

The Frankfurt School

Sociology

Critical theory's turn from economics to culture, and Habermas after it.

A tradition begun in 1920s Frankfurt that asked why advanced capitalism produced stability rather than revolt, and looked to culture and reason for the answer.

FOUNDED

Frankfurt, 1923

SHIFT

economy to culture

- Adorno and Horkheimer: the culture industry.
- Standardised culture sold as free choice.
- Marcuse: one-dimensional thought, needs manufactured.
- Instrumental reason turns ends into means.
- Habermas: system colonises the lifeworld.
- Communicative action as the counter-model.

LOOK FOR IT

Habermas' ideal speech situation: agreement is legitimate only if reached without coercion or hidden strategy.

Educational reference. Often criticised as elitist about popular culture and short on empirical test of its own claims.