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NB : les cinq articles doivent être lus. Deux seront tirés au sort lors de l'examen oral.

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1- Last year, Airbnb underwent a rough regulatory patch.

from plus.google.com, April 18th, 2017

The short-term rental company became a Federal Trade Commission target last summer after three senators asked for an investigation into how companies like Airbnb affect soaring housing costs. In October, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo of New York signed a bill imposing steep fines on Airbnb hosts who break local housing rules.

The two actions appeared unrelated. But one group quietly took credit for both: the hotel industry.

The plan was laid out in two separate documents that the organization presented to its board in November and January. It was a national campaign approach at the local, state and federal level.

The documents provide an inside look at how seriously the American hotel industry is taking Airbnb as a threat — and the extent to which it is prepared to take action against it.

There is now little mistaking that Airbnb is encroaching on the traditional hotel business. The company, which is based in San Francisco, was founded in 2008 as a way for people to easily list and rent out their spare rooms or their homes online. Since then, about 150 million travelers have stayed in three million Airbnb listings in more than 191 countries, according to the company. Investors have pegged Airbnb's value at around \$30 billion; in contrast, Hilton's market capitalization is \$19 billion and Marriott's \$35 billion.

All of that has hurt hotel operators. Airbnb has brought hotel pricing down in many places during holidays, conventions and other big events when room rates should be at their highest and the industry generates a significant portion of its profits.

The industry's plan against Airbnb shows "the hotel cartel is intent on short-sheeting the middle class so they can keep price-gouging consumers," Nick Papas, a spokesman for Airbnb, wrote in an email. The national hotel association said its push against Airbnb was not about the platform's financial impact on hotels.

"Airbnb is operating a lodging industry, but it is not playing by the same rules," Troy Flanagan, the American Hotel and Lodging Association's vice president for state and local government affairs, said in an interview.

The association has made public studies to show Airbnb is filled with people who are quietly running hotels out of residential buildings and highlighting how Airbnb hosts do not collect hotel taxes and are not subject to the same safety and security regulations as hotel operators.

The trade group began to form alliances with politicians, affordable housing groups and neighborhood associations. The industry also forged relationships with hotel labor unions — which it typically faces off against on many issues — about dealing with Airbnb.

In New York, the association began working with local affiliates to lobby state legislators and the governor's office to adopt steeper fines for New York City hosts that list on Airbnb in violation of local law.

The association also sought help from three Democratic Senators, who sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission in July “raising concerns about the short-term rental industry,” one of the hotel association documents said.

The association also met with legislators and attorneys general in dozens of other states to discuss how Airbnb hosts often do not comply with rules imposed on hotels, like anti-discrimination legislation, local tax collection laws, and safety and fire inspection standards.

The association claimed legal and regulatory victories last year in Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles, as well as in states like Virginia, Tennessee and Utah, where laws were being passed to restrict Airbnb activity.

“We are trying to showcase and bust the myth that Airbnb supports mom and pop and helps them make extra money,” Mr. Flanagan, of the American Hotel and Lodging Association, said. “Homesharing is not what this is about.”

This year, the association plans to fund more anti-Airbnb research and roll out a testimonial campaign of people hurt by home sharing.

The hotel association’s efforts have succeeded in disrupting some Airbnb hosts. Sebastian de Kleer, owner of Globe Homes, a short-term rental company based in Los Angeles, had listed some of his properties on Airbnb for more than a year. But Airbnb canceled his Los Angeles listings from its site in March 2016 after the hotel association argued to local politicians that Airbnb hosts like Mr. de Kleer were raising the cost of housing in the city by renting out properties for short-term use rather than for long-term tenants.

“Because there was so much pushback here in Los Angeles, we got kicked off” Airbnb, Mr. de Kleer said. “That was \$250,000 in reservations. It was not very professional.”

Mr. de Kleer said he had since gotten over his removal from Airbnb in Los Angeles. He still uses the site to list his many properties in Palm Springs, Calif., where short-term rentals are common and are not controversial.

2- Slavery Thrived on Compromise, John Kelly.

By Kashana Cauley, nytimes.com, October 31st, 2017

In an interview with Laura Ingraham on Fox News last night, the White House chief of staff, John Kelly, said “the lack of an ability to compromise led to the Civil War,” a statement that would shock, among others, the founding fathers. After spirited debates at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, they included Article 1, Section 2, Paragraph 3 in our Constitution, which said each slave, for legislative representation and taxation purposes, counted as three-fifths of a person. That provision is known as the Three-Fifths Compromise, a term that clearly states that Northerners and Southerners were, in fact, quite able to reach weird compromises on slavery.

