

Society of Infantilization - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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(Aka “Postindustrialism — an Infantile Disorder?”)

It is at work everywhere — in the school, the workplace, the media, and even the family. It is a new era of capital, in total contradistinction to the last, and which makes the old seem like folklore.

I. Non-Production

1 — In societies dominated by post-industrial forces, life presents itself as a vast, crooked smile of infantilization.

2 — “Infantilization” is the process by which members of a society are continuously conditioned for lives of useless consumption and productivity.

3 — An “infantilized society” is one which has lost the elements of consumption for the sake of satisfying real needs, and lost the elements of productivity for the sake of larger positive societal progress.

4 — Satisfaction of basic needs remains wholly inadequate in post-industrialism, but it has become invisible due to its overtake by automation. Productivity is no longer considered necessary by those with the means to advance it due to a ballooned level of economic control which renders the need to compete in productivity and consumer demand unnecessary, and due to the social necessity to retain labor as a commodity despite no *productive* necessity.

5 — It is no longer the case that producers must satisfy use-values for production of commodities; they now have the power to force utility everywhere it is profitable. Headless exchange-values float in a sea of “non-productive profit” for producers.

6 — “Non-productive profit” is the post-industrial law of the land. Profit without competition, genuine consumer demand, a necessity to innovate, nor even a necessity to streamline the production process itself. It is all the dynamics of capitalism without any of its of innovation, invention, and accumulation of products at cheaper prices.

7 — If producers ever streamlined the production process as it is now, enough of labor would disappear that the producers’ commodities would lose almost all of their value, i.e., such a drop in employment would create a fall in aggregate demand for commodities large enough to affect an implosion of the whole system. Wage-labor must be retained as an archaic artifact of industrialism for the sole purpose of keeping the commodity-form alive in the face of gaping obsolescence.

8— The purpose of work today is not real labor, but absolutely nothing, for a wage.

9— All of the images of labor remain: people still go to offices, have executives and corporate meetings, and develop mental incapacitation and fatigue caused by such work. However, it serves zero productive purpose; the knowledge of this fact can make the labor even more miserable than real productive labor.

10 — Since labor is faux, so too is education whose purpose was once to precipitate real labor; since there is no longer anything to produce, there is largely nothing to teach either.

11 — Thus, labor and education have morphed into one whole (the “labor and education supercomplex”), and people pass from and between one and the other without barriers; it is one supercomplex bound by the obsolescence of its parts.

12 — The “labor and education supercomplex” invests much time in neither production nor learning, but endless “preparation” and “training” for these things. Ultimately, of course, this endless “training” is all that labor and education is; there is no final purpose because there is no education to be taught nor things to produce.

II. Non-consumption

“The satisfaction which no longer comes from the use of abundant commodities is now sought in the recognition of their value as commodities: the use of commodities becomes sufficient unto itself; the consumer is filled with religious fervor for the sovereign liberty of the commodities. Waves of enthusiasm for a given product, supported and spread by all the media of communication, are thus propagated with lightning speed.” (*Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle, #67*)

13 — Post-industrial man works two full-time jobs: one as a useless wage-earner, the other as a consumerist.

14 — It used to be that fatigue caused by labor made it so that deep and thoughtful media could not be consumed en masse; as such, the market had to “dumb itself down” in order to meet such demand. Today it is the opposite: media is all *a priori* shallow, because such media is significantly easier to make, and it is the *individual* who is forced to change. The individual now becomes “dumbed down” by the market and not vice versa.

15 — Consumerism is the often quiet propaganda of wage-labor writ large. It presents endless choices (in fact it *forces* choice) and endless satisfactions; in short, it is the most developed facade of freedom the world has ever seen, because what it never says is that every choice is identical and contains the seeds for total unfreedom. [1] What is needed is withheld and what is harmful is promoted, but as “choices” they can be the image of a “free society.” [2]

16 — The wants of the market are forced as wants of the individual. Thus, man's servitude to its vagaries and abstractions can be experienced as desirable. At this point, it is not necessary to force his obedience like in the old-style totalitarianism; he comes to anticipate his yearn for consumerism so that the latter can be felt as satisfaction and thus "freedom."
[3]

17 — Man's twofold slavery: it is a completely rationalized and internalized servitude; it is both "true" and inescapable. From here, simple "dissent" is again becoming increasingly obsolete and now absorbed into the system. Each within the system feels their actions are completely rational (which they largely are), making simple moralistic objections to the system essentially impossible.

