

Does Capitalism and the Culture Industry Create False Needs? A study of Marcuse, Adorno, and Horkheimer

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Abstract

The world as we know it nowadays has evolved into an entity characterized by different political and economic systems. Each of these systems affects human mentality in a certain way. When focusing on capitalism and its culture industry, one cannot help but notice the different needs that are created as a result of different components of this system. To achieve an understanding of the needs, or rather, false needs created by the culture industry, a study of the latter would be provided at first. Furthermore, this paper aims at understanding whether it is only capitalism that creates a culture of false and unnecessary needs, in order to create a studying basis for future analysis where other systems could be analyzed and compared to the it. While implementing these societal analyses, it can then be possible to implement positive aspects of other systems, at least theoretically, into the capitalist system, providing therefore an economic system without false needs. The framework of this paper was characterized by the analysis of the three main minds that affected the Frankfurt School approach. Marx, Weber, and Lukacs' theories were analyzed and their effect to the critical theorists was compared with the main works of Adorno, Marcuse and Horkheimer. Marx's theory of commodity fetishism; Weber's instrumental action and reasoning; and Lukacs' reification of consciousness were all concepts that affected the latter thinkers in one way or another, allowing them to create a pivotal change in the academic and scholarly thinking on capitalism. In essence, this paper will describe, list, and analyze the aspects of capitalism that create our false needs.

Keywords: Capitalism, Economy, Politics, Psychology, Society.

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