

Huxley 1962

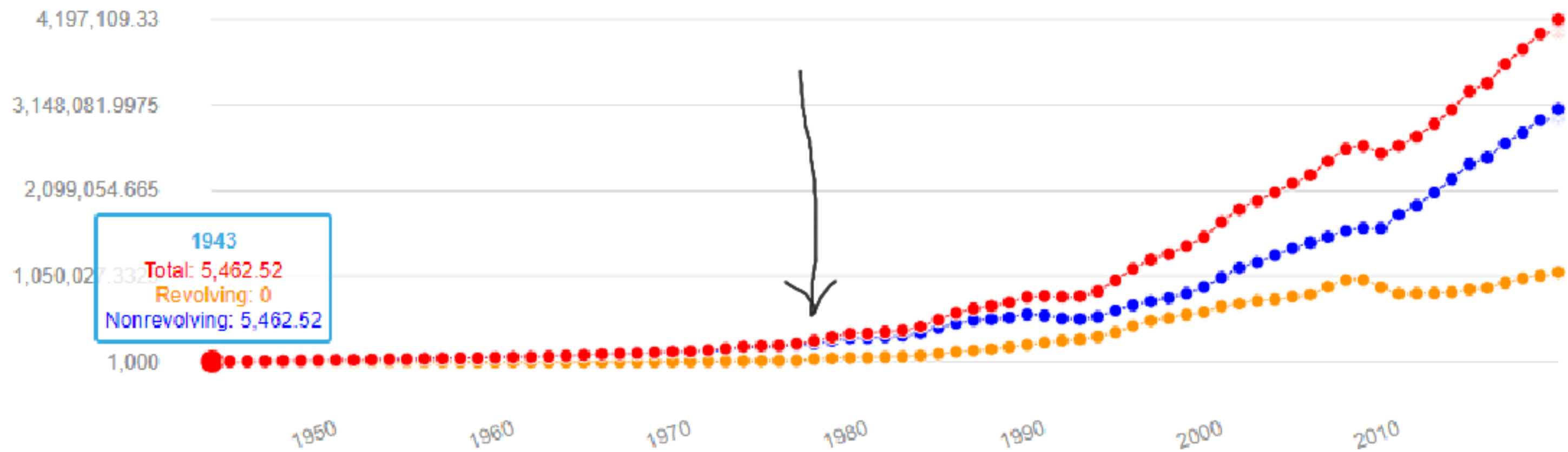
Armaments, universal debt, and planned obsolescence - those are the three pillars of Western prosperity. If war, waste, and moneylenders were abolished, you'd collapse. And while you people are over-consuming the rest of the world sinks more and more deeply into chronic disaster.

This quote currently fits the current climate of consumption. I say this because in the lecture on Monday container data was used as the metric of measurement and containers are used to ship 2 out of the three "pillars of western prosperity". The other one heavily relies on container traffic. The policy I suggest as a means of reducing the consumerist culture would be setting caps on the number and size of container ships a given company can own and operate. I believe this would work because it would 'cut out the middle man' for overall consumption within the western world.

I think that a policy that deals directly with universal debt would be useful and the most practical in addressing the effect of all three of those pillars of western prosperity. More oversight, restrictions, and limitations on the kind of debt people can incur, especially in regards to predatory loans like payday loans, will help to detach ourselves from the chain to consumerism and capitalism that debt leaves us in. This policy could also look to subsidize and offset the costs associated with common kinds of debt, such as student loans or hospital bills, and use some form of taxation/government spending to erase or restructure these burdensome financial commitments.

I found this quote particularly relevant to our current situation, as I firmly believe that these three pillars indeed are the genesis of the over-indulgence and rampant spending and waste that plagues our country and, drives our world into global environmental ruin. Planned obsolescence especially is one of the most infuriating, as I have found that most of everything I own is simply not built to last. It is mind-boggling that companies would ensure that their products are unusable after a long enough period, but with capitalist motivations driving them to always push the newest and nicest thing, it is frankly not that surprising. The universality of debt is also pressing. We owe trillions to countries overseas and the culture of consumption centered around debt and credit cards only serves to distract the middle and lower classes, and contributes heavily to the commercialized and heavily capitalist society that the introduction of easy debt has stemmed from.

