

# Radical Justice: Anarchism, Utopian Socialism, Marxism and Critical Theory

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## Introduction

Radical accounts of justice are less a coherent normative tradition or school of philosophy than a set of positions on or orientations towards justice, typically grounded in a critique of the *in*justice of contemporary social arrangements and their need for transformation. To be ‘radical’ is to seek to affect ‘the fundamental nature of something’, to be ‘innovative or progressive’, to offer diagnoses and interventions ‘intended to be completely curative’, and to advocate ‘thorough political or social reform’ often through measures thought to be ‘politically extreme’ at least in relation to mainstream politics, to adopt some of the definitions offered by the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. In this sense, radical approaches to justice often set themselves in opposition to liberal theories, which, from a radical standpoint, are understood to excuse, even support, an unjust status quo. Such a critique of liberalism (which may nonetheless adopt some of its normative tenets) provides a common denominator for radical theories of justice that are otherwise quite diverse in scope. This chapter surveys anarchist, utopian socialist and Marxist approaches to social justice from their foundation in the 19th century to their elaboration within two influential centres of western Marxist thinking that have proved to be especially influential in the social sciences: the Frankfurt School of critical social theory and the spatialisation of Marxist thought in the work of David Harvey (among others). We conclude by briefly noting the implications of Marxian/socialist thinking about justice for the ‘aspects of justice’ identified in the introduction to this book: the who, what, where, when and why of justice.

## Key ideas: debates and critiques

Most modern radical theories of justice have their origins in the Enlightenment and especially in the reaction to the expansive, radically transformative evolution and effects of the spread of capitalism from its early modern mercantile colonial form to its later modern industrial imperialist form. Such historical development was radically uneven and contradictory and often retained strong elements of its feudal precursor, deepening rather than ameliorating inequalities in modernising societies. In this context, the demand for liberty, equality and solidarity – now taken to be central tenets of a just, liberal society – were, of course, extremely radical in the context of the French Revolution, as was the contemporaneous demand by Olympia de Gouge and Mary Wollstonecraft that women be afforded full and equal standing in society (see [Chapter 4](#)). Together with the Haitian and American Revolutions, the French Revolution helped ensure that the end of the 18th and first half of the 19th centuries would be an ‘age of revolution’, especially in Europe ([Hobsbawm, 1962](#)).

### *Radical justice in utopian socialism and anarchism*

Utopian socialists like Charles Fourier (1772–1837) and to a lesser extent Robert Owen (1771–1858) sought to imagine, and create, the social and spatial preconditions for a society of radical egalitarianism, which for them was the primary precondition for a just society. For Fourier, the emancipation of women was a basic measure of the progress of society towards social justness. It also required sexual liberation (including openness to sexual diversity) and the reassociation of work with libidinal pleasure (see, for instance, [Marcuse, 1955](#)). Work was to be organised cooperatively with less desirable occupations more highly compensated and the resulting social product distributed according to need. A just society was a pleasurable society and one that allowed people, through their cooperative and libidinal endeavours, to liberate their human passions. Fourier’s ideas were foundational for the efflorescence of Utopian communes and intentional communities that spread across North America and Europe in the 19th century and have continued to be inspirational to socialist and utopian thinkers ([Hayden, 1976](#); [Harvey, 2000](#)).

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) is reputed to be the first to use the term ‘anarchist’. Like Fourier, he was possessed of an antisemitic temperament, but unlike Fourier, he was also deeply anti-feminist, defending patriarchy to the hilt, a position quite in conflict with many of his anarchist ideas, especially his central argument that justice had to be founded on equity. His brand of anarchism was based on mutualism, which was likewise central to the anarchism of Élisée Reclus and Pyotr [Kropotkin \(2006 \[1892\]; 1902\)](#). In particular, Proudhon advocated what he called ‘industrial democracy’

where workers, organised in labour associations, freely cooperated and exchanged their products on the market with other cooperative labour associations. By contrast, Reclus and Kropotkin's version of 'mutual aid' was based more on the 'needs principle' ('from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs') than market principles. In Proudhon's world, wages – and thus labour power as a commodity – would be abolished, as would be the state, which would be replaced by federations of free communes (municipalities). Famously associated with the phrase 'property is theft', Proudhon's views on property were complex (and evolved over his lifetime), but he essentially held that 'property' in personal goods was acceptable, but monopoly ownership of land and the means of production, especially when used as a means of labour exploitation, was not.

