

The Empire of Mind by Michael Strangelove

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Chapter 1 – Capitalism and the Limits of Thought

Russell Neuman - *The Future of the Mass Audience*

"Clearly, the Internet provides the online community with expanded expressive freedoms" (p.7).

"What Internet users do with their new-found expressive freedoms – their ability to create and disseminate cultural-products – is substantially determined by the pre-existing conditions surrounding social order" (p.7).

*Manuel Castells, Noam Chomsky, Nick Dyer-Witherford, Ien Ang, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, John Kenneth Galbraith

"Western cultures place a premium on the notion of the independent self, and the average individual gives little thought to the impact that commercial media has on cherished beliefs and habits of consumption."

Normalization theory

"McChesney provides an excellent survey of how American media corporations have hijacked United States cultural policy, brought off politicians, corrupted journalism, assisted in the selling of immoral wars, undermined confidence in government, and robbed the public domain" (p.18-19).

"Our beliefs, values, thoughts and emotions are highly conditioned to match the needs of the marketplace" (p.24).

Diamond engagement examples – "The Standard" in wedding/engagement process – judged on size and expense. Is she worth it?

"Advertising had successfully programmed American consumer attitude towards diamond engagement rings."

"As often the case, the marketplace's value system compels the consumers to act, while at the same time defining the acceptable parameters of action" (p.25).

"Within capitalism the reigning assumptions are that what is good for business is good for all and that human needs can best be satisfied through the acquisition of more stuff" (p.26).

*Herbert Marcuse – *One-Dimensional Man*

"Corporate messages aggressively invade all areas of life with little resistance from a population conditioned to accept their presence" (p.28).

"The entire apparatus of commercial media is intent on diminishing awareness of our lack of self-mastery" (p.31).

*Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert K. Merton

*Herbert I. Schiller – *Culture Inc.*

Chapter 2 – Content and Audiences Beyond Control

Argue that full control will not be re-established. There are inherent limits to law, technology, and corporations as regulating forces.

Digital Piracy

Yet to be stopped; increase in high speed internet will increase peer-to-peer file sharing

Marginal economic activity compared to other sources in economy for online shopping

Original fears of privatization, commercialization, and monopolization yet to occur; nor do they appear to occur to Strangelove

CanWest Global Communications believes in a convergence strategy: "If you can watch it, read it, hear it or download it, we want to be the source" (p.59).

Highly centralized media system

"The logic of capitalism demands that the Internet eventually succumb to market forces and be reduced in status to just another form of private property to be carved up and divided among corporations" (p.61).

Digital Rights Management Technology (DRM) – by Sony failed = huge customer backlash

Lessig's Architecture of Perfect Control

Lawrence Lessig's theory that corporations will eventually control intellectual property rights on the Internet through control of the underlying architectural code

Invisible hand of the marketplace would turn the Internet into a 'perfect tool of control'

Control through Internet code

"While any attempt to embed the American notion of free speech in an architectural code that governs online communicative capabilities may, on the surface, appear well intentioned, it would have nefarious consequences on the global community" (p.67).

"Any strategy based on reducing access to non-proprietary content will be doomed to failure in the face of massive audience defection to friendlier ISPs" (p.69).

If AOL shut off access to the wilder and wilder Internet it would self-destruct

Stuart Biegel: "Three significant forces that could undermine any attempt to bring the Internet under corporate control: lawsuits, code-breaking technologies, and consumer behaviour" (p.70).

Castells proclamation that the Internet "is no longer a free realm" (p.73).

Software businesses have been failing against digital piracy

-25% of business software programs in the United States are pirated; 38% in Canada (p.74).

"Rather, 'the evidence suggests...the emergence of a kleptocratic corporate culture, that is, a culture ruled by thieves" (p.76).

*Manufacturing Consent (1992)

Though there should be concern for the Internet; resistance, deviance, and competition may severely frustrate market and state strategies of containment and control (p.78).

"[f]or the foreseeable future, the Internet will remain an anomaly within capitalism's media system" (p.78).

Chapter 3 – The Abnormalization of the Internet

With all the negative aspects, the Internet is far from civilized and normalized

Margolis and Resnick – "Normalization Theory"

Normalization Theory – adoption of marketplace determinism is part of what could be called an imperial economic world view

Robert McChesney supports theory

Internet vs. highly centralized analog technologies

Internet "goldmine" prediction was inaccurate

Online surfers are not easily moulded into consumers this can be noticed through detest for pop-upes, junk-mail, and emails from companies; online retail/profit is miniscule to total sales of the country

Internet bubble collapse

"Clearly, the New is a threat. Corporations fully realize that it is a threat. It is more a question of the degree of threat and of the speed and trajectory of change" (p.87).

