



Human nature and the marketing concept

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Abstract. *The marketing and sales orientations that are basic to our understanding of marketing history and also underlie distinctions about different company philosophies are considered in the light of the works of Hobbes and Rousseau. These philosophical treatises propose contrasting views of the essential nature of mankind that are similar to the implicit assumptions about buyer behaviour that underlie marketing and sales orientations. By extension, we propose that a case exists for the adoption of the marketing concept being considered as the equivalent to the Enlightenment for business practices. Renewed emphasis on the study of the mind in management theory adds weight to the need to make our assumptions about the nature of mankind explicit when we develop concepts and theories in marketing.* **Key Words** ● enlightenment ● human nature ● marketing concept ● marketing history

Introduction

Many of the typologies and classification systems developed by marketing theorists over the last 100 years have made implicit assumptions about the nature of human behaviour. Examples include the kind of product groupings developed by Copeland (1925) and others, which divided market offerings into convenience, shopping or speciality goods. Behind each of these groups lay unspoken statements about the degree of motivation arousal in consumer behaviour and the self-serving nature of humans in meeting their own needs as individuals. The fundamental state of nature, and the basic assumptions that govern our behaviour as human beings, have been argued in many disciplines over the centuries, but have especially formed a major part of the debate in philosophical treatises.

Obviously a full account of the debate on the scope of human nature is well beyond the scope of any single journal article in marketing so in this article we aim to briefly review some of the most important relevant authors who have made contributions to the debate on human nature relevant to our discipline. From the array of different approaches to considering human nature we select one of the



principle contrasts in the history of philosophy and then demonstrate how the fundamental dichotomy in this debate actually lies behind the assumptions made about the implementation of the marketing concept. In particular it can be demonstrated how sales and marketing orientations in particular make assumptions that reflect the contrasting views of human nature contained in the works of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). Although other views can be found in philosophical writings, Hobbes and Rousseau provide useful and contrasting views that are often considered as opposites (Pinker, 2002). In this discussion we are aiming to provide some further philosophical ideas that may underpin and support one of the most important and widely acknowledged theoretical foundations in marketing. The importance of developing this philosophical debate is demonstrated by the subsequent conclusions we are able to draw relating to the consequent oversimplification of a number of marketing ideas in the standard literature. In some respects we see this article as providing a complement to Hirschman and Holbrook's (1992) review of philosophical approaches and their recognition and influence on consumer research. While Hirschman and Holbrook concentrate on philosophical changes *since* the Enlightenment, our main argument focuses on changes in perspective *during* the Enlightenment. Furthermore, while they provide a review that assists in the interpretation and application of consumer research, we focus on some of the philosophical writings dealing with aspects of human nature relevant to some core ideas in marketing management. In addressing this issue we are helping to meet a gap that has been recently re-emphasized in management theory. For example, a recent review in the *Economist* (15 April 2004) of Gardner's new book, *Changing Minds*, was entitled 'Might the proper study of management be man?' The review stressed how understanding the nature of mankind is fundamental to explaining business behaviours and performance where choice, change and morals are an important part of the system.

Hobbes and Rousseau

Our review of the nature of mankind begins with Hobbes and Rousseau as opposed to the early Greek philosophers. Hobbes and Rousseau were both writing at a time when modern political and economic systems were being developed. Consequently, they provide the most appropriate starting point for analysis. Despite the fact that there are some similarities between the writings of Hobbes and Rousseau regarding a collective will or social contract, they are still held as providing contrasts in the essential elements of human nature. Writing 150 years before Rousseau, Hobbes was the son of a clergyman who was fortunate enough to have an education provided by a well-to-do uncle. He has been described as having a sheltered and leisured upbringing and was sent to Magdalen, Oxford before he was 15 years old. Hobbes was able to travel continental Europe while instructing the sons of the English aristocracy as a private tutor. With this relatively easy and privileged background it is perhaps surprising that it was Hobbes



