, where he defines the collective worker as “a collective labourer, i.e. a combination of workers” (Marx 1867, 644), and argues that labour is productive if it is part of the combined labour force:

In order to work productively, it is no longer necessary for the individual himself to put his hand to the object; it is sufficient for him to be an organ of the collective labourer, and to perform any one of its subordinate functions.

*Marx 1867, 644*

The collective worker is an “aggregate worker” whose “combined activity results materially in an aggregate product” (Marx 1867, 1040). The “activity of this aggregate labour-power” is “the immediate production of surplus-value, the immediate conversion of this latter into capital” (Marx 1867, 1040).

The question of how to define cultural labour has to do with the more general question of how to understand culture. It therefore makes sense to pay some attention to the works of one of the most profound cultural theorists: Raymond Williams.

### 2.2. Cultural Materialism

Raymond Williams was a genuine Marxist theorist with a profound knowledge of Marx’s works. Jim McGuigan and Marie Moran (2014) argue that his influence in sociology has been marginalised after his death in 1988 because of the decline of Marxism’s influence and the rise of neoliberalism. In 1958, he argued in his early work *Culture and Society* that his approach is grounded in Marxist theory: “We are interested in Marxist theory because socialism and communism are now important” (Williams 1958, 284). Seventeen years later, Williams confirmed his deep commitment to Marxist thought: he argued that he has “no real hesitation” to define himself as a historical materialist, if this position means demanding “the destruction of capitalist society”, “the need to supersede” capitalist society and “to go beyond” it “so that a socialist society” is established (Williams 1975, 72). He wrote that Marxism that extends its scope to the totality of culture is “a movement to which I find myself belonging and to which I am glad to belong” (Williams 1975, 76).

Williams (1983) points out that culture comes from the Latin word *colere* that means to inhabit, cultivate, protect, and honour with worship. The association of culture with cultivation and being cultivated, culture as civilisation and process of human development, became especially important with the Enlightenment and the bourgeois revolution. Williams argues that there are three modern meanings of the term *culture*:

- 1 the “general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, from C18”,
- 2 “a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general”,
- 3 “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity. This seems often now the most widespread use: culture is music, literature, painting and sculpture, theatre and film” (Williams 1983, 90).

Meanings (1) and (3) have been closely related. Williams (1961, 61) described these three ways of defining culture also as (1) the ideal definition, (2) the social definition, and (3) the documentary definition.

He has especially stressed the second type of definition in his works. In *Culture and Society, 1780–1950*, Williams (1958, xviii) defined culture as “a whole way

of life”, “a mode of interpreting all our common experience, and, in this new interpretation, changing it.” A “culture is not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life” (Williams 1958, 325). In *The Long Revolution*, Williams repeated this definition: Culture “is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour” (Williams 1961, 61). Understood this way, elements of culture would be e.g. meanings, values, intellectual and imaginative works, traditions, the organisation of production, family structures, institutional structures, or forms of communication, experiences, structures of feeling, the popular (Williams 1961, 62, 69, 78). Terry Eagleton stresses that Williams’s reason for foregrounding this definition of culture is that restricting “culture to the arts and intellectual life is to risk excluding the working class from the category” (Eagleton 2000, 35).

In his early works, Raymond Williams was trying to understand working-class culture in contrast to bourgeois culture, which illustrates his genuinely socialist position and interest in culture. But although Williams stresses the focus on totality, i.e. culture as “the way of life as a whole” (Williams 1958, 281) and “a general social process” (Williams 1958, 282), he in his early works tended to categorically separate culture and the economy: “even if the economic element is determining, it determines a whole way of life” (Williams 1958, 281). This notion of determination implies that the two realms of the economy and culture are connected, but that in the first instance they are also separate.

In 1973, Williams discussed the question of the relationship of base and superstructure in his article *Base and Superstructure in Marxist Cultural Theory*. He argues in this essay that the base is a process that is “setting [ . . . ] limits” and exerts “pressure” on the superstructure (Williams 1973, 34). He understands the base as “the specific activities of men in real social and economic relationship”, the “productive forces”, and the superstructure as the “range of cultural practices” (Williams 1973, 34). Williams argues that the superstructure is “from the beginning, basic” because productive forces mean the “material production and reproduction of real life” (Williams 1973, 35). Williams here argues on the one hand that the separation of culture from production is artificial and ideological, but on the other hand asserts this separation by providing definitions of the base as production and the superstructure as cultural practices. But if the superstructure is part of the base, then the two categories do not make sense in the first place, so there is no need for defining them in the way that Williams does.

Whereas in *Culture and Society* (Williams 1958) and the *Long Revolution* (Williams 1961) the question of cultural work was not crucial for Williams, he more and more approached it in his later works, which becomes apparent in his 1973 essay, although in a still ambivalent way. Raymond Williams’s engagement with Marxist theory for understanding culture probably was most thorough in his 1977 book *Marxism and Literature*. He in this book formulated a genuinely cultural materialist position and a specific form of cultural Marxism.