Total US Consumer Debt Graph



But even in the much-publicized rebellion of the young against the materialism of the affluent society, the consumer mentality is too often still intact: the standards of behavior are still those of kind and quantity, the security sought is still the security of numbers, and the chief motive is still the consumer's anxiety that he is missing out on what is "in". In this state of total consumerism - which is to say a state of helpless dependence on things and services and ideas and motives that we have forgotten how to provide ourselves - all meaningful contact between ourselves and the earth is broken. We do not understand the earth in terms either of what it offers us or of what it requires of us, and I think it is the rule that people inevitably destroy what they do not understand.

**Wendel
Berry
2002**

This quote best demonstrates our current global climate change issue. Society is driven by the insatiable desire to consume material goods, and we seem to have this infinite growth model that is completely unsustainable. Should we continue consumption at this rate, the planet will easily be exhausted of its resources. The quote goes into detail about the consumer problem. It describes how despite rebellious attitudes about the consumer and materialistic ideals of society, just about everyone is still in the consumer mindset to some degree. Any consumption is consumption even if the quantity is diminished, or the quality is augmented.

There could be some sort of policy that limits how much material goods a family can purchase in one month. That cap could start very low, and gradually increase as people adapt to buying less stuff. Perhaps an incentive could be offered to meet this new limit, like a small tax deduction, or a free pet.

people inevitably destroy what they do not understand.” We have been brainwashed into thinking that we have stronger connections to things that we buy. We have pushed aside nature and even having one on one conversations with another human. People need to change that way we think society now works. Things will not change fast but if we start taking little steps, this can change what values more in society. For example, somethings that can create a curb in this could be learning what really is important. Reducing media intake because they are the new way of consumerism. Choosing ways to spend your time whether that is going outside and exploring nature or talking to people. As well as learning to connect to earth, instead of making earth seem like a place where we as humans can escape. Stop caring of what is “in” and instead care of the world we are living in and how to protect it.

I do agree with all of the quotes that were on the document but I felt this one best summarized current consumerism issue. There has been a disconnect between people and the earth and its resources. People are purchasing items that aren't necessary but are trending which they take as an excuse. The production and transportation of goods are what is harmful to the environment because of its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and water use. If we can remind people that consumerism is detrimental and a waste of resources, we may be able to reduce it. Awareness, education and behavioral insights are needed in order to do this. Although sustainable products are helpful, it still encourages the same amount of consumerism, just with products that are better for the environment after the consumer is done with it. We need policies that encourage producers to make longer lasting products, products that are reusable and don't use harmful chemicals, and produce less waste.

I have a shirt that I've had for 5 years. I bought it from Forever21 when I was 15 years old. I barely wear it as it doesn't match my "style" anymore. In addition to this shirt, I have probably 100 other items that fall under this "barely want, seldom need" category. These items are mostly various clothing items from socks to sweatshirts. With ever-changing styles and trends, the textile and clothing industry is extremely wasteful and feeds our society's need to overconsume. According to the National Resource Defense Council, Chinese textile factories alone (where many of the U.S. clothing is made) produce about 3 billion tons of air pollution every year¹. In order to combat the presumption of clothes, I am suggesting a policy that will reduce textile waste and production. Specifically, clothing production companies could not produce more than 2x the amount of sales of a specific item. This will allow a tighter cushion for companies to increase production of a product if there is a sudden/unexpected increase in demand. In addition, this would prevent overproduction and excessive textile waste. My hope is that policies similar to this will allow our society to move away from a world of overconsumption and materialism.