that produced a view of man as totally self-serving in nature. The self-serving nature of human interest has parallels with Machiavelli who produced a similar argument in *The Prince* (1961). This was particularly shocking to 16th-century Italy since Machiavelli was seen to promote political ambition and ends as justifying means in contrast to centuries of prevailing thought regarding the purpose of man as seeking to acquire knowledge of God (Gutfreund, 2000). While Machiavelli has been considered at some length in relation to marketing and management issues (Harris et al., 2000), the writings of Thomas Hobbes have drawn less attention, although they may be seen to offer further insights into other issues relating to both demand and supply side behaviours in marketing (see below).

In contrast to Hobbes, Rousseau's mother died at his birth and after being abandoned by his father, he was apprenticed to a coppersmith. After running away he was taken into care by Catholic monks and then spent most of his teenage years in household service. He was fortunate enough to achieve a position where he was able to educate himself in mathematics, Latin and music. He was able to achieve recognition in his writings and music by 1750. With a much less privileged upbringing than Hobbes, it was Rousseau who produced a portrayal of man in which the essential elements are noble, dignified and good.

In Hobbes most famous work, *Leviathan* (1957[1651]), he presents the following view of mankind:

Hereby it is manifest, that during the time men live without a common power to keep them in awe, they are in that condition that is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man . . . (1957[1651]: 88)

In writing this, Hobbes is summarizing the view that without a state organism to maintain control and order the self-serving nature of mankind will degenerate into a state of competitive anarchy:

. . . There is no culture of the earth, no navigation, nor use of commodities that may be imported by sea . . . no society, and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (1957[1651]: 89)

Hobbes' view emphasizes a negative view of human nature where compliance with social systems is required to avoid self-destruction. All human actions are deemed to be motivated by self-interest. Thus a donation to charity would never be purely altruistic and would ultimately be completed for some other purpose – for example a display of social power or the alleviation of a sense of guilt or shame. Mankind is naturally lazy and only does enough to preserve and better its own purposes rather than society as a whole. It is a view that reflects coercion to avoid risk and loss, rather than reward to maximize gain.

At a societal level Hobbes argues that this is the same function that legitimizes government. People surrender the right to govern themselves in return for the collective protection of the multitude and continue to cooperate with the system as long as it is in their own self-interest to do so. Basically, there is no psychological commitment that might be expressed as some form of loyalty but rather a social contract in which benefits are traded. In extending this theme Hobbes goes



on to define the 'rights' of a 'sovereign', which was the term he used to describe the ruler even when he recognized democracy as one of the options. The 'rights' of the ruler actually define a mixture of expectations relating to the roles of the governed and governor, which define the basis for the legitimate power that they exercise. Hobbes' view of mankind is interesting from a perspective of modern marketing theory for several reasons:

1. It seems to provide the basis for the exchange theory that underpins our analysis of consumer and business transactions. In Hobbes' framework all transactions and relationships are 'negotiated' on the basis of the utility that they contribute to the individual.
2. It provides perhaps the earliest philosophical framework regarding the essence of cooperation and competition. Hobbes provides an explanation why cooperative behaviour and alliances may be beneficial in some situations and not others. Some of these perhaps become most explicit in aspects of game theory where the outcomes for different cooperative and competitive behaviours are made explicit. In the usual forms of applying game theory there is always an implicit assumption that the individual decision maker will be searching to maximize benefits (minimize losses) for their own situation – vis the self-serving approach that is inherent in Thomas Hobbes' portrayal of how humans behave. More recent developments in psychology and ethical theory have developed other conceptual frameworks and measures using game theory approaches that explain how different individuals may place issues like equity of distribution or maximizing total utility above their own individual outcomes (De Dreu and Van Lange, 1995; Olekalns and Smith, 1999)
3. The framework for government and the 'rights' of the sovereign may be useful to understand expectations and the exercise of power in other institutional frameworks such as marketing channels. Hobbes provides guidelines regarding the basis for the exercise of legitimate power in respect of government. Essentially, Hobbes provides an early application of role theory in defining the rights and expectations of both the sovereign and the people and places a strong emphasis on moral obligations to fulfil a contract. As the name 'Leviathan' indicates, government is not a benevolent institution. In its own behaviour, it mirrors the essential self-serving nature of mankind, just as a retailer, who might be a channel leader, will ultimately drive the best bargain for themselves while fulfilling obligations to protect other channel members with whom they ultimately share some interdependency.
4. Most importantly to this article, Hobbes presents a view of the motivations of mankind that may be both contrasted with other philosophers and linked to more contemporary views of market place behaviour inherent in different orientations that might be held by the firm.