Internet = the aggressive destruction of property rights

Corporations ARE NOT the dominant force within the Internet

'Panopticon' – signifies the ability of network technologies to intensify surveillance and control systems deployed within capitalism and the contemporary state (p.97).

Chapter 4 – Culture Jamming and the Transformation of Cultural Heresies

"The success of capitalism throughout the 1900s owes a great deal to its ability to limit the individuals communicative capabilities and access to alternative sources of knowledge" (p.99).

"Corporate leaders are fearful of Internet's communicative freedom (Doug Miller) (p.100)

"Clearly, 'living in fear' suggests that corporations do have something to hide from consumers

Strangelove believes in physical marketplace (more personal) than online shopping

Reformation and use of technologies (i.e. email, photoshop) allow words and images to travel quickly regarding corporate ideas and images

Culture jamming: The destruction of commercially produced meanings is usually referred to as culture jamming, adbusting or subvertising

Tactics across all mediums (video, pirate radio, digital photography, billboards, websites, songs, etc.)

Usually illegal (using corporate property without permission)

Internet enables public reinterpretation of privately owned messages and meanings

Counter culture forces = using culture jamming

Pornography can also be used as a tactic against corporations "Jammers themselves frequently describe their motives as arising from the loss of public space, public voice, and meaningful choice within the mediascape and the marketplace" (p.110).

Gutenberg Press "But print changed the way information moved through space. It could go farther and faster and remain in circulation longer" (p.111).

In terms of circulation, the Internet can rapidly exchange information and ideas (whether positive or negative) to millions of users worldwide

"[P]rolonged within public memory. The Internet also makes it easier to correlate events and issues" (p.112).

"The capitalist system requires a certain degree of control over the past, present, and future, whereas cyberspace denies any degree of hegemonic control of memory" (p.114).

"The cultural authority of mass-produced, corporate-owned commodities is diluted by masses of technologically empowered individuals who are constantly re-articulating the meanings embedded in corporate speech" (p.115).

The Normative Debate

Mary Douglas "Douglas approaches the issue of collective action – action that constitutes society – through the assumption that collective action is difficult" (p.126).

"Within the normative debate individuals scrutinize their social arrangements – they monitor each other's behaviour and contribution to the collective" (p.126).

"We are not free to act as we wish without regard for the constraints imposed by our local culture" (p.126).

Papers have sides to them

Media "sets the agenda for the debate and biases the discussion from the perspective of media owners, and elite."

"The intent behind the normative debate is to mobilize support for a particular view of the good society, which type(s) of society is to be considered desirable is defined by the contenders in the debate" (p.127).

"In a society where the bulk of the public sphere has been monopolized by the corporate sector, the normative debate is muted – the field of contenders is reduced" (p.127).

Internet provides an alternative forum

An expanded normative debate means that culture is less constrained, the future holds more possibilities

"We can be hopeful that the Internet will loosen the bounds of corporate media on the form and substance of the normative debate, expand the number and variety of contenders within the debate, and alter our notion of the common good" (p.127).

Consumer activism? More responsibility and care from businesses

Corporations now TRY to show care, but their core beliefs continue to be the same

Chapter 5 – Naughty Barbies and Greasy Clowns

Barbie – "plastic princess of capitalism"

"By overdetermining meaning and excessively structuring the social order, capitalism invites the destruction of its master symbols."

What Barbie means or stands for in the commercial sense can reference such things as sexual identity, consumption patterns, acceptable roles, mating, and reproduction expectations. There appears to be strict symbols established within society as to Barbie's role.

People now seek to destroy such symbols or change them in an anti-capitalist manner

So many companies are now viewed as parodies and are constantly targeted

Public meanings (fixed) are now being challenged

Master symbols

"Because symbols actively influence the shape of the social order (as opposed to merely representing social experience), these alternative representations have the potential to undermine capitalism's mastery of the symbolic economy and its social order" (p.149).

"Uncontrolled anti-capitalist expression"

Internet was a means of unifying general public about McDonalds and why it should be deemed as bad

McSpotlight, McLibel, McFacism, McDeath, McGrease

Corporation has failed to control the meaning of its brand within cyberspace

McDonalization of society

"The economy operates by standardizing wants, minimizing consumer sovereignty, and controlling the most fundamental processes of individual perception."

*Marx, Habermas

"Ability to affect the symbolic economy deep within cultural roots of the Internet lies a hostility to the very notion of property" (p.161).