

Professor Elliott
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Essay Brief 7: Capitalist Collective Consciousness

Capitalism is a monetary and political system seen within the social world that involves both the production and consumption of objects. These commodities that are produced and consumed drive humans to act in a certain manner and therefore arrange the society within the world. In “The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage” by Max Weber and “Estranged Labor” by Karl Marx these authors discuss how individuals work for economical benefits and the effects of this labor on the individuals.

In his paper, “The Spirit of Capitalism and the Iron Cage,” Weber makes the argument that people rationally devote their lives to making money, which correlates to when Marx explains that work is a forced means to survive. In his writing, Karl Marx also goes on to discuss how humans become isolated from their form of labor, as well as other aspects of the world, due to the fact that the labor is forced. Both of these components of the two readings relate to the fact that in modern societies it is common to see individuals working solely to make money. Nowadays, people often chose a certain career path so that they can enjoy the freedoms that money provides, rather than choosing an occupation they actually admire. Although this decision may not seem popular, it makes logical sense because humans are seen engaging in the pleasures that money provides in their daily lives.

An example of an individual choosing a career path solely to make money can actually be observed in my own life. Growing up I was always convinced I wanted to be a nurse because I wanted to help people. However, as I grew up I gained reassurance in my designated occupational choice after educating myself on the salary an average nurse makes each year. Over time, this desire to make money has overcome my admiration for the career itself. My job choice has transformed into a means to make money in order to consume and enjoy the commodities of a capitalist system, such as a nice house, good food, “cool” cars, and more.

The desire for humans to make money in order to consume certain commodities is related to the capitalist collective consciousness. Humans have an internal desire to perform labor in order to generate revenue and therefore be able to purchase commodities. This purchasing and consumption of these commodities creates passions within people, which nowadays can often drive the kind of work these humans do as well. In that aspect, human’s consumer identities can go on to control and influence their productive identities in society.