As indicated above, a contrasting view of human nature, which has carried a great weight of influence since the 18th century, is Rousseau's characterization. In *Emile* (1979[1762]), he presents the ideal citizen who is naturally inclined to God and goodness. Rousseau develops a theme in which the natural condition is empha-



sized. This is the essence of the ‘noble savage’ who without the artificiality and corruption of society is essentially pure and devoid of evil. Naturally inclined to cooperation, Rousseau argued that mankind had been subjugated by errors in philosophy and a culture that had corrupted morals. While Rousseau accepted that inequality would always exist, he was critical of institutions whose sole concern was their own private property and well-being. Unlike Hobbes, he refused to accept that military conquest and slavery provided any legitimate basis for rule over another and determined that society must be based on a social contract. In this Rousseau is seen to be reacting to the corruption of the social institutions of his time and his version of a social contract is one where all men are born free and equal and in their contract with the State, they surrender none of their natural rights as described in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*. Rousseau’s *Of the Social Contract* (1994[1762]) not only became the textbook for the French Revolution but the same principles are also clearly evident in other formal political declarations (such as the constitution of the United States) and provide the essential framework for the modern democratic states that have evolved in the last 200 years. In contrast to Hobbes, Rousseau’s natural state of humankind is free, independent, and while self-directed, it is not the brutal, competitive and self-interested portrait that was described earlier.

Rousseau’s view of humankind has clearly been inspirational in many historical and sociological contexts. Basic notions of freedom and equality have guided access to universal education and suffrage while in a marketing context the same notions underpin much market regulation in western society. Kennedy’s statement of the Bill of Consumer Rights in the United States summarized a set of principles that were subsequently extended and codified by the United Nations in the 1980s (Executive Office of the President, 1963; Fischer, 1999). The list of consumer rights define objectives that, if met, will allow consumers to behave in an unconstrained, independent way where they voluntarily participate in the market place as they wish. In the two centuries since Rousseau, there have obviously been many significant contributions to the debate on human nature, though we believe that the essential contrast between Hobbes and Rousseau remains uncontested. Pinker (2002) argues that ‘political correctness’ during the 20th century has meant that it has been fashionable to attribute all variations in human behaviour to ‘nurture’ and that it has not been appropriate to consider essential arguments about ‘nature’. Pinker describes this as the doctrine of the ‘blank slate’ which presumes a neutral and non-dispositional nature for humankind. The debate about human nature as it relates to the portrayals provided by Hobbes and Rousseau is being revived as geneticists provide increasing evidence that many aspects of human behaviour are at least influenced by our genetic make-up from nature (see, for example, Sykes, 2003). In briefly reviewing later writings dealing with human nature (Emerson, Freud, Sartre, and Foucault), it will be noted that they primarily deal with mankind and how nature is related to, or determined by, its relationship with the environment. This is in contrast to presumptions and discussion about intrinsic motivations, morality and ideas on conflict and cooperation. Where their writings do relate to the Hobbes/Rousseau contrast we



have tried to make this clear but it is also important to recognize that both Hobbes and Rousseau wrote in a pre-Darwinian period. Obviously, Darwin changed many views on mankind by forcing people to reconsider: man as an animal; the mechanics of the mind; and consequently how mankind adjusted to and reflected the social environment in which they lived.