Later, in his “major theoretical work” (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 172) *Marxism and Literature*, Raymond Williams questioned Marxism’s historical tendency to see culture as “dependent, secondary, ‘superstructural’: a realm of ‘mere’ ideas, beliefs, arts, customs, determined by the basic material history” (Williams 1977, 19). Cultural materialism is for Williams an approach that avoids “both economic reductionism and [ . . . ] idealist cultural reductionism” (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 173). “Williams [ . . . ] developed a notion of culture that pays heed to Marx’s materialist supplication that we must analyse ideas, values and cultural forms in the social conditions of their production and circulation” (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 175). Williams discusses various notions that Marxist theories have used for conceptualising the relationship of the economy and culture: determination, reflection, reproduction, mediation, homology. He argues that these concepts all assume a relationship between the economy and culture that to a varying degree is shaped by causal determination or mutual causality. But all of them would share the assumption of “the separation of ‘culture’ from material social life” (Williams 1977, 19) that Williams (1977, 59) considers to be “idealist”. In Williams’s view the problem with these approaches is not that they are too economic and materialist, but on the contrary that they are not “materialist enough” (Williams 1977, 92). For Williams, culture is not a superstructure independent from an economic base, but rather culture understood as “language, ideas, values, beliefs, stories, discourses and so on” is for him “itself material” (McGuigan and Moran 2014, 176).

Williams (1977, 78) argues that Marx opposed the “*separation of ‘areas’ of thought and activity*”. Production would be distinct from “consumption, distribution, and exchange” as well as from social relations (Williams 1977, 91). Productive forces would be “all and any of the means of the production and reproduction of real life”, including the production of social knowledge and co-operation (Williams 1977, 91). Politics and culture would be realms of material production: ruling classes would produce castles, palaces, churches, prisons, workhouses, schools, weapons, a controlled press, etc. (Williams 1977, 93). Therefore Williams highlights the “material character of the production of a social and political order” and describes the concept of the superstructure as an evasion (Williams 1977, 93). Here, Williams reflects Gramsci’s insight that “popular beliefs” and “similar ideas are themselves material forces” (Gramsci 1988, 215).

Ngai-Ling Sum and Bob Jessop (2013, 117) argue that Williams “placed culture ‘inside’ the economic base and, indeed, whether Williams recognized it or not, marked a return to the Marx and Engels of *The German Ideology*.” One gets the impression that Sum and Jessop assume that Williams has an interesting approach, but did not engage enough with Marx’s works. Such an assumption is, however, based on a reading of Williams that is not thorough enough. Works such as *Marxism and Literature* (Williams 1977) and *Marx on Culture* (Williams 1989, 195–225) are among the most thorough discussions of Marx’s ideas on culture, including the *German Ideology*. These works show that Williams was not

only a thorough reader of Marx, but that he really engaged with the meanings of Marx's works by discussing which specific meanings of terms such as *ideology* and *culture* specific sentences written by Marx convey. Sum and Jessop (2013, 120: [table 3.1](#)) also overlook that Williams not just used Gramsci for introducing the notion of the structures of feeling, but that he also used Gramsci's concept of hegemony for conceptualising culture's role in society (Williams 1977, 108–114: [chapter 6](#)).

Raymond Williams (1977, 111) formulates as an important postulate of cultural materialism that “[c]ultural work and activity are not [. . .] a superstructure” because people would use physical resources for leisure, entertainment and art. Combining Williams's assumptions that cultural work is material and economic and that the physical and ideational activities underlying the existence of culture are interconnected means that culture is a totality that connects all physical and ideational production processes that are connected and required for the existence of culture. Put in simpler terms this means that for Williams the piano maker, the composer, and the piano player all are cultural workers.

Williams (1977, 139) concludes that cultural materialism sees “the complex unity of the elements” required for the existence of culture: ideas, institutions, formations, distribution, technology, audiences, forms of communication and interpretation, worldviews (138–139). A sign system would involve the social relations that produce it, the institutions in which it is formed, and its role as a cultural technology (Williams 1977, 140). In order to avoid the “real danger of separating human thought, imagination and concepts from ‘men's material life-process’” (Williams 1989, 203), one needs to focus on the “totality of human activity” (Williams 1989, 203) when discussing culture: We “have to emphasise cultural practice as from the beginning social and material” (Williams 1989, 206). The “productive forces of ‘mental labour’ have, in themselves, an inescapable material and thus social history” (Williams 1989, 211). Marx expressed the basic assumption of cultural materialism well by stressing that the “production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men” (Marx and Engels 1845/46, 42). The production of ideas is therefore the “language of real life” (Marx and Engels 1845/46, 42). “Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc., that is, real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms” (Marx and Engels 1845/46, 42). “Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of men is their actual life process” (Marx and Engels 1845/46, 42). Consciousness, thought, information, and communication are for Marx part of the actual social and material production process that enables human life. Thinking and communicating for Marx are processes of production that are embedded into humans' everyday life and work. Human beings produce their own capacities and realities of thinking and communication in work and social relations.

In his later works, Williams stressed that it is particularly the emergence of an information economy in which information, communication, and audiences are sold as commodities that requires rethinking the separation of the economy and culture and to see culture as material. “[I]nformation processes [ . . . ] have become a qualitative part of economic organization” (Williams 1981, 231). “Thus a major part of the whole modern labour process must be defined in terms which are not easily theoretically separable from the traditional ‘cultural’ activities. [ . . . ] so many more workers are involved in the direct operations and activations of these systems that there are quite new social and social-class complexities” (Williams 1981, 232).

As information is an important aspect of economic production in information societies, the culture concept cannot be confined to popular culture, entertainment, works of art, and the production of meaning through the consumption of goods, but needs to be extended to the realm of economic production and value creation. Cultural labour is a crucial concept in this context.

In contemporary capitalism, pianos, compositions (via intellectual property rights), and music are all three commodities. So what unites the cultural work of the piano maker, the composer, and the musician is that the commodity form mediates their works. Raymond Williams argues that this circumstance requires us to think of culture as material and economic. But he adds that in the first instance all of these practices are material because they produce use-values of different kinds.