Proudhon's view of human emancipation was primarily confined to emancipation from being governed, arguing that the 'justice' and 'morality' of being governed consisted only in being condemned, judged, ridiculed, spied on, exploited and oppressed (Proudhon, 1923 [1851]). Anarchist justice thus consisted in the opposite of these, and in liberation from them through mutualism. Such ideas – implicating just systems of social production through cooperation, just distributions of social products through social ownership, and just governance through liberation from state tyranny – have remained cornerstones of anarchist thought ever since, as has been well summarised by David Wieck:

A society will be just, then, insofar as it is free ... of 'enslaving' social or political institutions (military, familial, governmental, educational, sexual, ethnic hierarchical, ecclesiastical, etc.); but it will not be a society at all unless patterns of cooperation capable of sustaining human communities and vital personal existence are achieved. (To be anarchist and just, a society need not be perfectly, or even approximately egalitarian in an economic sense, unless such a principle arises from mutual agreement; unjust would be such systematic discrepancies of wealth as would constitute de facto economic classes, where the inferior class or classes would be chronically blocked off from full participation in the life of the society.) (Wieck, 1978, p 231)

### *Marx and Engels*

In his early works and reflecting the influence of Hegel (and to some degree Rousseau) on his thinking, Karl Marx was essentially concerned with the question of human flourishing, seeking to understand what would allow and what would thwart humans from achieving their 'species being' – their potential as humans. In 'On the Jewish question', Marx (1844) made a distinction between 'political emancipation' (that is the granting of full

citizenship to Jews) and ‘human emancipation’ (in this case emancipation from the mystifications of religion). In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (1932 [1844]), he sought to account for the forces producing humans’ alienation from their own nature, focusing on the inhibiting, alienating and exploiting effects of the capitalist mode of production and arguing that under capitalism, humans are alienated (estranged) from:

- what they produce;
- their own labour;
- other human beings;
- their own selves; their own natures.

Finally, in *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1932 [1846]) show that what differentiated humans from other animals, and thus what is central to their nature, their species being, is that they can and must produce their own means of subsistence. What a human *is* – and *can be* – is determined by the material circumstances of such production. Significantly, production is always and must be social in character. It is through collaborative acts of production that humans produce themselves and their actually-existing nature, however alienated, and however far removed from their species being.

Though Marx rarely invoked *justice* in his writing, and though he was sceptical of rights in the abstract (though less so as actual social practices), his theory of alienation, especially when combined with his theory of exploitation, has profound implications for theories of justice. Central to Marx’s arguments – especially in later writings like the *Grundrisse* (1976 [1856]) and *Capital* (1987 [1867]) – was that under capitalism, there is nothing unjust about exploitation. Exploitation (which is necessary to the production of surplus value and thus the accumulation of capital – or ‘economic growth’ in mainstream parlance), is the result of formally *just* market interactions whereby a worker sells her/his labour power at its value and for a mutually agreed upon length of time. The purchaser of that labour power (the capitalist) is thus free to deploy that labour as seen fit (within the laws and mores of the land). That the workers can produce sufficient commodities to repay her/his value (as represented in the wage) in less than the agreed time, and thus continue to work for the capitalist ‘for free’, is exactly what makes the system go. That the product of all that expended labour power now belongs solely to the capitalist is juridically as it should be. For Marx, ‘exploitation’ was a measurement of the relationship between a worker’s ‘necessary’ labour time (the time required to replace her/his own wages) and his/her ‘surplus’ labour time (the time spent working ‘for free’). Exploitation was a technical term. But exploitation in practice was exactly the site of human alienation and the thwarting of our species being: by selling our labour power (‘justly’) we alienate ourselves from what we produce

(this is determined by the capitalist), from how we produce it (ditto), from each other (all our relationships are mediated through and take the form of commodities), and from ourselves (we have little or no control over our own self-development) (Geras, 1985).

