**Jenkins:** The web has become a site of consumer participation. Consumers do not just sit back and absorb information from big media corporations; they are able to express themselves and provide their own opinions so that their voices can be heard.

**Fuchs:** It sounds like these consumers are influenced by nothing whatsoever.

**Jenkins:** That is indeed true. Communication is power.

**Fuchs:** Unfortunately, I do not understand what you mean by communication. Are these consumers communicating with each other, or are they still in contact with large corporations?

**Jenkins:** Well, technically they are exposed to these companies… advertising exists on sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram/Twitter through sponsored posts. But social media is more than that.

**Fuchs:** How so?

**Jenkins:** Well, for one, consumers have a choice whether they want to pay attention to these advertisements. Although they exist on social media, the main purpose of these sites is for consumers to exchange their views, or more simply to talk amongst themselves.

**Fuchs:** You say so, but to me, your view seems too idealistic, grounded on the ideology of social media. What you say is what the people want social media to be. However, corporate influences play a much larger role than you think. We must take a look at this through a political economic standpoint.

**Jenkins:** Well, what do you mean by political economic? Politics has nothing to do with social media.

**Fuchs:** By that, I mean we must look at how the structural features of capitalism affect social media. I think it is imperative to highlight a concept known as relative surplus value.

**Jenkins:** Relative surplus value? What value is there to be had when there is no cost of joining a social media site?

**Fuchs:** Ah, Jenkins. Naïve young Jenkins. I remember when I was only 49. But anyway, social media and its consumers provide a huge value to corporations who advertise on these sites.

**Jenkins:** First of all, I am 49 ½. My birthday was last June. Anyway, enlighten me with your wisdom.

**Fuchs:** Well, surplus value is generated from the exploitation of labor- when capitalists are able to make profit and none of the workers benefit. In the case of social media, the “workers” are the consumers- they click on advertisements that lead to higher sales for the corporation that is advertising, and higher sales lead to higher profits.

**Jenkins:** So what? I see advertisements for various things all the time. That does not mean I click on all of them. For example, a pop-up for adult diapers appeared on the side of my Facebook feed. Hmm, come to think about it, I guess Facebook knows that I will be 49 ¾ soon.

**Fuchs:** This ties into the concept of relative surplus value- corporations advertise to your specific needs and interests. Jenkins, how does Facebook know that you will soon be 49 ¾?

**Jenkins:** Well, on my profile, I listed my birthday as June 1, 1965.

**Fuchs:** Ah, beautiful. I can visualize Karl Marx turning over in his grave already. Jenkins, because you put that information in your profile, Facebook knows how old you are- likewise, they will place advertisements on your news feed that cater to people of your age group.

**Jenkins:** So… if I changed my birth year to let’s say, 1996, I would see advertisements for student loan companies like Sallie Mae, or young, fresh musicians like Lil’ Kim? Or whomever the kids listen to these days. It’s been a while.

**Fuchs:** Ah, Jenkins, it has been a while. This is why you’re a month away from adult diapers. But anyway, yes, you’re right. Because Facebook is able to advertise different things to different age and demographic groups at once, its advertisements to each group are far more relevant than if everyone saw the same advertisements. Because of this, more corporations will earn profit from advertising, which means that the corporations benefit at the free labor of the people.

**Jenkins:** Okay, but I would not say the people are suffering from this. After all, if they see advertisements for what they like, they will be pleased and benefit from exposure to the products that are being advertised.

**Fuchs:** Yes, but the people are being manipulated and do not realize it. Had they never seen these advertisements, they would not be persuaded to buy the advertised products, and the corporations who advertise would never make additional profit. And it isn’t just the advertisements… look at the figures. The Facebook accounts with the most fans, the Twitter accounts with the most followers, the YouTube videos with the most views… these are all celebrity pages or music videos, which are associated with large media companies such as Sony and Universal. The more the people feed into these things, the more these corporations benefit.

**Jenkins:** So you’re saying that social media is actually dominated by large corporations, not the people?

**Fuchs:** Yes, through advertisements and people following their pages or the pages of their celebrity clients, they persuade the people to buy into their products- whether it be a tangible item advertised by a retail store, or an album that is indirectly advertised by watching a music video whose song belongs to that album. These big corporations are more in our faces than you think.

**Jenkins:** I see. Well, my brain hurts. I’m going to go home and see what my relatives are up to on Facebook.

**Fuchs:** Okay. Just be sure not to click on any advertisements. Mwahahahaha.