Terry Eagleton (2000, 1) stresses that the word *culture* has its origins in husbandry, agriculture, and therefore the realm of nature. The phrase “cultural materialism” therefore for Eagleton “is something of a tautology”. The problem is, however, that the materiality of culture is today too often forgotten and dualist thought tends to separate the concept of culture from the economy, matter, nature, technology, and labour. The notion of cultural materialism reminds us of the inherent materiality of all culture and is therefore not a tautology, but a critique of dualist worldviews. Why does cultural materialism matter today? We can find a new separatism in the study of the information economy that tends to separate technology/content, non-creative (functional)/creative, production/circulation, productive/unproductive, labour/ideology, work/communication when analysing culture and information.

### 2.3. A Materialist Notion of Cultural Work

Williams (1981, 207) suggests that culture is “a realized signifying system” that is distinct from the economy and politics, but that all social systems have their own signifying systems, which makes culture part of any system. But any social system also has ownership structures and decision-making structures, which shows that the economic, the political, and the cultural are three crucial dimensions of the social. A “signifying system is intrinsic to any economic

system, any political system, any generational system and, most generally, to any social system” (Williams 1981, 208). Culture would nonetheless be a “system in itself”, in which humans produce language, thoughts, consciousness, works of art, and ideologies (Williams 1981, 208). Culture would be “the signifying system through which necessarily (though among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored” (Williams 1981, 13). Signification appears as “language, [ . . . ] as a system of thought or of consciousness, or, to use that difficult alternative term, an ideology; and again as a body of specifically signifying works of art and thought” (Williams 1981, 208). Culture involves “signifying institutions, practices and works” (Williams 1981, 208). “All social systems, then, involve signification, but not all of them are signifying or ‘cultural’ systems” (Eagleton 2000, 34).

What can we make of Williams’s work? On the one hand he refuses the separation of culture and the economy as well as base and superstructure. On the other hand he maintains that culture as a signifying system is a distinct system of society. How can we make sense of these claims that at a first sight seem to be mutually exclusive?

Inspired by Raymond Williams’s cultural materialism, it is feasible to argue for a broad understanding of cultural labour that transcends the cultural idealism of the early digital labour debate and some positions within the cultural industries school. If one thinks dialectically, then a concept of culture as material and necessarily economic and at the same time distinct from the economy is feasible: culture and politics are dialectical sublations (*Aufhebung*) of the economy. In Hegelian philosophy sublation means that a system or phenomenon is preserved, eliminated, and lifted up. Culture is not the same as the economy: it is more than the sum of various acts of work, it has emergent qualities—it communicates meanings in society—that cannot be found in the economy alone. But at the same time, the economy is preserved in culture: culture is not independent from work, production, and physicality, but requires and incorporates all of them.

On the level of specific qualities of the subsystems of society, we can distinguish between the economy, the political system and culture. There are three interconnected systems of society (Fuchs 2008):

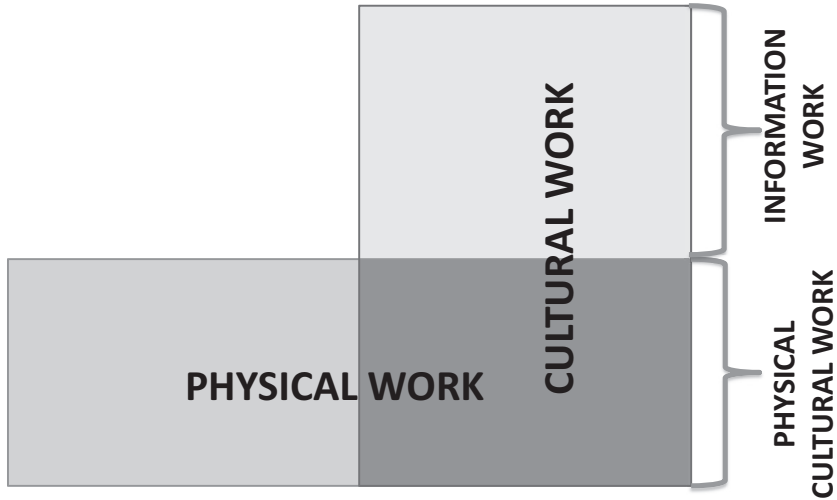
- The economy: the system of the production of use-values that satisfy human needs; labour produces use-value within specific social relations of production.
- The political system: the system of the production of collective decisions that regulate society.
- Culture: the system of human reproduction and the production of meanings and moral judgements that define what is assessed as good and bad. Culture is the system that organises the re-creation of the human—its body and as part of the body also the human mind. “Culture means the domain of social subjectivity” (Eagleton 2000, 39). Culture is therefore about medicine and

psychology, cycling and chess, food/restaurants and cooking, painting and visiting galleries, practicing sports and watching sports, the architecture of churches and the practice of praying in them, schools as institutions and learning as the practice of acquiring skills, the family and friendships as social systems, love as feeling and practice, etc. Culture is not just mind, thought, and ideas. It is at the same time body and matter. The mind is part of the body and thought is an organisational form of matter.

All three systems are material because they are systems of production. Matter is the process-substance of the world (Fuchs 2003c): systems are constituted by permanent reproduction and the creation of novelty that emerges out of existing structures. Production guarantees human existence and reproduction. The world is material because it has the capacity to produce itself and new forms of organisation. Society is material because in it humans produce structures, their own sociality, and ever-newer human practices so that society can reproduce itself and exist over time. This reproduction includes the production of use-values, decisions, and definitional and judgemental meanings.