If what is *just* within capitalism is deemed more broadly as *unjust* (because it thwarts human species being, or more narrowly because despite its juridical legitimacy it creates gaping inequalities in income, life chances, self-development, and so forth), then, as with anarchism and the ideas of the utopian socialists, the only way to create a more just society is to radically transform the current one, especially, for Marx, in how it organises the social relations of production. More analytically, the full corpus of Marx's work suggests a dual nature to justice:

1. The substance and processes of justice are historically determined and geographically situated: in one era and society, slavery, for example, might be perfectly just (as in Greek and Roman worlds), bonded labour might be just (as in feudalism), or child labour might be just (as in much of the world, including the industrial capitalist world, into the 20th century). As an important corollary, standards of justice change only as the result of concerted, and often long-term, social struggle.
2. Nonetheless, according to Engels, justice is an ideal to be strived towards as well as a 'stick' against which to measure current society – 'the final arbiter to be appealed to in all conflicts' (quoted in Merrifield and Swyngedouw, 1995, p 1). This 'stick' is human emancipation, the degree to which humans achieve their 'species being', which is to say, humanity's full potential as a species.

The complex dialectic between the material (justice is historically and geographically determined) and the ideal (justice is the stick against which to measure current society) suffuses all of Marx's writing, but given his foundational historical materialist argument that it is social life that determines consciousness, not consciousness that determines social life, his analytical work was more concerned with understanding the logic of capitalism (as the dominant force shaping humans' *actual* human nature) than with theorising justice as such (see Forst, 2017, p 113; Wolff, 2017). For this reason, perhaps, it is easier to spot critiques and theories of *injustice* in his work than it is to find sustained discussions of justice, which is why the preceding focus on the overall thrust of his work has been important.

### *The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory*

By contrast, justice is more explicitly theorised in the work of the Marxian Frankfurt School, especially after its post-Second World War revival. The first

(pre-war) generation of Frankfurt theorists returned Marxism to its Hegelian roots (while juicing it up with a good dose of Freud) and thus placed an emphasis on *critique* and *theory*. Max Horkheimer (1972, p 246) conceived of Critical Theory as a theory that contributed to human ‘emancipation from slavery’ and helped ‘to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers’ of human beings. As with Marx (and the anarchists), creation of a just world requires a thorough remaking of society. This in turn requires the critical examination of the forces, including the ideological forces, that can lead institutions to create the conditions of possibility for freedom and justice (see Held, 1980). Theodor Adorno and Horkheimer together launched a withering critique of the failures of the Enlightenment to live up to its own ideals, with Adorno arguing (in Schick’s [2009, p 147] words) that ‘Enlightenment notions of justice and injustice fail to live up to their goal of improving well-being’. Furthermore, the appearance of progress towards Enlightenment ideals hinders critique: ‘the semblance of freedom makes reflection upon one’s own unfreedom incomparably more difficult than formerly’ (Adorno, 1981, p 21).

For this reason *justice* is closely linked to *ideology*. For early Frankfurt School theorists, ideology:

is *justification*. It presupposes the experience of a societal condition which has already become problematic and therefore requires a defense just as much as does the idea of justice itself, which would not exist without such necessity for apologetics and which has as its model the exchange of things which are comparable. (Adorno, 1972 [1954], pp 189–190, emphasis in original)

For the first generation of Frankfurt theorists, to the degree that Critical Theory is ideology critique, then Critical Theory’s contribution to justice theory is its critique of justice *as* ideology, as ‘apologetics’ for the status quo. Beyond an orientation towards human emancipation and a methodology of immanent critique aimed at exposing the dialectical underside of modernity and Enlightenment, however, this generation of Frankfurt theorists made little contribution to a *positive* theory of justice, that is, a theory that moves beyond critique to develop a rational basis for what is just.

The same cannot be said for later (post-war) generations. There is no satisfactory way to summarise the range and depth of Jürgen Habermas’ development of Critical Theory over his long career, nor even the range of its implications for justice theory. But at the risk of oversimplification, it can plausibly be argued that Habermas has been consistent in attempting, from *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962), through his major work on communicative rationality (1981), to his more recent works on cosmopolitanism and democracy (2001; 2012), to develop what Pettit

