

Analysis of Marcuse's Theory of Dissimilated Consumption

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Abstract: Marcuse exposed the phenomenon of alienated consumption in the western developed capitalist Industrial society through “false demand”, believed that people were influenced by the external consumption culture, ignored the real demand for goods and lost the ability to think independently and transcend, and then elaborated his own theory of alienated consumption, and mercilessly criticized the phenomenon of alienated consumption culture in the developed Industrial society. Marcuse's theory of alienated consumption can enable us to clarify the mainstream of development in the world while developing the economy, correctly view the development of science and technology, and maintain a clear attitude towards the development and guidance of consumer culture.

Keywords: Marcuse; Dissimilation of consumption; Scientific consumption concept

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The “alienation” in the traditional sense only governs people politically and economically, constrains people's freedom and oppresses people's subjectivity, but now it is transformed into ideology, technical rationality, Instrumental and value rationality, etc., which permeate people's daily life, forming an invisible rule. Marcuse believed that the fundamental reason for the lack of human subjectivity caused by alienated consumption is the “duality” of science and technology and the “false demand” of consumers, which has become a new way for capitalist society and commodity producers to restrain, control, and oppress people. The essence of consumption should be aimed at meeting people's actual needs, and consumers' needs should be primarily based on their true needs for goods. However, in the western developed Industrial society, in order to stabilize its dominant position, it manipulates people with consumer goods, and uses the media to publicize, so as to achieve the purpose of building false demand.

1. Definition of the concept of alienated consumption

Marcuse elaborated in detail on the connotation of alienated consumption in “Unidirectional People”. Under the influence of the rapid development of the scientific and technological revolution in Western countries, the development of social productivity and socio-economic development has shown unprecedented prosperity, resulting in a large surplus of social wealth and the entry of society into a consumer society. The consumer society often requires continuous consumption to drive social development, and a long-term stable and prosperous society and market require strong purchasing power to maintain. This kind of consumer society exists as a purpose, not to meet the people's real basic survival and living needs. False needs have gradually become the main needs of people, leading to people becoming increasingly confused about why they consume, people can not treat consumption correctly, and eventually fall into the trap of Consumerism in the developed Industrial society.

Consumption was defined as waste in the past, but with the development of society, people gradually changed their thinking and began to understand the concept of “consumption” from a technical and neutral perspective. Adam Smith pointed out that “consumption is the only destination and purpose of all production.” Consumption is a prerequisite for reproduction. Without consumption, there would be no labor force, and production activities would lose their goals. Therefore, consumption is an important condition and link in social development, and is an inevitable result and ultimate goal of human social production. However, consumption is supposed to be a link to meet people's real needs. It is supposed to be an activity with human feelings and emotions. However, in the capitalist

society, consumption has become the purpose and significance of people's daily life.

Marcuse's theory of alienated consumption mainly comes from the following aspects: firstly, Marx's theory of "labor alienation". Marx systematically divided "alienated labor" in the "1844 Economic Philosophy Manuscript", and then Marcuse shifted to the field of "alienated consumption" based on Marx's concept of "alienated labor". The second is Lukacs' "materialization theory". Lukacs explained the concept of "materialization" in *History and Class consciousness*, highlighting the reasons for materialization between people. Lukacs believed that the development of industrial civilization and commodity economy and Commodity fetishism led to the disappearance of workers' personality and the process of human alienation. Marcuse critically inherited Lukacs' "materialization theory" and further studied the alienation of consumption in modern capitalist society. The third is Freud's "psychoanalysis". Freud believed that human is an irrational existence, and he proposed that human thoughts include consciousness, Preconscious, and unconsciousness. The cognition of unconscious (instinctive) existence is an important function of human internal activities, and plays an important role in understanding the psychological level of human nature. He divided unconsciousness into two kinds - life and death..

