

KILROY CAFÉ

Philosophy for the Modern Age

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FIGHT THE EVIL of the Capitalist Commercial Agenda

By GLENN CAMPBELL

Capitalism has given us many useful tools. Thanks to trade, you don't have to grow or hunt your own food; you just go to the store and buy it. Thanks in part to commercial medicine, you now have a reasonable chance of living beyond the age of 40. Many products offered by Capitalism, like computers and washing machines, can be worth far more than their purchase price if they relieve you of routine tasks and let you spend more time on important things.

All of this technology is driven by profit. Entrepreneurs know that if they provide something people need, they will make money and gain greater freedom for themselves. For example, a farmer can grow food more efficiently than the blacksmith. The blacksmith pays the farmer for food so he, in turn, can focus on what he does best. Both parties benefit from their commercial exchange and don't have to work so hard to survive.

Capitalism becomes less benign, however, as soon as the needs of survival have been met. Merchants will still seek profit, but how can they make any when the customer is already satisfied?

Answer: They make the customer dissatisfied.

Once all reasonable human needs have been met, the role of Capitalism is to generate artificial needs where none had previously existed. These new needs, in turn, are used to sell ever more ridiculous and burdensome products.

That's the purpose of advertizing: to

create those artificial needs. Once upon a time, advertizing was simply used to connect the buyer who wanted something with the seller who had it. Now, its main purpose is to tell the buyer he needs something when he never would have thought of it otherwise.

In the modern world, the overwhelming role of Capitalism is to sell people things they don't need, thereby keeping the people enslaved to the system rather than freeing them.

If all you need is simple food and basic shelter, you can become satisfied relatively quickly, but the wheels of marketing assure that the simple and basic are never enough. There will always be ever finer distinctions of "need" to attend to—more exotic food, more expensive fashion, etc.—until all your resources are used up and you never feel satisfied no matter how much you have.

The incentive for deception is huge. There is little profit in supplying basic needs, because this is a commodity business where competition holds prices down, but there can be big profit in selling people things they don't need. When a marketer invents the need himself, he can engineer it so only his product fulfills that imaginary need.

The bulk of advertizing is focused on products with "tm" at the end of their names. Pepsi™ and Coke™ are each focused on creating an addictive need for their supposedly unique product. By buying the product, the marketing tells you, you are buying into a certain illusory lifestyle only they can supply.

Of course, what they are really selling you is sugar water and caffeine, things for which your body has no genuine need. Like 99% of the marketed products out there, the need is totally or mostly artificial and has no real benefit to the healthy functioning of your life.

It is easy to say you're not swayed by advertizing, but advertizing is rapidly becoming the only culture we have left on this planet. It's impossible to avoid. Even most "entertainment" is a commercial product design to generate and reinforce an artificial need.

We all have real needs, but we have to listen to our own bodies and circumstances to find out what they are and how best to address them. We shouldn't take advice from people who have an obvious agenda in selling us something.

Even when it accurately identifies a need, Capitalism usually wants to sell you a \$200 solution when a \$2 one might work even better. Because commerce has so thoroughly usurped our culture, you're probably never going to hear about the \$2 solution because there's no news channel for it.

The commercial agenda poisons everything it touches and will destroy your life if you give it a chance. You can't make it go away, but you can turn it off. You don't just have a choice of Coke vs. Pepsi. The real exercise of your freedom is seeing that you need neither.

—G.C.

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