(1982, p 228) has identified as a ‘consensus theory of justice’. Such a theory, clearly echoing Horkheimer but with less negative connotations, is rooted in a theory of rational *justification*. For Habermas, justice, like truth, is a ‘discursively resolvable validity claim’ (quoted in Pettit, 1982, p 228), which is to say it can more fully be empirically investigated than normatively defined. And yet, into the 1980s, according to Pettit (1982, p 228), there *was* a normative core to Habermas’ sense of justice: a ‘just system is that which impartially and maximally satisfies people’s real needs’ – which is to say an essentially distributive form of justice arrived at through maximally rational procedures of discursive engagement. In later work, particularly *Between Facts and Norms* (1992), and in a series of debates with John Rawls, Habermas developed a ‘critical theory of justice’ that was discursively grounded (as it also is with Rawls) on the argument that ‘justice itself has no authority other than that which it “earns” in a justified way; public justification remains the “touchstone” of normativity’ (Forst, 2014, p 156, see also Forst 2010).

Like Rawls, Habermas is centrally concerned with the ‘basic structure’ – the institutional arrangements within which we all must live – as the primary object of justice, but ‘presupposes a model in which the citizens accept the conception of justice based on publicly sharable reasons, such that an actual moral consensus independent of comprehensive doctrines exists’ (Forst, 2014, p 163). Yet Habermas does not deny that there is a foundational content to justice. As he says in perhaps his most straightforward statement: ‘Justice concerns the equal freedoms of unique and self-determining individuals’ (Habermas, 1990, p 244). Such content must be understood in a particular way: as the ‘reverse side’, that is, indissoluble from, *solidarity*. As a fuller rendering of Habermas’ statement puts it:

Every autonomous morality has to serve two purposes at once: it brings to bear the inviolability of socialized individuals requiring equal treatment and thereby equal respect for the dignity of each one; and it protects intersubjective relationships of mutual recognition requiring solidarity of individual members of a community, in which they have been socialized. Justice concerns the equal freedoms of unique and self-determining individuals, while solidarity concerns the welfare of consociates who are intimately linked in an intersubjectively shared form of life – and thus also to the maintenance and integrity of this form of life itself. (Habermas, 1990, p 244)

Within this context of solidarity, *justice* must be publicly defended, justified, and it is only in its justification that justice takes on real, practical meaning. And yet, recently, Habermas (2014; see Peirce, 2017) has reversed himself on this position and now argues that solidarity is *not* an essential aspect – the



reverse side – of justice, moving closer to Rawlsian liberalism, and thereby, perhaps, diminishing the radical core of his theory of justice.

Habermas' Frankfurt colleague, Rainer Forst (2012), has sought to retain that radical core. As with Habermas, justification is the touchstone. For Forst (2014; 2017) justice is *non-domination* and the *right to justification*, which is operationalised through *reciprocity* and *generality*, respectively. Reciprocity means that 'one does not make any claims to certain rights or resources that one denies to others, and that one does not project one's own reasons (values, interests, needs) onto others in arguing for one's claims' (Forst, 2004, p 317). Generality means that all affected persons must be able to access and accept the reasons (for a claim of justice) in relation to universal and fundamental norms (Forst, 2012, p 6).

These base arguments are linked to a reorientation of justice theory from 'recipient-oriented views' to '*production* and its just organization' (Forst, 2017, p 122, emphasis in original), which is the radical kernel of Forst's theory. He argues that most mainstream theories of justice are distributive and 'understand "distributive justice" exclusively as a matter of allocating goods' (Forst, 2017, p 122). Such theories:

- 'obscure essential aspects of justice – in the first place how the goods to be distributed come into the world';
- 'neglect the *political* question of who determines the structures of production and distribution and in what ways – hence the question of power – as if there could be a giant distribution machine that only needs to be program correctly' (cf Young, 1990);
- 'disregard ... [the fact] that *justified claims* to goods do not simply "exist" but can only be ascertained discursively, which class for procedures of justification must in turn be defined in normative terms as a matter of justice'; and
- 'leave the question of *injustice* largely out of the account – [and for example] equates someone who ... is deprived of goods and resources as a result of a natural catastrophe with someone who suffers the same deprivation as a result of economic or political exploitation'. (Forst, 2017, p 122, emphasis in original)

A proper theory of justice instead 'must aim at *intersubjective relations and structures*, not *subjective* or *putatively objective states* of the provision of goods' (Forst, 2017, p 122, emphasis in original), and in particular must concern itself with the relations and structures of production.