Views on human nature in the 19th and 20th centuries

Following Rousseau, in both a philosophical and chronological sense, one of the great and influential American authors was Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson was born in 1803, son of the pastor of Boston's First Church and entered Divinity School at Harvard in 1825. His first book, *Nature*, was published in 1836 and established the non-conformist position he maintained throughout his writings. Self-reliance and independence are consistent themes that run through Emerson's writings and in this respect he is credited with great influence on other American authors such as William James, Henry Thoreau and Walt Whitman (Porte and Morris, 1999). As regards human nature, one potential difference between Rousseau and Emerson is that Rousseau's ideal is linked to what man can be if oppressive social systems are removed. While, for Emerson, achieving self-reliance and independence are portrayed as goals for individual aspiration irrespective of the dominating social institutions.

The degree of independence that humans hold in determining their own behaviours and status is perhaps the key factor that discriminates between other writers who have influenced thinking on human nature in the last two centuries. The emergence of science as a dominant force, and the recognition through Darwin that scientific statements could be equally applied to mankind is, for example, central to the writings of Sigmund Freud (Neu, 1992). While many of Freud's ideas reflect the approaches of ancient Greeks regarding the basic tripartite structure of the mind and classification of instincts, this is integrated into an essentially deterministic model that argues that all behaviour is explicable if the unconscious processes are examined appropriately. Freud argues that the human mind is a functional system in which there are internalized representations of significant items (usually people and often parents) and that these representations guide motives, feeling and actions of individuals. It is difficult to assess the degree of influence of Freudian thinking in marketing. Psychoanalysis as a method has never been common in marketing investigations but there is some sense that Freud's conceptualization of drives, especially emphasizing sexual urges, has been very influential in determining practice in advertising. The most explicit applications of Freud's thinking are perhaps to be found in the writings of Dichter in describing consumer motives. For example, Dichter (1967) describes travel motivations as dealing with major conflicts in the human mind '... a desire for sameness, the return to the womb, if you wish; conflicting with the motivation to reach out and discover the world. In a sublimated fashion, a trip is therefore a form of birth or rebirth'. This is an understanding that draws directly on a



Freudian philosophy of the mind but it cannot be presented as a dominant view in the research literature on consumer behaviour.

One general feature of Freud's thinking that has been a consistent part of marketing approaches is the basic idea of determinism. The overwhelming volume of work in consumer research since the 1950s has been grounded in cognitive aspects of psychology (Lawson, 1999; Wells, 1993) and assumes that the behaviour of consumers is attributable to mental constructs such as attitudes and traits.

At the macro level a similar parallel may be drawn with the popularity of functionalism in social sciences. Functionalism emphasizes that human actions are performed for a purpose and therefore there are reasons behind actions. In marketing this is best embodied in the writings of Alderson (Sheth et al., 1988). Purposeful actions can be described within organized behavioural systems and a key goal of marketing theory is to seek ways in which the performance of these systems may be improved (Alderson, 1954, 1957). A major change in thinking in marketing since the 1960s is a move away from functionalist thinking to an acceptance that some behaviours may not have ascribed purposes (see, for example, Holbrook's jazz analogy, 1995), or, indeed, to following a behaviourist approach (Foxall, 1990), that the determinants are largely taken from the environment and so independence of thought and self-determination become far less important than Rousseau, Emerson or his disciples, such as Thoreau, would have credited.