This is the postmodern desert inhabited by people who are, in effect, consuming themselves in the form of images and abstractions through which their desires, sense of identity, and memories are replicated and then sold back to them as products

Larry
McCaffery
- 1991

Tho no one chose this specifically, much of what you write about for other quotes involving brainwashing and consumerism is directly reflected in this particular quote

We seldom consider how much of our lives we must render in return for some object we barely want, seldom need, buy only because it was put before us...And this is understandable given the workings of our system where without a job we perish, where if we don't want a job and are happy to get by we are labeled irresponsible, non-contributing leeches on society. But if we hire a fleet of bulldozers, tear up half the countryside and build some monstrous factory, casino or mall, we are called entrepreneurs, job-creators, stalwarts of the community. Maybe we should all be shut away on some planet for the insane. Then again, maybe that is where we are.

Mante 1993

This quote best applies to our global consumerism situation because it recognizes how unnecessary the main components of our lives are in a consumerist society:

- our commodities;
- our jobs;
- our developments and progress.

All these things provide meaning to life, but some have recognized the hollowness of this meaning. People 'who are happy to get by' without sacrificing so much of their lives for material success are in opposition to those who create jobs and commodities for others. Those who reject the meaning created by acquiring commodities are deemed to be non-contributing and irresponsible. The quote points out that 'contributing' and 'consuming' are objectively the same in our value system. Progress means always producing more, and consuming more, and this is the highest ideal of humanity.

Since this quote talks about our social values, changing our value system seems like a good way to address these problems. One policy solution that comes to mind is enacting a valuation system for ecosystems services in our development requirements. By assigning value to things that have previously been disregarded, we can recoup some of what is not counted in commodity transactions. This mean bull-dozer driving casino developers would incur a cost to match what they have destroyed. It also could encourage a value system that allows people to preserve the parts of their lives they previously 'rendered in return for some object.' It doesn't cost anything to enjoy nature, however it is manifested in your life. Changing our monetary and personal value systems seems difficult and unlikely, but I guess these things can happen slowly over time as a response to influential people and ideas.

What is Natural Capital and why is it important?

Natural capital is a way of thinking about nature as a stock that provides a flow of benefits to people and the economy. It consists of natural capital assets – such as water, forests and clean air.

The goods and services that natural capital provides – such as foods, water, or climate regulation – are called ecosystem services. These provide people everywhere with the means for healthy lives and underpin all economic activity.

On the way from the Renaissance to our days we have enriched our experience, but we have lost the concept of a Supreme Complete Entity which used to restrain our passions and our irresponsibility. We have placed too much hope in political and social reforms, only to find out that we were being deprived of our most precious possession: our spiritual life. In the East, it is destroyed by the dealings and machinations of the ruling party. In the West, commercial interests tend to suffocate it. This is the real crisis.

**Aleksandr I.
Solzhenitsyn
Harvard
Commencement
1978**

I chose this quote, because the first line really resonated with me. A “good” life is no longer how we can enrich our experience, but rather we rely on the ability to achieve money and material possessions. It is undeniable that consumerism and commercial interest are today's gods as they influence just about everything we as humans in an industrialized country see everyday. There is no sense of accountability from some sort of “Supreme Complete Entity” as the quote above put it; to put pressure on humans to make conscious decisions when deciding whether or not to buy another iphone. Without some sort of accountability, and with the reprogramming of what a “good” life is in society we have spiraled down a path that has left millions of people impoverished and disenfranchised. On top of that we as a human race are currently enacting a

I would propose a change in the education system. This change would require a class to be taught in elementary school, jr. high school, and highschool that teaches a combination of environmental science and ethics. The course would provide a basic understanding of what environmentalism is and how that can lead to more equality in elementary school. For jr high school it would reveal more real world issues, solutions, and how those solutions would benefit the entire population. The high school level course would get more into how to enact the change, to be aware that everyone's actions matter, and how to implement what they have learned into their life. The goal of the education change would be for a future generation to understand the moral obligation we have as humans to each other, animals, and the Earth as a living system.