Forst (2017, p 123) further argues that the opposite of justice is *arbitrariness* which in turn is at the core of domination. 'The basic impulse that opposes injustice is not primarily of wanting something, or more of something, but of no longer wanting to be dominated, harassed, or overruled as someone



who has a claim and a basic *right to justification*' (emphasis in original). In this view, the central

*political* essence of justice ... is who determines what is received by whom. On this conception the demand for justice is an emancipatory one. ... The person who *lacks* certain goods should not be regarded as the primary victim of injustice, but instead [the primary victim is] the individual who does not *count* when producing and allocating goods. (Forst, 2017, p 123, emphasis in original)

Forst links his conception of justice tightly to Marx's theories of exploitation and alienation (both of which are vital to making some people not *count*) and argues that it is in Marx's conception of the fetishism of commodities that the heart of the matter can be glimpsed.

Through commodity fetishism, relations between people appear as relations between things and the possibility of the free association of people (the precondition for justice as the right to justification) becomes impossible. Humans come to be dominated by 'an alien power' – the estranged commodities they make and their owners. By contrast: 'Freedom ... can only consist in this, that socialized man, the associated producers, govern the human metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power' (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, in Forst, 2017, p 128). Like Marx, Forst (2017) holds that justice can only be approached through a radical transformation of the social relations of production, which in turn also requires a careful analysis of *injustice* as rooted in existing relations of production and distribution. Even more, Forst argues in a direct critique of Habermas, Rawls, and the Capabilities Approach, but in line with Kant, that *dignity* is a central object of justice, and dignity 'is violated when individuals are regarded as mere objects of social relations or *primarily as recipients of goods*' (Forst, 2017, p 129, emphasis added). Distribution is an insufficient basis for justice.

Standing somewhere between Habermas and Forst, Axel Honneth (1995) also holds that (re)distributive theories of justice are inadequate. For him, the core of injustice is non or misrecognition; justice requires recognition and respect. In turn, these must be founded on what Honneth (2004, p 355) sees as the 'three principles of recognition' – 'love, equality, and merit', which, slightly reformulated ('love ... equal treatment in law and ... social esteem') are also the 'three principles of social justice' (Honneth, 2004, p 358). Distributional theories of justice ignore this aspect of justice at their peril. For Honneth (2007), mis and nonrecognition are closely related to *reification*, which, in his hands, is transformed from a structural process emanating from within capitalism and its divisions of labour and necessarily fetishising social relations (Lukács, 1971 [1922]) to a kind of social psychology

defined by ‘intersubjective’ power relations, which has the unfortunate effect of reducing the struggle for justice to a kind of demand for therapy. Despite Honneth’s (2004, pp 362–363) rather arbitrary suggestion that claims for recognition must be assessed through a ‘criterion of progress’ and only those meeting such a criterion should be recognised, there is little radical in Honneth’s arguments. As he himself says, his theory is highly affirmative of contemporary liberal capitalism.

### *In defence of Marxist theories of justice*

While the question of justice was a central concern of the Frankfurt School, simultaneous developments within other branches of western Marxism in the 20th century also led to a good deal of scepticism concerning the validity of ‘justice’ as a Marxian concept. Perhaps most prominent in this regard was Louis Althusser’s radical antihumanism and his promotion of a ‘scientific’ Marxism that sought to strip Marxian analysis of its normative dimensions and make it fully a *science* of society. Within Marxist philosophy more generally, there was a vigorous debate in the 1970s and 1980s about the status of justice within Marx’s own thinking (see Geras [1985] for a review), with many arguing that:

- to the degree Marx traded in ideas of justice, he understood justice to be completely and fully determined by the stage of development of the mode of production (as Marx argued, exploitation in capitalism was not unjust, though slavery was); or
- it was at best a ‘reformist’ concept that had little room for revolutionary thinking and practice; or
- communism would be ‘beyond justice’ in that it would not be a scarcity-based mode of production and thus questions of distribution would not be questions of justice.

In these arguments, ‘justice’ for Marx was not transcendent, not universal, and not at all an ideal.

Defending the notion that Marx *did* hold a normative concept of justice (and condemned capitalism in terms of it), Norman Geras (1985; 1992), representing a significant number of other philosophers, argued instead that:

- For Marx, the argument that exploitation in capitalism was ‘just’ held only in the realm of exchange, where equivalents were traded ( $x$  amount of labour power for  $y$  amount of money representing its real value). Once one entered the ‘hidden abode of production’ where exploitation occurred, then any ‘semblance’ of justice rapidly disappeared and the unjustness of exploitation was rapidly exposed.