Two major 20th-century writers who have influenced our thinking on human nature are Sartre (1905–1980) and Foucault (1926–1984). Sartre's existentialism provides a philosophy of existence that emphasizes the groundlessness and potentially radical nature of the human condition which may be seen to provide some foundation for apparent irrational acts in behaviour, and a reluctance of at least some consumers to conform to unified patterns of behaviour that we attempt to categorize in methods such as lifestyles research. Two aspects of Sartre's writings seem particularly pertinent to an understanding of human nature that is relevant to issues covered in marketing research and theory. In the first instance, Sartre provides an alternative view to the ego as portrayed by Freud. For Sartre, consciousness is intentional. Thus the ego is created by consciousness and does not have a subliminal existence as a repository for different drives. This has many important consequences in Sartrean philosophy, but one that is particularly relevant to marketing and consumer research and theory is the idea that since consciousness produces the ego, there is no pre-existing ego to explain different forms of behaviour. Consequently, all conscious acts are spontaneous and are transparent to the self; in other words the individual is responsible for them and they are not the product of hidden motives.

A second important feature of Sartre's writings which follows from the spontaneous nature of consciousness is the denial of self-identity. In *Being and Nothingness* (1958), Sartre argues that the transitory nature of consciousness, and the fact that it is always defined in relation to other objects, means that consistent self-identity is impossible. In this respect, Sartre's ideas are clearly at odds with



many of the traditional assumptions marketers make about self identity. For example, we like to believe that brand choice may be used in a consistent way to support self-identity. Nevertheless, his ideas do strike a chord with assumptions about fragmentation of lives and juxtaposition of opposites that are identified with consumption in postmodern society.

Overall, Sartre presents us with something of a paradox when comparing his work to Hobbes or Rousseau. For, while humans are clearly responsible for all actions and choices because they are conscious events, and this ultimately allows individuals unlimited freedom of choice, Sartre also presents a gloomy view of human existence characterized by failed relationships and the inability of humans to make constructive choices. In one of Sartre's later works, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1982), he does modify his views regarding freedom and the requirement to live within politically and socially defined and accepted boundaries. However, the general sense of the Sartrian human is one more akin to Hobbes because there is an inherent selfishness arising from an interpretation of human nature which emphasizes ultimate freedom of choice for individuals and the consequent lack of care for others.

In contrast to Sartre, Foucault made no attempt to develop a single theme in his writings or employ a consistent methodology (Gutting, 1994). Perhaps what most distinguishes Foucault from previous writers is the way in which mankind is displaced from the central position of analysis. Like Hobbes and Rousseau, Foucault is concerned to provide a contemporary analysis of European culture and like the Enlightenment authors he focuses on structures that determine and reflect the power relationships in society. Foucault has made a huge impact on thinking in many disciplines that have adopted poststructuralist views of their subjects because he proposes that many issues previously regarded as naturally determined objective phenomena are socially constructed ideas. There has been particular emphasis on his ideas regarding the body and sexuality in this regard (Hoy, 1986) but this is also Foucault's view of human nature. It is most clearly revealed in Foucault's analysis of power and knowledge: 'The exercise of power creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power' (Foucault, 1980: 51). Thus, the individual is not seen as a pre-existing element that power influences, but instead human nature is *created* by the exercise of power: 'The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is . . . one its prime effects' (Foucault, 1980: 98). In the exercise of power, Foucault places most emphasis on the norms established in disciplines and professions such as criminology, medicine, psychology and psychiatry. This represents a switch from Hobbes and Rousseau who emphasized government and nobility and it is interesting to consider that while they may not directly link their arguments to Foucault, other authors emphasize marketing institutions as the most important prevailing source of normative power in society. For example, McCracken stresses advertising and fashion systems as the central components through which society invests meaning in products and thence to individuals (McCracken, 1988). The prevalence of power exercised by business through branding and marketing activity is also central to the critical analyses offered by writers such as Klein (2001).