The Austrian philosopher of information Wolfgang Hofkirchner has introduced stage models as a way for philosophically conceptualising the logic connections between different levels of organisation. In a stage model, “one step taken by a system in question—that produces a layer—depends on the stage taken prior to that but cannot be reversed! [ . . . ] layers—that are produced by steps—build upon layers below them but cannot be reduced to them!” (Hofkirchner 2013, 123–124). Emergence is the foundational principle of a stage model (Hofkirchner 2013, 115): a specific level of organisation of matter has emergent qualities so that the systems organised on this level are more than the sum of their parts, to which they cannot be reduced. An organisation level has new qualities that are grounded in the underlying systems and levels that are preserved on the upper level. These elements/systems produce through synergies new qualities of the upper level. In the language of dialectical philosophy this means that the emergent quality of an organisation level is a sublation (*Aufhebung*) of the underlying level.

Using a stage model allows us to identify and relate different levels of cultural and digital work (see [Figure 2.1](#)). *Cultural work* is a term that encompasses organisational levels of work that are at the same time distinct and dialectically connected: cultural work has an emergent quality, namely, information work that creates content, that is based on and grounded in physical cultural work, which creates information technologies through agricultural and industrial work processes. Physical work takes place inside and outside of culture: it creates information technologies and its components (cultural physical work) as well as other products (non-cultural physical work) that do not primarily have symbolic functions in society (such as cars, tooth brushes, or cups). Cars, tooth brushes, or cups do not primarily have the role of informing others or communicating with others, but rather help humans achieve the tasks



**FIGURE 2.1** A stage model of cultural work

of transport, cleanliness, and nutrition. Culture and as part of it information work, however, feed back on these products and create symbolic meanings used by companies for marketing them. Cultural work is a unity of physical cultural work and information work that interact with each other, are connected and at the same time distinct.

All culture involves cultural work and effects of cultural products in society (meaning-making). The production of meaning, social norms, morals, and the communication of meanings, norms, and morals are work processes: they create cultural use-values. Culture requires on the one hand human creativity for creating cultural content and on the other hand specific forms and media for storage and communication. Work that creates information and communication through language is specific for work conducted in the cultural system: information and communication work. For having social effects in society, information and communication are organized (stored, processed, transported, analysed, transformed, created) with the help of information and communication technologies, such as computers, TV, radio, newspapers, books, recorded films, recorded music, language, etc. These technologies are produced by physical cultural work. Culture encompasses (a) physical and information work that create cultural technologies (information and communication technologies) and (b) information work that creates information and communication.

Williams questioned the separation of realms of society and therefore also of culture and economy (McGuigan and Moran 2014). On the one hand the relationship between societal realms changes historically (McGuigan and Moran 2014). On the other hand, given that humans interact in various social roles and through their everyday social practices connect various social roles and realms,

social realms are never separated from each other, but dialectically mediated and overgrasping into each other. Culture is at the same time part and no-part of the economy: it requires cultural work that produces cultural structures, i.e. social meanings that help organising communication everywhere in society.

These two types of work act together in order to produce and reproduce culture. Meanings and judgements are emergent qualities of culture that are created by information work; they take on relative autonomy that has effects inside but also outside the economic system. This means that specific forms of work create culture, but culture cannot be reduced to the economy—it has emergent qualities.

Following Williams, communication is the “passing of ideas, information, and attitudes from person to person”, whereas communications means the “institutions and forms in which ideas, information, and attitudes are transmitted and received” (Williams 1962, 9). Information and communication are meaning-making activities created by information work. Physical cultural work creates communications as institutions and forms that organise the creation and passing on of information in social processes.

Marx identified two forms of information work: the first results in cultural goods that “exist separately from the producer, i.e. they can circulate in the interval between production and consumption as commodities, e.g. books, paintings and all products of art as distinct from the artistic achievement of the practising artist”. In the second, “the product is not separable from the act of producing” (Marx 1867, 1047–1048). The first requires a form, institution, or technology that stores and transports information, as in the case of computer-mediated communication; the second uses language as main medium (e.g. theatre). The first requires physical cultural work for organising storage, organisation, and transport of information; the second is possible based only on information work.

Cultural goods are not just information that expresses and communicates meanings. These meanings also express moral norms, values, judgements. Culture is therefore inherently political. In class societies, culture tends to be antagonistic, an arena of intellectual and symbolic struggle, in which class distinctions are made by and through symbols that communicate differences and hierarchies and contestation of these differences. Class culture is on the one hand shaped by struggles and on the other hand by ideologies: dominant groups express their values in practices that can result in crystallised cultural forms. They try to convince others that society works the way the dominant class imagines. Such a dominant culture can be said to be ideological if claims are made that do not correspond to reality in order to justify or reproduce dominative social relations. The culture of subordinated classes has its own specificities that range on a continuum that runs from reproducing dominative values to challenging them. There can also be mixed cultural forms that mix elements of dominative and oppositional culture. Edward P. Thompson stresses that culture in class societies is often contested and shaped by cultural struggles: “culture is also a pool of

diverse resources, in which traffic passes between the literate and the oral, the superordinate and the subordinate, the village and the metropolis; it is an arena of conflictual elements” (Thompson 1991, 6).

Nicholas Garnham (1990, 25) argues that Raymond Williams’s approach “suffers from a misleading reductionism by failing to distinguish between the material and the economic.” For Garnham, cultural labour are activities that “produce and disseminate symbols in the form of cultural goods and services, generally, although not exclusively, as commodities” (Garnham 1990, 156). Garnham distinguishes between a social and a cultural form. The social form would be “a series of social relations”, the cultural form would not itself be material, but have “material support” (Garnham 1990, 26). “Cultural forms become effective only when they are translated into social forms which do have material effectivity” (Garnham 1990, 26). Garnham separates culture and matter by saying that culture is immaterial and that “cultural production directly services the wider system of material production” (Garnham 1990, 13).