- Capitalism is based in theft. Marx saw the expropriation of surplus value as a kind of theft (and thus a question of justice) and he saw capitalism as having been born primarily through acts of theft, the thefts of enclosure, dispossession and colonisation.
- For Marx, ‘standards of right’ are sociologically grounded, which means they are ‘constrained by the economic structure and resources of the given society’ *not* that the standards for ‘evaluating or assessing society must necessarily also be constrained by the same economic configuration’ (Geras, 1985, pp 58–59).
- Demands for justice are not reformist but ‘a relatively independent contribution to processes constituting the human agency of revolutionary change [and] the formation of a desire and consciousness for socialism’ (Geras, 1985, p 60). Marx’s sense of justice was in this sense both juridical and normative.
- The ‘needs principle’ (‘from each according to their abilities’) which is at the root of Marx’s theory of justice concerns modes and relations of production but is also distributive in that Marx recognised that distribution according to need is fairer than distribution according to ability, merit or ownership.

Taken as a whole, this defence of Marx as a justice theorist argues that in his dialectical analysis, Marx held justice to be always *actually-existing* (and thus limited and ideological) and a *normative ideal* (and thus, as Engels put it, the stick against which these actually-existing conditions could be measured). The core of justice, for Marx and in terms of this defence, was rooted in the ‘needs principle’ and could be described as a kind of productive-distributive theory that required a thoroughgoing transformation and reorganisation of the relations of production so that a more just distribution (based in need) could be achieved.

## Radical justice and the social sciences

Despite the efforts of the Frankfurt School, development of radical theories of justice within the various social sciences was relatively muted during the middle decades of the 20th century and after 1971 the overwhelming influence of Rawls turned many radical thinkers away from direct engagement with justice theory. One major, early exception was in the field of geography, where the work of David Harvey has been of inestimable importance. In the wake of Geras’ (and others’) defence of explicitly Marxist theories of justice as well as the collapse of state-socialist Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Marxian and other socialist forms of justice theorising have enjoyed something of a renaissance, as scholars (and activists) have come to better recognise the analytical potential of a dual

notion of justice that simultaneously assesses ‘actually-existing’ conditions of justice and drives towards normative ideas.

### *Marxism and the geography of justice*

Having moved to Baltimore in the wake of the nationwide urban unrest in the United States in 1967–1968, the geographer David Harvey quickly grew disenchanted with his position as the discipline’s foremost philosopher of positivist epistemology. For all the power of its statistic and other mathematical tools, positivist geography had no way to explain, much less assess, either the conditions leading to or the eventual results of this unrest. Harvey turned instead to questions of justice. Strongly influenced at first by Rawls’ (1971) recently published *Theory of Justice*, Harvey (2009 [1973]) sought to ‘spatialise’ liberal theories by asking what a just *spatial* distribution in the (American) city would look like. It was not long, however, before he was dissatisfied with this line of inquiry too, since, he discovered, questions of *equity* (central to liberal theories of justice as codified by Rawls) were inevitably reduced to questions of *efficiency* and thus the promotion of a kind of technocratic reasoning that left little room for understanding either the sources of injustice (and thus served to perpetuate them) or the real interests, desires and needs of people who live in cities.

Harvey (2009 [1973]) therefore turned to what he called ‘socialist’ formulations of the justice question and launched a still ongoing effort to both retheorise Marx spatially and develop a theory of justice adequate to Marxism’s revolutionary aims – with Marx’s own insights as vital fuel for his arguments. His work is impossible to briefly summarise, but three central principles of his work can be identified:

1. Any approach to theorising justice must be *dialectical* (in the sense developed by Ollman, 1991), seeking to understand the totality of society and its relations.
2. It must also be attentive to the relationship between the universal and the particular and thus the *geography* of difference.
3. All justice theory must thus incorporate efforts to understand what would constitute a *just production* of geographical difference (Harvey, 1996).