Theories x and y

Returning to the contrast established earlier between Hobbes and Rousseau, one management theorist who did consider an equivalent dichotomy describing human behaviour was McGregor (1960). McGregor is famous for proposing his Theory X and Theory Y dichotomy describing employee behaviours. McGregor's descriptions of Theory X and Theory Y bear a striking resemblance to the contrasts described above from Hobbes and Rousseau. Regarding Theory X, McGregor (1960) states that people are inherently lazy, and must therefore be motivated by outside incentives and that their natural goals run counter to those of the organisation, hence they must be controlled by external forces to ensure that they work towards organisational goals. This is a view remarkably similar to Hobbes' view of the self-serving and oppositional nature of human behaviour that demands the Leviathan in order to maintain control and prevent anarchy. In contrast, Theory Y suggests that people are self-motivated and self-controlled and that there is no inherent conflict between the goals of the employee and the organization. This starting point is clearly much closer to Rousseau's view, which allows for self-direction but from a basically non-confrontational position.

Lawson (1986) pointed out the similarities between McGregor's dichotomy describing employee behaviour and the assumptions regarding consumer behaviour that are inherent in the marketing as opposed to the sales concept. Quoting the 5th edition of Kotler's authoritative marketing text:

The selling concept holds that consumers, if left alone, will ordinarily not buy enough of the organisation's products. The organisation must therefore undertake aggressive selling and promotion effort. The concept assumes that consumers typically show buying inertia or resistance and have to be coaxed into buying more. (1984: 19)

This description is clearly close to McGregor's view of Theory X motivation and by extension may take us back to the uncompliant nature of man that is inherent in Hobbes' original description of human nature. In contrast, the marketing concept carries a different set of assumptions regarding consumer behaviour in the marketplace. Under the marketing concept, consumers seek to be mature in their purchasing behaviour and are capable of being so. They are self-motivated and clearly there is no inherent conflict between the objectives of the firm and the market since we understand effective application of the marketing concept *will* result in both satisfied customers and satisfied organizations that will be able to maximize profit over the long run. This view of consumer behaviour is also inherent in the philosophies that guide consumer policy legislation and regulatory frameworks in many parts of the world. For example, Fischer (1999) and Lawson and Larsen (1999) both describe how Australia and New Zealand, who have modelled legislation on the UK and others, aim to provide a basic consumer policy framework where consumers have correct marketplace information and appropriate choices so that they may then take responsibility in a mature way for their own actions as buyers and consumers. As noted earlier when discussing the Bill of Consumer Rights, this is clearly a view of human nature and behaviour that



is much closer to Rousseau where the essential being is responsible and capable of participating in a voluntary social contract and only corrupted by the social system in which they are forced to survive. Thus, if we provide the appropriate societal framework devoid of deceptive and misleading information, and with sufficient choice to be able to discriminate, the consumer will be able to revert to marketing's equivalent of the 'noble savage'. It should be acknowledged that this framework provides an intuitively more appealing approach if we believe in the efficacy of consumer choice as a means both to increase market performance and overall prosperity within society. Rousseau has a far more optimistic view of human nature than Hobbes and the same may be said in relation to the marketing as opposed to the sales concept. In historical terms the difference between Hobbes and Rousseau is characterized as the Period of Enlightenment. This can be summarized as an era of cultural and intellectual history in Europe normally dated between 1680 and 1780. Enlightenment was characterized by a belief in self-progress achieved by self-reliant use of reason. It rejects traditionalism, obscurantism and authoritarianism. The last is particularly reminiscent of assumptions about consumer behaviour under the sales concept, which highlights the need to cajole and control behaviour through the use of external forces.

A key difference between McGregor's' dichotomy of employee behaviour and the contrasting assumptions about consumer behaviour that lie behind the marketing and sales concepts is that McGregor assumes that both may exist within any one time in any organization. On the other hand, the marketing literature has tended to assume that the orientations are almost mutually exclusive and that an organization acts with one or the other. For example, Kotler et al. (2001: 19) present the normal textbook contrast between the two concepts using the illustration shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Contrasts between the sales and marketing concepts

	Starting point	Focus	Means	Ends
Selling concept	Factory	Existing products	Selling and promoting	Profits through sales volume
Marketing concept	Market	Customer needs	Integrated marketing	Profits through customer satisfaction

If McGregor was correct about employees, might it be that companies need both marketing and sales approaches, and not either/or according to the immediate macro-economic conditions and relativities of demand and supply?



