

The commodification of our desires, our values, and ultimately our selves, is, in its most blatant instance, underwritten by our television industry. Although we do have five radios per home in the United States, and although over 80 million of our autos are equipped with them, it is indeed television which influences most pervasively our commodity consciousness. Estimates of the average American watching-time run from 29 hours a week to the equivalent of 13 straight continuous years of our average life span. Since up to 27 hours of prime time can be given to advertisement, we could possibly spend, on an average, the equivalent of three solid years of our lives watching solely commercials. And this is their relentless message which assaults the self-worth and perceptions of millions: your hair is too long, your hair is too short, your skin is too light or too dark, your smells are noxious, you are too fat, too thin, too blemished, you must have a training bra in fifth grade or you will have no friends, your breasts are too large or frightfully small, you can stop traffic in a Maidenform bra, you will be frigid or impotent if you do not use Hai Karate or Musk. Our narcissistic buying is motivated by an anomalous self-loathing.

When people, at least on a per capita basis, have most of their needs fulfilled, how are you going to get them to continually want and buy more? Is it possible that it would be more financially rewarding if people were conditioned to be dissatisfied cravers rather than appreciators of the goods of the earth? Does one buy more if one appreciates and relishes things, or if one is continually dissatisfied and distressed and craving? Is it profitable that dissatisfaction be induced into the life-consciousness of a people? Will the stimulation of anxiety and tension (closely associated with the experience of need) be economically desirable? Will persons buy and consume more if they have been taught to be unhappy, to be distressed, to be unsure about personal identity, sexuality,

and relationships?

Another way of putting this problem of the commodity formation of self-consciousness is to suggest what kinds of behavior are not ``good news for business.'' let us suppose that you are a married person with children. If you are relatively happy with your life, if you enjoy spending time with your children, playing with them and talking with them; if you like nature, if you enjoy sitting in your yard or on your front steps, if your sexual life is relatively happy, if you have a peaceful sense of who you are and are stabilized in your relationships, if you like to pray in solitude, if you just like talking to people, visiting them, spending time in conversation with them, if you enjoy living simply, if you sense no need to compete with your friends or neighbors--- what good are you economically in terms of our system? You haven't spent a nickel yet.

However, if you are unhappy and distressed, if you are living in anxiety and confusion, if you are unsure of yourself and your relationships, if you find no happiness in your family or sex life, if you can't bear being alone or living simply---you will crave much. You will want more. You will have the behaviors most suitable to a social system that is based upon continual economic growth.

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