

# Outline of a work on Mass Culture - Postliterate - Medium

By Postliterate

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Mass culture is a mirror of capitalist social logic — a mediated form of social interdependence. When looked at from the perspective of social interdependence, it appears as the innocuous and self-evident result of its own interpersonal social properties; when looked at from the perspective of mediation, something far more sinister is under operation which cannot explain itself solely in reference to some conception of social interdependence as such. It is so difficult to see the problem just in the same way as it is with capital because its negative sociality is always *just* out of reach: can be explained by reference to something only *just* outside of direct sociality as such, and which manifests itself *alongside*, and not instead of, this direct sociality. The popular conception of capital as something self-evidently contained in the “natural” propensity of social men can attest to this difficulty. The task of the anti-capitalist, wrestling her mind from apologia, is for this reason always a cognitive uphill battle, often struggling with concepts that seem to fall *just short* of articulable.

Yet it is doubtful that mass culture can be explained simply by extending our understanding of capital to it. Simply because the former exhibits many of the same conceptual properties as the latter does not alone make it able to be explained by the same logic. Of course mass culture has properties which are a direct extension of capital — to be sure, its profitability — but it also has technologico-communicative properties which are not in and

of themselves explainable in reference to capital as such. These properties can be comprehended in the first analysis as an absorption of corresponding preexisting social tools which existed outside of capital and have now been subsumed by it. In the final analysis, however, these properties are generated in every sense with capital in mind. This is a sort of “formal” and “real subsumption” process for technologico-communication.

For this reason, Guy Debord cannot tell us everything. We have to draw from the heretical anti-Marxists as well (Baudrillard and perhaps Habermas, to be sure.)