The sales and marketing concepts

In truth it seems that the folklore has developed a long way from Robert Keith's seminal paper on this topic published in the same year as McGregor introduced us to Theory X and Theory Y (Keith, 1960). Keith's paper provides a short history of the Pillsbury company, documenting how the emphasis in their business practice has changed over time. The paper shows how they reassessed their view of *their business* including their products and their relationships to both distributors and consumers. Implicit in this is the idea that Pillsbury, over time, changed their view of the way both distributors and final customers behaved. The history of a single American company that Keith describes as moving from production to sales and then market orientation and control, has been reproduced in major textbooks as a generalized history of the evolution of marketing (e.g. Quester et al., 2004; Stanton et al., 1991; Zikmund and D'Amico 1989). This has even been received into marketing literature in other countries which have quite different economic histories from the United States (e.g. Stanton et al., 1992). While there may be some truth in a generalizable statement that, for example, a sales orientation dominated in the 1930s when oversupply in the Great Depression forced more aggressive selling and promotion, the overall pattern could only make some sense if we also assume that consumers behaved fundamentally differently during this period from those preceding or succeeding. In 1960 Keith wrote his influential words, 'No longer is the company at the center of the business universe. Today the customer is at the center' (1960: 35).

One must ask if this sentiment is in effect significantly different from Charles Parlin's views expressed in 1916:

We may talk as long as we please about manufacturers and wholesalers and retailers. But in the last analysis, the consumer is king. The whim of the consumer makes and unmakes the manufacturers, the jobbers, and the retailers. Whoever wins the confidence of the consumer wins the day; and whoever loses it, is lost. (cited in Robinson et al., 1976: vi)

In any event, some people had the same view of customer behaviour in 1916 that Keith and Pillsbury came around to almost 50 years later. If the ontologies on which these views of consumer behaviour were established, we would not mislead ourselves with oversimplified descriptions of the market system and may potentially develop better theory over time.

Conclusions

This article proposes three essential conclusions from the preceding discussion. The first of these is that all assumptions relating to theories in marketing must be made explicit. For over 50 years we have accepted the marketing concept as a fundamental tenet of marketing both as an academic subject for study and research and as a useful framework for business. We are not challenging this *per se* but suggesting that in the true spirit of the concept, where the focus is supposed



to be on the market, that we actually contemplate the assumptions being made about human behaviour in the marketplace. Keith's paper, which provided the basic framework for production, sales and marketing concepts, is based on a managerial appraisal of company actions and attitudes. The acceptance of these viewpoints is bound to be conditioned by the assumptions one is prepared to accept about the way consumers behave. For example, it has been pointed out in literature on consumerism how activists and marketers have fundamentally different views of the marketplace (Aaker and Day, 1978) and in part these must be explained by different assessments of human nature including the degree of self interest that lies behind all our actions.

Following from the previous conclusion it is also evident that in seeking to develop theory we must consistently remind ourselves of the dangers of oversimplifying our ideas. Sheth et al. (1988) demonstrate how the early days of marketing as a subject for study were characterized by a 'cookbook' mentality as researchers and scholars strove to describe simple taxonomies that could be used to develop strategies (or recipes) for different classes of products. In an applied discipline it is both natural and commendable that we should seek to develop normative models that can be both easily communicated and seen as useful to guiding marketing managers in their decision-making. Unfortunately, this can result in the generation and rapid adoption of very simple conceptual frameworks that may not serve us well over a long period. We would contend that one example of this is the definition of *alternative* product, production, selling and marketing concepts. Our main objection is that within our 'normal marketing education models' they are naively presented as exclusive states, and states that have evolved over time. The evolution of business practice towards embracing the marketing concept is one that fits very comfortably with researchers and others who practise marketing and have a basic understanding that progress in science reflects a movement towards truth and better understanding over time. In Keith's paper on the evolution of Pillsbury (1960), he even makes an analogy to the Copernican revolution in science. However, even the brief review of the assumptions in human behaviour inherent in the sales and marketing concepts suggests this evolutionary model is far too simple. No one would presume that Hobbes produced a totally accurate analysis of 17th-century man as a self-serving brute, and that within 100 years Rousseau was absolutely correct in describing the 'noble savage' as an altered and contrasting view of man. Thus, it cannot be correct to simply presume that in the 1930s all consumers behaved in the self-serving Hobbesian way assumed in the sales concept, but that by 1950 they changed the way they were prepared to respond to the marketplace.