But our country’s tortured attempt to find some kind of balance on whether it was right to enslave African-Americans wasn’t limited to the Three-Fifths Compromise. To argue that the Civil War came about because Americans couldn’t compromise on whether black slaves were truly people or not would require us to ignore at least six other major compromises on slavery, from the first fugitive slave law in 1793, which said that escaped slaves in any state could be caught, tried and returned to their masters, to the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which allowed residents of the two territories to vote on whether to allow slavery. Slaveowners and abolitionists compromised on slavery over and over again, throwing black people’s rights onto the bargaining table like betting chips in a casino.

The Civil War ended slavery, but the legacy of all the prewar compromising on black people’s rights sparked new fights: the fleeting freedoms of Reconstruction Era; the punishing hand of Jim Crow laws; the limited triumphs of the civil rights movement; the quiet indignities of practices like racially restrictive covenants, which allowed homeowners to place terminology in property deeds to restrict ownership by race; and redlining, which reduced the value of homes in black neighborhoods compared with their white counterparts.

In the 1970s, President Richard M. Nixon opened a new front on the compromising with his war on drugs. One of his top advisers admitted to a reporter in 1994 that they had designed the war to target blacks and hippies, and it resulted in a large spike in the prison population, which took away many black people’s right to remain physically free.

And in 1973, the Supreme Court decided that school financing systems that relied on property taxes and therefore favored wealthy districts over poor ones weren’t unconstitutional. This decision, in San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez, allowed districts to refuse to fix the continuing financial effects of housing segregation.

Just last week, a black criminal defendant in Louisiana was denied his constitutional right to an attorney because the Louisiana Supreme Court ruled six to one that he hadn’t really requested a lawyer when he told police during questioning: “I know I didn’t do it. So why don’t you just give me a lawyer, dawg, ’cause this is not what’s up?” The willfully ignorant justices ruled that the defendant had asked for a “lawyer dog,” not a lawyer, so he had not invoked his right to counsel.

I practiced law for more than five years, and I remain unaware as to what a “lawyer dog” is, and sad that the Louisiana Supreme Court decided to make up an animal to deny a criminal defendant’s right to counsel. This case is an example of the now common denial of that right. And since criminal defendants are disproportionately black and poor, in part thanks to the war on drugs, redlining and discrimination, they are more likely to need state- appointed counsel.

But back to the Civil War. What if slavery itself was always an untenable compromise? What if, in a country that claimed to stand for freedom and justice for all, the idea that people should be kept in chains and forcibly separated from their families and bought and sold and killed was never going to be an idea that sat right with enormous sectors of the population?

It's unnatural to ask us to compromise on whether certain types of people are equal to others, and to expect those deemed unequal not to cry out for justice while being punished, tortured and killed. It's unnatural to treat people unequally. It requires the construction and maintenance of an economically inefficient system intended to oppress certain types of people. And in this country, it requires us to throw out all the honorable principles this country was founded on. Someone should tell John Kelly that our history is based on too much compromise concerning slavery and black lives, not too little.

3- The science of SAD : understanding the causes of “winter depression”

by David Cox, theguardian.com, October 30th, 2017

For many of us in the UK, the annual ritual of putting the clocks back for daylight saving time can be accompanied by a distinct feeling of winter blues as autumn well and truly beds in. This might be felt as a lack of energy, reduced enjoyment in activities and a need for more sleep than normal. But for around 6% of the UK population and between 2-8% of people in other higher latitude countries such as Canada, Denmark and Sweden, these symptoms are so severe that these people are unable to work or function normally. They suffer from a particular form of major depression, triggered by changes in the seasons, called seasonal affective disorder or Sad.

In addition to depressive episodes, Sad is characterised by various symptoms including chronic oversleeping and extreme carbohydrate cravings that lead to weight gain. As this is the opposite to major depressive disorder where patients suffer from disrupted sleep and loss of appetite, Sad has sometimes been mistakenly thought of as a “lighter” version of depression, but in reality it is simply a different version of the same illness.

Around 10-15% of the population has what we call sub-syndromal Sad. These individuals struggle through autumn and winter and suffer from many of the same symptoms but they do not have clinical depression. And in the northern hemisphere, as many as one in three of us may suffer from “winter blues” where we feel flat or disinterested in things and regularly fatigued.

One theory for why this condition exists is related to evolution. Around 80% of Sad sufferers are women, particularly those in early adulthood. In older women, the prevalence of Sad goes down and some researchers believe that this pattern is linked to the behavioural cycles of our ancient ancestors.

Ten thousand years ago, during the ice age, this biological tendency to slow down during the wintertime was useful, especially for women of reproductive age because pregnancy is very energy-intensive. But now we have a 24-hour society, we’re expected to be active all the time and it’s a nuisance. However, as to why a small proportion of people experience it so severely that it’s completely disabling, we don’t know.

