

Free the culture industry essay example

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This paper looks at the theory created by these two that argued that various factors led to the cultural chaos that are present in the world today. The paper compares the line of thought that Adorno and Horkheimer had to the idea that Susman had about culture. The views that Adorno and Horkheimer had on mass culture show a form of primitive and reductive thinking on their part. These factors include loss of support for objectively formed religion, destruction of pre-capitalism and social differentiation and technological differences. The two created a critic of mass society. Many people disagree with the argument that the two created. In contrast to their theory, technology in form of film, radio and magazines produce a system that is similar as a whole. Even political opponents have some similarities in how they handle the election period. The buildings in the world have very little differences (Juliet, 2000).

Susman idea on culture

Susman speaks of the idea of the people in relation to culture. Many of the reading materials from that period refer to the people as the group that defines culture. This era however had a high level of rhetoric aspects that call raise questions about the nature of culture. The term the people however acquired new meaning after the First World War. This kind of idea means that people functioned as a single primary unit. This theory puts it out that the differences among people are superficial. If the people that seem different have the chance to speak then they will speak in one language all together. There were various statistics carried out that verified this fact. This look changed the pervious view about culture. People no longer concentrated

on individualism. Now they aimed at attaining the average American life. Capitalism defines the order of social life.

Adorno and Horkheimer's argument

A clear example of the reasoning Adorno and Horkheimer had is how housing projects work. They create a single unit for an individual. This unit is supposedly an independent unit for that person. This unit is usually similar to other units around it. In the end, mass culture is uniform. The two philosophers seek to show the negative impact of the modern capitalist societies. They explain capitalism as an exploitative factor. They urge humans to eradicate all forms of capitalism to ensure their survival. It is only through the eradication of capitalism that man can live to his full potential. Adorno and Horkheimer explain that men craved the desire to conquer the world, in the name of advancing in technology. To them, this search for knowledge ultimately works against man. They use this concept to explain cases of mass murder such as genocides and wars around the world. Most of these wars use the latest technology, which in the end has adverse effects on humans on either side of the war. Other people view the culture industry in different ways (Juliet, 2000). Many people participate in the culture industry. This makes certain reproduction processes necessary. This is because people have identical needs. The production of these needs leads to a similarity. In the production world, identical production of goods is easier and serves the needs of people in a way that is faster and better.

Adorno and Horkheimer accept that there is significance in the new forms of mass communication media. The culture industry according to these two refers to modification of cultural ways due to the effect of capitalism around

the world. The culture industry creates a status quo that ties people to the idea of an ideal culture. They contrast art and culture industry. These two aspects have opposite roles and different results. The two show the culture industry as a form of mass deception. They explain that there are hidden desires by company directors. The rest of the people have to accept the terms of these directors, especially those in the most powerful industries (Juliet, 2000). Some of these industries include petroleum, electricity, and chemical among others. People need these factors so the directors use these factors to control the mass. These people are the real holders of power in the society. This kind of culture provides goods depending on the kind of supply required by the people. This kind of system also produces inferior products into the society. The people just look for products that might be able to appeal to a high amount of people.

In contrast to the culture industry, Susman compares how people would react in a fair. All fairs create opportunities for people to learn new things. This particular fair had particular learning opportunities for the people involved. This fair shows the individual how much he gains through contributions to various forms of life and work. The fair also shows how an entire community gains through the contributions of a single individual. This concept of the fair seeks to show people the ideal concept.

In reference to mass media communication, Adorno and Horkheimer discuss how there is a mixture of high art and low art. This mixture seeks to appeal the high amount of audiences. This theory however does not state that all the products of this culture industry are inferior. It is however important to note that this form of mass production replaces the previous methods

without paying attention to the important role that the cultures before this played. The new sources of culture eliminated the old sources without fulfilling the required roles. Still on mass media, there is a clear contrast between the Fascist Germany and the American Film industry. The two film industries have certain similarities. These include culture that is mass-produced. Other similarities include the consumption of the products by a passive audience. This shows how monopoly capitalism dominates the minds of people.

Susman also looks at the effect of communication. He discusses how in certain conditions the generals failed in informing the citizens that the war was on their doorstep. This kind of thought helps reduce tension among the people involved. This thought also shows the effect that communication has in the society. It defines culture also looks at the development of a class that is self-organized and prone to social and political aspects. The definition that Williams had showed a problem in the power that media has in changing the opinion of the masses. He also criticizes the idea of mob rule. At times, the majority is wrong.

Adorno and Horkheimer also talk of how mob rule mostly comprises of low quality order. there is nothing such as a mass democracy. Democracy remains the same. Majority is not always correct. He further criticizes the meaning of mass of people by explaining how different humans are. The masses do not handle the differences that people have among themselves. Therefore the term mass does not accurately describe a group of people. When people view, themselves as a mass, then they can be exploited both politically culturally. On the issue of mass communication, the development

of media enhanced the means of communication among people. It increased the way people communicate with each other and made it easier for people to access information. Aspects such as reading show a one-way means of communication among people. Some critics argue that this form of communication does not serve the purpose of communication. The fast spread of communication has various effects on culture. People are able to share various aspects of their culture through this. Development in communication has led to multiple transmissions, which also helps in spread of information. This factor makes it better in terms of education as people are able to access information easily. This theory also looks at aspects of mass observation. If masses are a mob, then they might have negative influence to the popular culture. He notes how popular culture emerged after various education acts. There is a culture considered acceptable and developed by a group of elites. There is also the bad culture developed by skilled and educated people who do not have the time to read materials that were more complete. He further describes communication in the community not only as the transmission but also as the reception and response of the people in the community (Susman, 1927).

The culture industry undermines the power of the individual. The culture industry consumes the needs of the individual. A culture produced by industry shows people a way of life that limits their freethinking capacity. The culture industry takes the responsibility of producing goods without the consent of the individuals. In the end, the people have no option but to take whatever products offered to them. People have no chance to exercise diversity in mass production. Everything is similar (Susman, 1927). Movies

show the perfect example in this setting. All movies released almost have a similar flow. People are able to predict the ending in most movies. People only focus on economic success and have created little space for creativity among the people. The world would require an authentic culture that allows people to think and create goods differently according to their imaginations.

Conclusion

Authentic culture allows people to think differently. Authentic culture presents people with different suggestions on how to do things differently. This kind of culture is different from the industry culture in that it allows people to think and function as independent entities. Authentic culture goes beyond the level of culture industry. It allows for higher chances of people being independent. The culture industry is different from the authentic culture in various ways. The culture industry remains pessimistic in how it defines things. The creators of the culture industry dislike the idea of mass media and mass production. Here, goods are produced in huge amounts and said to represent the needs of the people. This is however not the true thought behind this concept. In this way, this culture deceives the people. It lures consumers to buy goods that they do not really need or want.

References

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- Susman, W. (1927) *Culture as History*, New York: Pantheon Books