Garnham, however, does not consistently use the notion of culture as immaterial and contradicts himself in the very same book. He says in the same book that culture is “the production and circulation of symbolic meaning”, “a material process of production and exchange, part of, and in significant ways determined by, the wider economic processes of society with which it shares many common features” (Garnham 1990, 155). Williams does not clarify the difference between the economy and culture, but in Garnham’s work it is not clear what it means that something is material.

Terry Eagleton was a student and faculty colleague of Raymond Williams at the University of Cambridge. He commemorated Williams as having “transformed cultural studies from the relative crudity in which he found them to a marvellously rich, resourceful body of work” so that “he altered irreversibly the intellectual and political map of Britain, and put hundreds of thousands of students and colleagues and readers enduringly in his debt” (Eagleton 1989a, 9). Eagleton is Williams’s comrade in arms in the struggle against capitalism, but is also critical of the cultural materialist perspective that the author of *Marxism and Literature* advanced.

Eagleton describes himself as “a defender of the classical doctrine” (Eagleton 1989b, 166) and states that “some activities are more fundamentally determining than others” (Eagleton 1989b, 169). He is therefore sceptical of Williams’s out-Marxising of the Marxists that is “pressing the Marxist logic to an extreme” and thereby undoes “the ‘base’/‘superstructure’ distinction” (Eagleton 1989a, 6). Williams would collapse all reality into matter:

If *everything* is ‘material’, can the term logically retain any force? From what does it differentiate itself? From an actual realm of phenomena which could properly be said to be non-material, or from an ideological misperception of properly material objects as ideal ones?

*Eagleton 1989b, 169*

Eagleton overlooks that a logic that assumes that there is matter and non-matter in the world violates the philosophical law of ground that says that every phenomenon must have a ground. The philosophical law of ground is,

“Everything has a sufficient ground or reason.”—In general, this means nothing but this: Anything which *is*, is to be considered *to exist* not as an immediate, but as a posited; there is no stopping at immediate existence but a return must rather be made from it back into its ground, and in this reflection it is a sublated being and is in and for itself.

*Hegel 1812, 11.294*

If outside of matter there is always non-matter, as assumed by Eagleton, then the world cannot in the first and last instance have a sufficient ground. One ends up with having to assume the fundamental existence of two substances: matter and spirit. The question that can then, however, not be answered is what the ground of matter and spirit is in the first and last instance. The question remains either unanswered or one must assume that God created the world out of nothing. This argument can then take on two forms: (a) That God is the endless expression of spirit in the first and last instance and that God created matter, or (b) That God is something endless that created both spirit and matter. In any case there is no proof for the existence of God. A materialist position that assumes that the entire world is material and that matter is the process-substance of the world (see Fuchs 2003c) does not face this problem: matter is a *causa sui*, a cause of itself. It is its own ground, which means that matter and therefore the universe are self-organising and capable of producing new levels of the organisation of matter through which the existence of matter reproduces itself (see Fuchs 2003c). That matter is its own ground is a sufficient explanation for the existence of the world that does not have to revert to religious or esoteric explanations. It furthermore has atheistic implications. It is a better elucidation because it has fewer assumptions, which makes it according to the principle of Occam’s razor the superior explanation of the world. Raymond Williams has a monist conception of the world, whereas Eagleton holds on to a dualist version that thought to the end is a form of idealism.

Eagleton (1989b, 170) argues that Williams sets up the concept of the “immaterial superstructure” as straw-target in order “to replace ‘ideology’ with ‘hegemony’”. Williams does not however, construct a straw-target, but rather criticises Marxists who use concepts such as determination, reflection, reproduction, mediation, and homology as being dualists. They cannot explain society’s common ground. Williams in contrast argues that matter is the common ground of society, the world, and the universe. But he does not dissolve the concept of ideology, but rather understands it as “class outlook” (Williams 1977, 109) that, as Eagleton remarks himself, is for Williams part of the more general concept of hegemony.

It is in no way an “idealist reading of superstructures” (Eagleton 1989b, 171) to assume that hegemony involves ideology and other forms of domination (such as direct and structural violence).

Eagleton misses one crucial argument that Williams stressed again and again since the late 1970s: that an important reason why we need cultural materialism is the fact that the superstructure has been industrialised, commodified, and capitalised in the twentieth century by the emergence of the culture industry and the rising importance of information work. We have argued in this chapter that information work is an economic process that produces culture that has effects inside and outside of the economy. So culture necessarily takes place inside and outside of the economy. What economy and non-economy share is that they are both material systems: they are grounded in human transformative action that changes and reproduces structures that enable the continuity of social actions that bring about further changes and reproductions of structures in space-time (Fuchs 2003a, 2003b, 2008). Cultural work is economic in that it creates informational use-values that have emergent qualities that at a sublated level outside of the economy impact the whole of society. Matter is the process-substance of the world and therefore also of society. Society is a specific human organisational form of matter that has emerged in the history of the self-organisation of the universe. All society and human beings are material. Therefore also all of capitalist societies are material. All dimensions of capitalism are material. And this includes both physical and informational domains that are interconnected. Raymond Williams reminds us that culture is part of the material universe of the world and society and must therefore be produced and reproduced by humans in work processes, and at the same time develops dialectically in such a way that it sublates—i.e. preserves, eliminates, and uplifts—its own economicity and takes on emergent qualities in the whole of society.