There are a variety of biological systems thought to be involved, including some of the major neurotransmitter systems in the brain that are associated with motivation, energy and the organisation of our 24-hour circadian rhythms. “We know that dopamine and norepinephrine play critical roles in terms of how we wake up in the morning and how we energise the brain,” says Robert Levitan, a professor at the University of Toronto.

One particular hormone, melatonin, which controls our sleep and wake cycles, is thought to be “phase delayed” in people with severe Sad, meaning it is secreted at the wrong times of the day.

Another system of particular interest relates to serotonin, a neurotransmitter that regulates anxiety, happiness and mood. Increasing evidence from various imaging and rodent studies suggests that the serotonin system may be directly modulated by light. Natural sunlight comes in a variety of wavelengths, and it is particularly rich in light at the blue end of the spectrum. When cells in the retina, at the back of our eye, are hit by this blue light, they transmit a signal to a little hub in the brain that integrates different sensory inputs, controls our circadian rhythms, and is connected to another hub in the brain stem, which is the origin of all serotonin neurons throughout the brain. When there is less light in the wintertime, this network is not activated enough.

Serotonin may also explain why women are so much more vulnerable to Sad than men. There's a close connection between estradiol, the main female sex hormone, and the serotonin transporter.

For those on the Sad spectrum, there are a variety of treatments available, the most popular being bright-light therapy, an artificial means of stimulating the brain's neurotransmitters. "It's very important to use a Sad-specific ultraviolet filtered light otherwise it can be dangerous," Levitan says. "But it can really enable people with Sad to get their day started earlier and avoid oversleeping, which can be very depressogenic. For the most severe patients, though, it may have to be combined with antidepressant therapy."

However, psychiatrists urge patients to steer clear of some of the many alternative therapies on the market. "There's a range of new technologies people are developing, such as an earplug that is supposed to radiate light into your brain, but there's no science to prove that this actually works," says Brenda McMahon, a psychiatry researcher at the University of Copenhagen. "However, there are some good additions to conventional light therapy and antidepressants, such as tryptophan, an amino acid that gets converted to serotonin in our bodies, which can be given as an add-on treatment."

4- The history of social media : social networking evolution !

From historycooperative.org

In 1997 the first social media site that everyone can agree actually was social media was a website called Six Degrees. It was named after the 'six degrees of separation' theory and lasted from 1997 to 2001. Six Degrees allowed users to create a profile and then friend other users. Six Degrees even allowed those who didn't register as users to confirm friendships and connected quite a few people this way.

From Six Degrees, the internet moved into the era of blogging and instant messaging. Although blogging may not seem like social media precisely, the term fits because people were suddenly able to communicate instantly with other readers.

From there, ICQ was born and most members of Generation X remember ICQ and the service that was created shortly thereafter, America Online, with AOL's instant messenger especially prominent in the social media lineup.

By the year 2000, around 100 million people had access to the internet, and it became quite common for people to be engaged socially online. Of course, then it was looked at as an odd hobby at best. Still, more and more people began to utilize chat rooms for making friends, dating and discussing topics that they wanted to talk about.

Although the younger generation of today might not know about it, back in the early 2000s the website MySpace was the popular place to set up a profile and make friends. MySpace was the original social media profile website, leading into and inspiring websites like Facebook.

But even though MySpace has a very small user base today compared to Facebook and Twitter, there are musicians who have used MySpace to promote their music and even be heard by record producers and other artists. Colbie Caillat is an example.

Another website that was one of the beginning social media websites was LinkedIn, still a social media website today, geared specifically towards professionals who want to network with each other. In fact, most of the social media websites we have today are similar to LinkedIn, in that they are specifically about one particular thing, or they have some kind of unique quality that has made them popular.

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg launched what would soon become the social media giant that would set the bar for all other social media services. Facebook is the number one social media website today and it currently boasts over a billion users.

However, back in 2004, Facebook (TheFacebook.com then) was launched just for Harvard students. Zuckerberg saw the potential and released the service to the world at the website facebook.com.

In 2006, the popularity of text messaging or SMS inspired Jack Dorsey, Biz Stone, Noah Glass and Evan Williams to create Twitter, a service that had the unique distinction of allowing users to send "tweets" of 140 characters or less. Today, Twitter has over 500 million users.

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Around 2010: The Rest of the Pack

Before long, there were dozens of other websites providing social media services of some kind. Flickr was one of the earliest and still is one of the most popular photo sharing sites, but others include Photobucket and Instagram, with Instagram gaining popularity today as one of the top social media sites to include on business cards and other media.

One of the things that started happening right in this time period is that social media not only became widely used, it also became widespread in business. Websites were starting to list their social media addresses, businesses would include Facebook and Twitter addresses on their television commercials and many tools were being built to include social media on websites. In addition, social media began to be one of the ways in which internet marketers and website owners would boost the visibility of their websites. The benefits of social media marketing for business began to become quite clear to business owners large and small.