The final conclusion to be drawn from this article is to be conscious of history and refer to our roots in an appropriate manner. For example, there is nothing unusual in the way Kotler et al. (2001) entitle discussion of the product and other concepts as 'Marketing Management Philosophies' yet there are no references to philosophy. The distinctions inherent between the most discussed of these concepts (sales and marketing) are not new at a fundamental level. They have been rooted in history for at least 400 years, as far back as Machiavelli, and, in our view,



the contrasting writings of Hobbes and Rousseau best present these distinctions. Such linkage is important for the development of our discipline. Most people who practise, research and study marketing are aware the popular misunderstandings concerning much marketing activity (Barksdale and Clopton, 1991) and the consequent low esteem that some place on the profession. While part of the answer is to develop good theory unique to marketing, this must still be placed in context that gives it legitimacy with a general audience.

There are good examples of how this has been attempted and done. Hunt's resource based theory is distinctly marketing but the pedigree of the ideas is legitimized in the context of earlier approaches to economics, especially the Austrian School (Hunt, 2002). Another influential marketing writer, Wroe Alderson, also drew heavily on Austrian approaches to economics for many of his ideas but he also used general systems theory to develop arguably the most comprehensive and uniquely distinctive theory of marketing that has ever been attempted (Barksdale, 1980; Wooliscroft, 2003). While consumer behaviour researchers have drawn heavily on concepts from parent disciplines of anthropology, psychology and sociology, arguably much of this has involved the piecemeal borrowing of individual constructs such as attitude, mood or personality. A comparable attempt to Hunt or Alderson in consumer behaviour might be Foxall's (1990) consumer theory which recalls the history of behaviorism (and, as such, is distinctly Hobbesian in its view of mankind). All these examples remind us that marketing is a subset of human economic and social behaviour. In this article we propose that even a simple dichotomy in marketing that is based on different assumptions concerning human nature can be improved if the argument is placed in the appropriate historical context. In this case we can use the contrasting writings of Hobbes and Rousseau to reflect on and understand the different behavioural assumptions on which the sales and marketing concepts are based. In a few generations' time, business historians may indeed reflect that the philosophical shift from the sales to the marketing concepts actually represents a new Enlightenment in business practice, just as the switch from Hobbes to Rousseau was shown to reflect a movement towards self-reliance and a belief in self-progress. We would argue that such a comparison serves to emphasize the importance of a market orientation in relation to the alternatives available for organizations and their managers.

While we acknowledge that we have focused on the contrasts in human nature that lie behind the sales and marketing concepts and not developed discussion regarding product and production orientations, we believe that we have considered the two orientations at the opposite ends of the behavioural spectrum. The assumptions regarding the interests of consumers are not so well considered under the other concepts except that they seem to emphasize different responses to issues relating to quality and price. Intuitively, we believe these are closer to the view of consumer behaviour that is inherent in the marketing concept. Indeed, one might speculate that the marketing, product and production concepts all have their roots firmly set in industrial economics and strategy literature since they have striking similarities with differentiation, focus and cost leadership as the



three basic competitive platforms upon which companies do business. The real contrasts lie between sales and marketing orientations rather than the other approaches described in Keith's paper, and we may understand the difference between these two more effectively in terms of the Enlightenment.

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