Eagleton (1989b, 173) justifies the base/superstructure separation by saying that exploitation is primary and that superstructures support, “regulate and ratify” exploitation. He overlooks that both politics and culture do not simply exist, but need to be created and re-created in actual work and labour processes and have therefore their own economies. Eagleton concedes that culture has both an infrastructure and a superstructure, but says that “reading a literary text”—or we could more generally say using any form of medium—means that we are “treating it ‘superstructurally’” (Eagleton 1989b, 174). Eagleton disregards that reading, watching, listening, and using are not pure free time and pure consumption activities, but also take place as part of labour activities and have increasingly due to the rise and extension of the culture industry and advertising culture become productive labour—watching, reading, and listening as working, play labour, and prosumption. These developments make Williams’s cultural materialism an approach that is compelling and much needed today. His perspective allows us to better understand the interlocking and tendency of the liquefaction of boundaries between culture/economy, private/public, leisure/labour, spare time/labour

time, labour/play, production/consumption, home/factory and office, fixed and stationary/mobile, information content/information technology, etc.

Eagleton remains trapped in the orthodoxy that eating is primary and more important than communicating. A baby that is not fed will die. A baby that is socially isolated and to whom nobody talks will, however, also die. What food and language have in common is that they are both material phenomena, because they emanate from nature and the human brain that both have in common that they are material systems.

Given the notion of cultural work and a cultural-materialist framework inspired by Raymond Williams, we can next ask the question what is specific about the digital mode of cultural labour.

### 2.4. Cultural Work and Cultural Labour in Modern Society

If culture were merely symbolic—mind, spirit, “immaterial”, superstructural, informational, a world of ideas—then cultural labour as expression of culture clearly would exclude the concrete works of mining and hardware assemblage that are required for producing media technologies. Williams’s cultural materialism, contrary to the position of cultural idealism, makes it possible to argue that cultural labour includes both the creation of physical products and information that are required for the production and usage of digital technologies. Some digital workers create hardware, others hardware components, minerals, software, or content that are all objectified in or the outcome of the application of digital technologies. Some workers, e.g. miners, contribute not just to the emergence of digital media, but to different products. If one knows the mines’ sales and financial figures, then it is possible to determine to what extent the performed labour is digital or other labour.

In order to illustrate this point that culture is material, we now return in greater detail to a passage where Marx reflects about the work of making and playing the piano. He wrote:

Productive labour is only that which produces capital. Is it not crazy, asks e.g. (or at least something similar) Mr Senior, that the piano maker is a productive worker, but not the piano player, although obviously the piano would be absurd without the piano player? But this is exactly the case. The piano maker reproduces capital; the pianist only exchanges his labour for revenue. But doesn’t the pianist produce music and satisfy our musical ear, does he not even to a certain extent produce the latter? He does indeed: his labour produces something; but that does not make it productive labour in the economic sense; no more than the labour of the madman who produces delusions is productive. Labour becomes productive only by producing its own opposite.

*Marx 1857/58, 305*

Williams remarks that today, other than in Marx's time, "the production of music (and not just its instruments) is an important branch of capitalist production" (Williams 1977, 93).

If the economy and culture are two separate realms, then building the piano is work and part of the economy and playing it is not work, but culture. Marx leaves no doubt, however, that playing the piano produces a use-value that satisfies human ears and is therefore a form of work. As a consequence, the production of music must, just like the production of the piano, be an economic activity. Williams (1977, 94) stresses that cultural materialism means to see the material character of art, ideas, aesthetics, and ideology and that when considering piano making and piano playing it is important to discover and describe "relations between all these practices" and to not assume "that only some of them are material."

Apart from the piano maker and the piano player there is also the composer of music. All three forms of work are needed and necessarily related in order to guarantee the existence of piano music. Fixing one of these three productive activities categorically as culture and excluding the others from it limits the concept of culture and does not see that one cannot exist without the other. Along with this separation come political assessments of the separated entities. A frequent procedure is to include the work of the composer and player and to exclude the work of the piano maker. Cultural elitists then argue that only the composer and player are truly creative, whereas vulgar materialists hold that only the piano maker can be a productive worker because he works with his hands and produces an artefact. Both judgments are isolationist and politically problematic.

There is a difference if piano makers, players, and music composers conduct these activities, just as a hobby or for creating commodities that are sold on the market. This distinction can be explored based on Marx's distinction between work (*Werktätigkeit*) and labour (*Arbeit*): Brigitte Weingart (1997) describes the origins of the terms *work* in English and *Arbeit* and *Werk* in German. In German, the word *Arbeit* comes from the Germanic term *arba*, which meant slave. The English term *work* comes from the Middle English term *weorc*. It was a fusion of the Old English terms *wyrcan* (creating) and *wircan* (to affect something). So to work means to create something that brings about some changes in society. *Weorc* is related to the German terms *Werk* and *werken*. Both *work* in English and *Werk* in German were derived from the Indo-European term *uerg* (doing, acting). *Werken* in German is a term still used today for creating something. Its origins are quite opposed to the origins of the term *Arbeit*. The result of the process of *werken* is called *Werk*. Both *werken* and *Werk* have the connotative meaning of being creative. Both terms have an inherent connotation of artistic creation. Arendt (1958, 80–81) confirms the etymological distinction between *ergazesthai* (Greek)/*facere, fabricari* (Latin)/*work* (English)/*werken* (German)/*ouvrier* (French) and *ponein* (Greek)/*laborare* (Latin)/*labour* (English)/*arbeiten* (German)/*travailler* (French).