18— This process, by which man comes to love himself as consumer and as tolerator of non-productive labor and the terroristic system as a whole, is the process of infantilization.

III. Infantilization

19 — Infantilization is not merely dominant ideology, it is a pathology that stunts a person's mental capacities. From sophisticated and serious, she becomes dull and infantile.

20 — The process occurs most prominently in the school and the workplace, but also in the prison, the family, and increasingly, in all of daily life. Man is treated like a child, the child like an infant. "Growing up" is synonymous with obedience, even increased obedience; a person is pacified and always conditioned for her life of servitude.

21 — It is much more effective, as can now be seen, to internalize totalitarianism rather than externalize it. If every man has a little authoritarian in his own head, such forces can far outweigh the capacities of even the most zealous old-style externalist totalitarians. Furthermore, a physical prison is easy to see and thus easier to fight; a mental prison is neither of those things.

22 — Man's mental prison is simultaneously social and material, i.e., both socially created and materially enforced. It is a back-and-forth dance between the real prison of post-industrialism and the social one whose purpose is *conditioning* for this prison.

23 — A dangerous contradiction is emerging between mind and body in post-industrial society: the infantilized mind clashing with the commodity-form. A person must still sell her body on the market, both as labor, and increasingly in everyday life, as consumerism and its capitalist logic dominate.

24 — Even many youth are now transforming their bodies into commodities, particularly sexual ones, as they are often the most in demand.

25 — Due to the nature of market transactions, on a sexual marketplace, many racist, sexist, and even pedophilic traits may be accentuated for profit (potentially unique aspects of oneself must become exaggerated, particularly in service of increasingly specific niches, many of which are unpleasant.)

26 — The clash between the commodified sexual body of the youth and their infantilized mind has made pedophilia the dominant sexual preoccupation of post-industrialism.

IV. Beyond Infatilization

27 — The school is the earliest of the most radical hubs of infantilization; a new movement against this process should begin in the school by the students alone.

28 — This new youth movement should assert its formerly suppressed ability to reclaim maturity and sensitivity to life and humanity — in a word, for freedom. [4]

29 — The key to the movement may lie especially in transgender youth; there is little more adult than the seizing of one's identity as his own, subject to his self, determined by his self, and consciously crafted it

in his own image. This radical sense of self is integral to the spirit of the movement, and as such, transgender youth may hold experience and wisdom which would be most needed of all in such a movement.

30 — The struggle to abolish the present state of things is thus the struggle for *adulthood*, for the full capacities of man, for true freedom.

[1] “They [people] have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue — which is the awareness that they could both work less and determine their own needs and satisfactions.” (Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*)

[2] This same dynamic can be found in the trappings of the “democratic” state machine. It, too, must maintain the image of “freedom” from within, and does so not with unanimous control among the populace (as in the old-style totalitarianism), but with purposeful dissent. To the dismay of many activists, the job of the people within this system of control is to disagree and dissent. The presence of multiple choices of candidates is not a fluke of what would otherwise be one-party rule, but necessary “disagreements” and choices from which faux democracy can live. If the people were ever unanimous in decision, the state machine would have to fabricate dissent campaigns to maintain the facade of a “free society.” In this sense, the act of “being different” from what one may perceive of as a unitary oppressive system, is the very mentality and action which the system embraces the most (Mark Fisher writes in *We Dogmatists*: “...*difference is not suppressed by the established order, it is its banal currency. Fragmentation, deconstruction, cut-up are the very stuff of which mediocracy is made.*”) The state needs such views, real or fabricated, to live under its illusions. The job of a revolutionary movement, then, must not be to dissent as others have before, but to grow a unanimity under a new framework altogether.

[3] “[F]reedom from want [is] the concrete substance of all freedom...” (Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*)

[4] “Therefore the *freer* a man’s judgment is in relation to a definite question, the greater is the *necessity* with which the content of this judgment will be determined; while the uncertainty, founded on ignorance, which seems to make an arbitrary choice among many different and conflicting possible decisions, shows precisely by this that it is not free, that it is controlled by the very object it should itself control.” (Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, ch. 11)