

Historical Background of Consumerism

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Abstract: *The most History the overwhelming majority of the Earth's inhabitants have owned more or less nothing the clothes they stood up in some bowls a pot and a pan perhaps a broom and if things were going really well a few farming implements Nations and peoples remained consistently poor. Mandeville's dark thesis went on to convince almost all great Anglo- phone economist and political thinkers of the 18th century. There were, Nevertheless, some occasional departures from the new economic Orthodoxy one of the most spirited and imps- signed voices was that of Switzerland's greatest philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau shocked by the impact of the consumer Revolution on the manners and atmosphere of his native Geneva. The reforms of capitalism hinge on an odd sounding but critical task: a new kind of consumerism that conception of an economy focused around buying and selling services and goods focused on high needs*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The most of the History the overwhelming majority of the Earth's inhabitants have owned more or less nothing the clothes they stood up in some bowls a pot and a pan perhaps a broom and if things were going really well a few farming implements Nations and peoples remained consistently poor. Global GDP did not grow at all from year to year, but world was an aggregate as hard up in 1800 as it had been at the beginning of time. However, starting in the early 18th century in the countries of North Western Europe, a remarkable phenomenon occurred. Economies began to expand and wages to rise families who'd never before had any money beyond what they needed just to survive found they could go shopping for small luxuries: a comb or a mirror, a spare set of underwear, a pillow, some thicker boots or a tower. Their expenditure created virtuous economic cycle the more they spend, the more businesses grew, the more wages rose. By the middle of the 18th century observers recognized that they were living through a period of epochal change that historians have since described as the world's first consumer Revolution. It was in Britain where the Changes were most marked: enormous new Industries sprang up to cater for the widespread demand for goods that had once been the preserve of the very richer alone in England cities, you could buy furniture from Chip n Dale, Hepplewhite and Sheraton pottery from Wedgwood and Derby, Cutlery from The Smithereens of Sheffield and hats shoes and dresses featured in the best-selling magazines like the Gallery of Fashion and the lady's magazine.

Styles for clothes and hair which had formerly gone unchanged for decades now altered every year often an extremely theatrical and impractical directions. In the

early 1770s There was a craze for decorating wigs so tall that tops could only be accessed by standing on a chair was fun for the cartoonists. So vivid a numerous with the consumer Novelties that the Austere Dr. Johnsons Riley wondered whether prisoners will also soon to be hand in a new way the Christian Church looked on and did not approve up and down England clergyman delivered bitter sermons against the new materialism. They call it vanity which was a sin. Sons and Daughters ought to be kept away from shops. God would not look kindly on those who pay more attention to household decoration than the state of their souls, but they're now emerged an intellectual Revolution that sharply altered the understanding of the role of vanity in an economy.

DISCUSSION

In 1723 a London physician called Bernard Mandeville published an economic tract titled the "Fable of the Bees". Which proposed that contrary to centuries of religious and moral thinking what made countries rich and therefore safe honest generous spirited and strong was a very minor an elevated and apparently undignified activity shopping for pleasure. It was the consumption of what Mandeville called fripperies hats, bonnets, gloves, butter dishes, soup tureens shoehorns and hair clips that provided the engine for national prosperity and allowed the government to do in practice what the church only knew how to sermonize about in theory make a genuine difference to the lives of the weak and the poor the only way to generate wealth argued Mandeville was to ensure high demand for absurd and unnecessary things, but of course, no one needed embroidered handbags, silk-lined slippers or ice creams, but it was a blessing that they could be prompted by fashion to want them for on the back of demand for such trifles workshops to be billed,

apprentices trained and hospitals funded. Mandeville shocked his audience with the starkness of the choice. He plays before them and Nation could either be very high-minded spiritually elevated intellectual refined and dirt poor or a slave to luxury and idle consumption and very rich man. Mandeville's dark thesis went on to convince almost all great Anglophone economist and political thinkers of the 18th century. There were, Nevertheless, some occasional departures from the new economic Orthodoxy one of the most spirited and impassioned voices was that of Switzerland's greatest philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau shocked by the impact of the consumer Revolution on the manners and atmosphere of his native Geneva. He called for a return to a simpler older way of life of the sword you are experienced in Alpine Villages or read about in travelers' accounts of the native tribes of North America in the remote corners of Appenzell or the vast Forest of Missouri there was blessedly no concern for fashion and no one-up Manship around hair extensions. Rousseau recommended closing Geneva's borders and imposing crippling taxes on luxury goods. So that people's energies could be redirected towards non-material values. He Looked back with fondness to the austere martial Spirit of Sparta. However, even if Rousseau disagreed with Mandeville, he did not seek to deny the basic premise behind his analysis. It truly appeared to be a choice between decadent consumption and

The wealth on the one hand and virtuous restrained and poverty on the other. It was simply that Rousseau unusually preferred virtue to wealth. The parameters of this debate have continued to dominate economic thinking ever since we re encounter them in ideological arguments between capitalists and Communists and free marketeers and environmentalists but for most of us the debate is no longer pertinent. We simply accept that we will live in consumer economies with some very unfortunate side effects to them cross advertising foodstuffs that are unhealthy for us products that are disconnected from any reasonable assessment of our needs all this in exchange for economic growth and high employment. We have chosen wealth over virtue. An irony laden acceptance of this dichotomy is what underpins the approach of many pop artists. In mid-20th century America. For example, Claes Oldenburg developed a reputation for taking modest consumer items many of them food-related and reproducing them enormous scale usually outdoor settings in vibrant polyester

2. REFERENCES

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