Raymond Williams (1983, 176–179) argues that the word “labour” comes from the French word *labor* and the Latin term *laborem* and appeared in the English language first around 1300. It was associated with hard work, pain, and trouble. In the eighteenth century, it would have attained the meaning of work under capitalist conditions that stands in a class relationship with capital. The term “work” comes from the Old English word *weorc* and is the “most general word for doing something” (Williams 1983, 334). In capitalism the term on the one hand has, according to Williams (1983, 334–337), acquired the same meaning as labour—a paid job—but would have in contrast also kept its original broader meaning. In order to be able to differentiate the dual historical and essential character of work, it is feasible to make a semantic differentiation between labour and work.

The meaning and usage of words develops historically and may reflect the structures and changes of society, culture, and the economy. Given that we find an etymological distinction between the general aspects of productive human activities and the specific characteristics that reflect the realities of class societies, it makes sense to categorically distinguish between the anthropological dimension of human creative and productive activities that result in use-values that satisfy human needs and the historical dimension that describes how these activities are embedded into class relations (Fuchs 2014a). A model of the general work process is visualized in Figure 2.3.

Human subjects have labour power. Their labour in the work process interacts with the means of production (object). The means of production consist

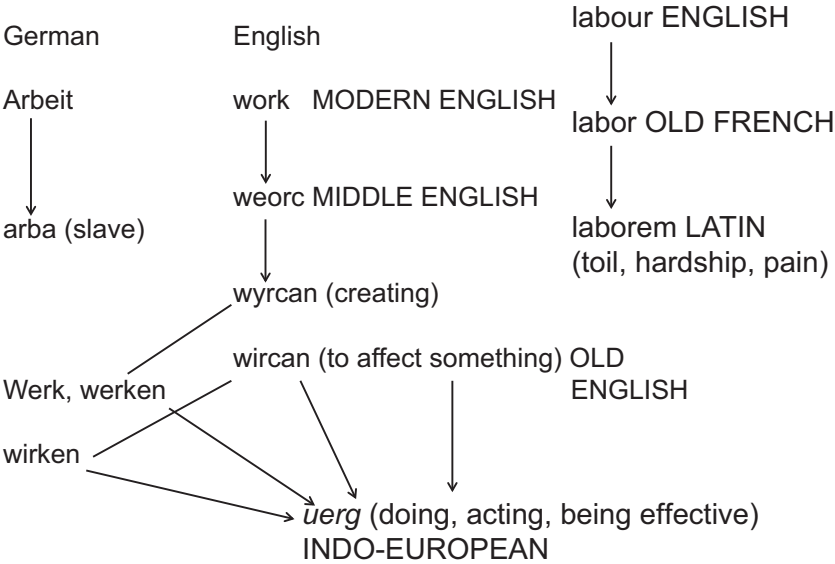
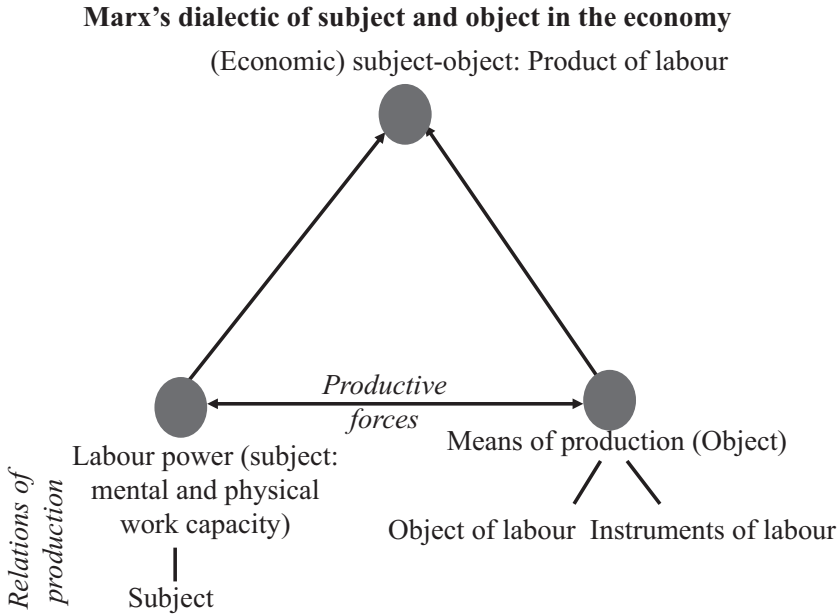


FIGURE 2.2 The etymology of the terms “work”, “labour”, and *Arbeit*



**FIGURE 2.3** The general work process

of the object of labour (resources, raw materials) and the instruments of labour (technology). In the work process, humans transform an object (nature, culture) by making use of their labour power with the help of instruments of labour. The result is a product that unites the objectified labour of the subject with the objective materials s/he works on. Work becomes objectified in a product and the object is as a result transformed into a use value that serves human needs. The productive forces are a system, in which subjective productive forces (human labour power) make use of technical productive forces (part of the objective productive forces) in order to transform parts of the nature or culture so that a product emerges.

