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The Fragility of Brands in the Era of Semiotic Capitalism

Abstract: In addition to infecting the great culture with the seeds of brand philosophy, the semiotic turn of capitalism would have a multitude of serious secondary consequences: the proliferation of materialistic philosophies of life, the standardization of behaviors and mentalities, the disappearance of real purchasing options, the proliferation of manipulation in public communication, the erosion of political power, the decline of research activities within companies, and the proliferation of goods with a programmed life span on the market. The main purpose of this article is to critically assess the so-called toxic consequences of the capitalism of brands. This critical examination of the consequences of branding on the world in which we live will be preceded by an ontological examination of the nature of brands precisely to ascertain whether, in principle, this type of entity can cause the considerable damage it is credited with. The thesis I argue is that brands are fragile entities, ontologically dependent on the intentionality of collectives and economically dependent on the act of buying. When buyers withdraw their trust in a brand and refuse to buy it, the brand disappears into nothingness. Therefore, if there are things that go wrong in today's society (and there are plenty of them), this cannot be attributed (exclusively) to the existence and action of brands.

Keywords: branding, capitalism, artifact, semiotic design, materialistic philosophy, consumerism, manipulation, technical obsolescence, psychological obsolescence