Social Media Today

Social media today consists of thousands of social media platforms, all serving the same – but slightly different - purpose. For example : Instagram caters to the kind of person that communicates through photographs best, and other platforms such as Twitter are perfect for those who communicate in short bursts of information. As mentioned, businesses are using social media to promote their products and services in a brand new way, so each form of social media serves a purpose that the others available may not.

The Future of Social Media

Although it is impossible to know what the future of social media holds, it is clear that it will continue. Humans are social animals and the more ability to communicate with each other on the level that each person likes best, the more prevalent social media will become. With new and exciting technologies just around the corner, social media will be interesting to see in the coming decades.

5- To cure affluenza, we have to be satisfied with the stuff we already own.

Shortened edited extract from “curing affluenza : how to buy less and save the world”, by Richard Dennis (Black Inc), the guardian.com, October 29th, 2017

Affluenza has not just changed the world, it has also changed the way we see the world. Short of money? Borrow some. Caught in the rain? Buy an umbrella. Thirsty? Buy a bottle of water and throw the bottle away.

There is nothing inevitable about this current way of thinking, consuming and producing. On the contrary, the vast majority of humans who have ever lived (and the majority of humans alive today) would find the idea of using our scarce resources to produce things that are designed to be thrown away absolutely mad.

I define consumerism as the love of buying things. For some, that means the thrill of hunting for a bargain. For others, it is the quest for the new or the unique. And for others still it is that moment when the shop assistant hands them their new purchase, beautifully wrapped, with a bow, just as though it's a present.

But the benefits of consumerism are inevitably short-lived as they are linked to the process of the purchase, not the use of the product. So while consumerism is the love of buying things, materialism is the love of the things themselves – and it is an important distinction.

If you really loved your car, the thought of replacing it with a new one would be painful. Similarly, if you really loved your kitchen, your shoes, your belt or your couch, then your materialism would prevent you from rushing out and buying a new one.

But we have been trained to love the thrill of buying new stuff. We love things not for their material function, but for the symbolic act of acquiring and possessing them . For many, if not most, consumers, it is the symbolism of a new handbag or new car, its expensive logo proudly displayed, that delivers happiness, rather than twenty years of using a material object.

Symbols matter, and psychological benefits matter. The fact that people are willing to spend their own time and money to show they fit in or to make sure they stand out should be of little or no concern to others.

But for those who are concerned with the impact of 7.5 billion humans' consumption decisions on the natural environment, the choice of such symbols matters enormously. Whether people choose to signal their wealth by spending money on huge cars or antique paintings is arbitrary, but that does not mean the environmental consequences aren't highly significant. Put simply, if we want to reduce the impact on the natural environment of all of the stuff we buy, then we have to hang on to our stuff for a lot longer. We have to maintain it, repair it when it breaks, and find a new home for it when we don't need it any longer. If we want to cure affluenza, we have to get more satisfaction from the things we already own, more satisfaction from services, more satisfaction from leisure time, and less satisfaction from the process of buying new things.

But if people continue to embrace the benefits of “convenience” and pursue the symbolic appeal of novelty then, as billions more people emulate the consumption patterns of today's middle-class culture, the impact on the natural environment will be devastating.

It is probably physically impossible for the production of stuff to grow exponentially for another hundred years. And if the world is to avoid dangerous climate change, the trajectory of human consumption will need to change radically in the coming decade.

Consider the following. Billions of tonnes of food are thrown away each year because fruit has spots on it, because leafy vegetables show signs of snails, or because producers put misleading “best before” dates on their packaging. Billions of tonnes of oil are transformed into plastic bottles, which, while lasting for thousands of years, are intended to be used once and then thrown away.

In 2015 American consumers spent over US \$ 14bn buying over 40bn litres of bottled water. Bottled water consumption has been growing steadily for the past decade, except when it declined in 2008 and 2009 during the global financial crisis. Despite its decline in those years, no reports of deaths through dehydration due to a shortage of bottled water were reported.

The international bottled water association also states: “Consumers’ interest in beverages that deliver benefit above and beyond simple refreshment also contributes to the quintessential hydrating beverage’s ascension in the beverage rankings.”

Whether consumers around the world choose to double their spending on bottled water in the coming decade or decide to carry their own water will not be determined by the relative cost of bottled water and the cost of a thermos. It will be determined by culture.

And whether buying goods that need to be disposed of each year is seen as a source of status or a source of shame will be determined by culture.

Those who want to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions, reduce deforestation or increase the ability of people to spend quality time with their friends, families and communities will need to spend as much time thinking about the cultural drivers of the problems they seek to solve as developing policy solutions to them. And the best way to prevent human consumption patterns from doing enormous environmental harm is to cure our culture of the disease of affluenza.