The general work process is an anthropological model of work under all historical conditions. The connection of the human subject to other subjects in [Figure 2.3](#) indicates that work is normally not conducted individually, but in relation with others. A society could hardly exist based on isolated people trying to sustain themselves independently. It requires economic relations in the form of co-operation and a social organisation of production, distribution, and consumption. This means that work takes place under specific historical social relations of production. There are different possibilities for the organisation of the relations of production. In general the term *labour* points towards the organisation of labour under class relations, i.e. power relationships that determine that any or some of the elements in the work process are not controlled by the workers themselves, but by a group of economic controllers. *Labour* designates specific organisational forms of work, in which the human subject does not control his/her labour power (s/he is compelled

to work for others) and/or there is a lack of control of the objects of labour and/or the instruments of labour and/or the products of labour.

Karl Marx pinpoints this lack of control by the term *alienation* and understands the unity of these forms of alienation as exploitation of labour:

The material on which it [labour] works is alien material; the instrument is likewise an alien instrument; its labour appears as a mere accessory to their substance and hence objectifies itself in things not belonging to it. Indeed, living labour itself appears as alien vis-à-vis living labour capacity, whose labour it is, whose own life's expression it is, for it has been surrendered to capital in exchange for objectified labour, for the product of labour itself. [ . . . ] labour capacity's own labour is as alien to it—and it really is, as regards its direction etc.—as are material and instrument. Which is why the product then appears to it as a combination of alien material, alien instrument and alien labour—as alien property.

*Marx 1857/58, 462*

Figure 2.4 visualizes potential dimensions of the labour process as alienated work process.

Gramsci's (1971, 1988) concept of hegemony makes clear that a ruling class not only rules economically but also has to ensure political and moral leadership in society, which it achieves through the state and ideology. A “hegemonic apparatus” aims at creating “a new ideological terrain” and “introducing

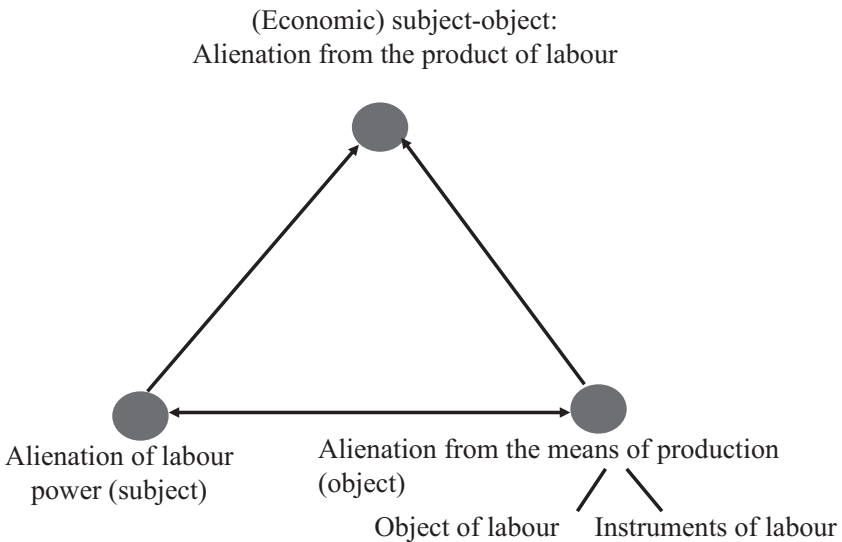


FIGURE 2.4 Labour as alienated work process

a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world” (Gramsci 1988, 192).

The state has an “educative and formative role” (Gramsci 1971, 242). “Its aim is always that of creating new and higher types of civilisation; of adapting the ‘civilisation’ and the morality of the broadest popular masses to the necessities of the continuous development of the economic apparatus of production” (Gramsci 1971, 242). The state is “the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules” (Gramsci 1971, 244). Hegemony means “an active and voluntary (free) consent” (Gramsci 1971, 271). The law, military, police system, secret services, and prison system are the repressive elements of the state system that aim at guaranteeing internal and external defence of the system. The state school system is for Gramsci (1971, 258) the most important element of state hegemony that aims at creating active consent. Both “force and consent” (Gramsci 1971, 271) are exercised for constituting, maintaining, and reproducing the state system. But there are also elements of “cultural hegemony” (Gramsci 1971, 258) outside direct state control, such as religions/churches, associations, newspapers, theatre, films, radio, other media, public meetings, language and dialects, folklore and traditions, conversations, and morals (Gramsci 1988, especially 356).

The question that arises is if civil society and culture stand outside the state or are part of it. Gramsci says that “civil society and the state are one and the same” (Gramsci 1988, 210), so for him the “State = political society + civil society” (Gramsci 1971, 263) and he speaks of “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Gramsci 1971, 263). A concept of the state that conceives it as the unity of coercive and ideological state apparatuses (Althusser 1970) inflates the state concept to a maximum and does not leave any conceptual space for conceiving parts of culture as neither controlled by the state nor capitalism, but as the people’s common culture.

Hegel, who is considered as one of the most influential writers on civil society (Anheier et al. 2010, 338), described civil society as political and as a sphere that is separate from the state and from the private life of the family (Hegel 1821, §§157, 261). Jürgen Habermas’s (1989a) seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* describes that eighteenth-century France and Germany were characterised by a separation of spheres. Civil society was the private “realm of commodity exchange and social labor” (Habermas 1989a, 30) that was distinct from the public sphere and the sphere of public authority. This understanding was reflected in liberal market-driven civil society conceptions of thinkers like Locke and Smith that positioned economic man at the heart of civil society (Ehrenberg 1999). The structural transformation of the public sphere has in the nineteenth and twentieth century according to Habermas resulted in an increasing collapse of boundaries between spheres so that “private economic units” attained “quasi-political character” and from “the midst of the publicly relevant sphere of civil society was formed a repoliticized social sphere” that formed a “functional complex that could no longer