2. The Main Connotation of Alienated Consumption

Marcuse believed that alienated consumption is an inevitable product of the development of developed capitalist society and the inevitable result of capitalism's manipulation of consumption. Through consumption, it can compensate for labor alienation and cover up exploitation, making the exploitation and oppression of workers by the bourgeoisie more reasonable. Therefore, in a consumer society, needs are not real needs, but are imposed on people through external social forces. Even the satisfaction brought about by such false needs is oppressive, and these needs are attracted through carefully planned advertisements by merchants. Imprinted with the brand of advertising media, it has become a propaganda tool for the rule of the capitalist class, helping capitalism paralyze people's hearts and proposing the slogan of "turning waste into need, and turning destruction into construction", making people believe that false needs are real needs. Driven by the satisfaction brought about by this false need, people have to continue to work and consume, and they have been trapped in a vicious cycle of alienated labor that cannot be overcome, leading to the loss of their practical ability to criticize and transcend freedom. This is also what Marcuse referred to as 'suppressed needs'. Obtaining satisfaction from this 'suppressed need' temporarily offsets many of the enslavement feelings of people exploited and oppressed by the bourgeoisie in real life. However, it is precisely this sense of slavery that gives birth to the sense of freedom that is repressed in people's hearts, and then people have the Freethought of realizing human liberation and resisting oppression. Of course, in the developed Industrial society, materialization activities have a hedonic nature. People are voluntarily integrated into the existing social system, and there is no longer an independent force of resistance in society.

Marcuse pointed out that "false needs are those externally imposed on individuals for specific social interests, which perpetuate hardship, aggression, pain, and injustice."^[1] It can be said that false needs are consumption completely dominated by commodity producers, and consumption beyond consumer satisfaction. The real need is determined through human analysis, and it is the inherent need for people to have their own subjective choices. This need is not subject to external interference. Therefore, the essence of alienated consumption is that commodity producers constantly change ways to stimulate people's consumption in order to profit. In the developed capitalist Industrial society, the rule of the bourgeoisie is in fact the rule of technological rationality combined with politics and technology. In order to meet the needs of people, the Ruling class provides a variety of entertainment activities to dispel the negation and resistance to society that people themselves have..

3. Marcuse's Criticism and Enlightenment on Alienated Consumption

Marcuse pointed out that: "If the worker and his boss enjoy the same TV program and indulge in the same amusement resort; if the Audio typist dresses up as beautiful as her employer's daughter; if the black also owns a Cadillac car; if they read the same newspaper, this similarity does not indicate the disappearance of class, but indicates the extent to which various people under the existing system share the needs and satisfaction to maintain the system."^[2] He further pointed out that "the 'compensation' for the loss of freedom in the process of labor and the 'refuge' for escaping the pain of reality are not based on human real needs, but rather on contemporary commodity mass culture as a tool for capitalist ideology output, which is imposed on workers through advertising, social public opinion, and other methods. Therefore, consumption deviates from human real needs and has evolved into a pathological behavior of consumption and consumption."^[3] This reveals that capitalist consumption has a political ruling function, and consumption deviates from real needs. Today's capitalism replaces the previous cruel, oppressive, and exploitative ways of governance with free, democratic, and gentle governance. However, in fact, this gentle and conscious way of governance is more harmful and long-lasting, easily causing people to completely lose their ability to criticize and surpass, as well as their

spirit of resistance.

In the era of online new media, consumer culture is rapidly and invisibly integrated into people's social culture and values through the use of new media technology due to factors such as the ever-changing content and strong penetration of online media itself, which has a wide impact on all members of society. Under the great abundance of material products and the penetration of Consumerism traps, consumption culture has prompted contemporary people to form new consumption concepts such as "Commodity fetishism", "poverty and refinement", "today's money is spent today", "today can spend tomorrow's money", etc., taking unrestrained consumption and the pursuit of luxury as the greatest meaning of life and the purpose of people's living, resulting in excessive dependence on materials, and gradually making people lost in false consumption. Some unscrupulous producers advocate this "consumer culture view", which has influenced the traditional virtues of diligence, thrift, and thrift that people have long formed, leading to distorted thinking about "consumer culture". They mistakenly believe that possessing a large amount of social wealth and continuous consumption are the value scales to measure a person's value and success. Therefore, people have gradually formed the consumption psychology of Cut throat competition, which is easy to cause alienation between people and between themselves and others, and eventually fall into the trap of Consumerism.

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