Though seeking radical approaches to justice, Harvey in some ways never really leaves the Rawlsian fold: he too is concerned with theorising a just ‘difference principle’. The primary difference between the two is that for Harvey, any just difference principle must be rooted in the production of geographical space as a fundament of the mode of production rather than in distribution. In this sense, Harvey’s position largely accords with Geras’, but

with the significant addition of a strong spatial component, which is to say that for geographers like Harvey, any Marxian and radical theory of justice has to take as a starting point both the geographical preconditions for, and the geographical results of, the dialectical interplay of universal and particularistic forces. As in feminist theories of global justice (see [Chapter 4](#)), in Harvey's theory lies a central concern with how seemingly just interventions in one place (or at one geographical scale) may have decidedly unjust outcomes in another.

Geographers have developed Harvey's arguments in three general directions – towards theories of spatial, landscape and environmental justice, and the results of these inquiries are detailed in the chapters covering these topics. In all three areas the influences of Marxian and radical approaches to justice are apparent. But one key concept should be highlighted here. For [Harvey \(2012\)](#), all his sophisticated work on spatialising radical philosophies of justice has led to a central concern with how peoples' desire for justice often resolves into a 'cry and demand' for the 'right to the city'. The language of cry and demand, as well as the original concept of a right to the city derive from the French philosopher/social theorist, Henri [Lefebvre \(1996 \[1967\]\)](#), who, writing on the centenary of Marx's *Capital*, argued that through an effective right to the city, which entails an effectively just city (and countryside), all people would have a right to:

- Centrality – access to the heart of the city, but also and especially access to the power to determine the city's development and use.
- The oeuvre – the ability to be centrally involved in the making of the city as an ongoing work, not a once-and-for-all product.

Geographers, urban sociologists, radically inclined anthropologists, architects and other spatial thinkers have latched onto this idea, and much research thus concerns itself with the question of what the conditions of possibility are – or could be – for the achievement of a right to the city, understood both as a congeries of spaces and places and as a metonym for the right to social life, to *species being*.

### *A focus on injustice and the promises of radical justice for social science research*

Radical approaches to justice have been particularly important in encouraging a strong focus on – making a priority of – *injustice* ([Barnett, 2017](#)). A radical core has been retained in this work when it has focused on the roots of injustice in the social relations of production rather than procedure or distribution. This does not imply that questions of distribution are absent from radical theorising in the social sciences,

but rather that such questions are subordinate or secondary to questions related to production. By moving from injustice (which is what ‘actually-existing’ justice looks like on the ground) to questions of just modes and relations of production – coupled with people’s fundamental right to justification and right to the city (as a metonym for society as well as a spatial reality) – radical theories of justice have profound implications for the social sciences. They fully reorient how we conceive of the project of justice theorising and especially the struggle for justice. They require social scientists to understand:

- The *subject* of justice as ‘people’ in general (not sovereign individuals), who, in their capacity for rational deliberation and their emancipatory potential seek the freedom (in solidarity) to develop their *species being*; in actually-existing society, this practically means the oppressed and exploited classes – precisely those who most need the right to justification.
- The *object* of justice as the mode of production and its social relations; in actually-existing society, this means its processes of exploitation, alienation and fetishisation, each of which needs to be transcended to create a just society founded in mutuality.
- The *domain* of as justice being scalarly complex while the universal and particular are mutually determinative; in actually-existing society, this requires the development of both deliberative and confederationist modes of governance.
- The *social circumstances* of justice as occurring at the points of production – both the production of goods (and thus needs fulfilment) and the production of the historical-geographical preconditions within which this more narrow form of production unfolds; in actually-existing society this means justice occurs both in the struggle for ‘industrial democracy’, the ‘right to the city’ and ‘right to landscape’ (see [Chapter 13](#)), as well as in the creation of forums for the ‘right to justification’.
- The *principles* of justice as entailing a radical reconstruction of deliberation (to address imbalances of power), the construction of mutuality, and the centrality of solidarity; in actually-existing society this requires, for example, the abolishment of ‘consultation’ and its replacement with active deliberation and appropriate mechanisms to make this possible.

Such then, is the challenge that radical approaches to justice – as outlined in these five aspects of justice – pose to social scientists: How do we understand actually-existing injustice? And how to we get from that understanding to something closer to Engels’ ‘stick’ – the radical ideal of justice as human emancipation? If not in so many words, that has been precisely the heart of the question insistently posed (however incompletely or contradictorily answered) from Fourier to Forst and beyond.

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