

Capitalism's Future and the New Cult(ure) of Marketing

I. DAEDALUS AND ICARUS: THE HERETICS DEBATE OF 1923

In 1923 the Heretics Club of Cambridge University invited J. B. S. Haldane and Bertrand Russell to share their views about “science and the future.” A brilliant biologist, Haldane believed that biotechnology would likely prove the most fertile area for scientific advance. Haldane’s description of the coming revolution in biotechnology remains astoundingly perceptive, as portentous as anything in the science fiction fantasies of H. G. Wells. Despite his own encyclopedic knowledge, Russell was deferential toward this area of biology and genetics; Haldane, he affirmed, has “admirably treated” this subject.

But with respect to his other predictions, Haldane was less than clairvoyant. An ardent Marxist as well as a geneticist, Haldane believed that the advanced industrial nations of the west would soon give up dirty, expensive, wasteful fossil fuel and adopt cleaner, cheaper and more efficient wind, wave and solar technologies as sources of renewable energy. Haldane expected this to occur by the second half of the 20th century. This was a reasonable scientific expectation in 1923, as it remains today. Was Haldane too much the idealist or did he simply expect humans to make rational choices? To read Haldane’s glowing prophecy about the impending glories of wind, wave and solar energy is to feel a profound loss, a clear measure of the extent to which entrenched fossil fuel interests have obstructed and distorted our once likely future. On the whole, the future looks rosy in Haldane’s “*Daedalus: Or, Science and the Future.*”

Not so for the inimitable philosopher of science, Lord Russell. If Haldane failed to anticipate the limits of human rationality, Russell—imprisoned for conscientious objection during World War One—knew better. In “*Icarus: Or, The Future of Science*”, Russell began by astutely recapping recent political and institutional history. The world of nations, he argued, is marked by an “increase of organisation” (this is “of the essence of industrialism”) and specifically “organisation in marketing...Already advertisers in America employ eminent psychologists to instruct them in the art of producing irrational belief.” But his depiction of the economic system of the early 20th century was prophetic:

Experience has shown, however, that the existing economic system is incompatible with all forms of free competition except between States by means of armaments. I should wish, for my part, to preserve free competition between ideas, though not between individuals and groups, but this is only possible by means of what an old-fashioned liberal would regard as interferences with personal liberty....

To our ears, numbed by decades of ideological jargon, phrases like “free competition”, “interferences with personal liberty” and “old-fashioned liberal” resonate weirdly. Just in case anyone missed it, Russell drives his point home with an explicit warning: “So long as the sources of economic power remain in private hands, there will be no liberty except for the few who control those sources.”

Large corporations, motivated primarily by a ruthless desire to squelch competitors (Russell likened them to “spectators at a football-match”) and destined to eclipse the power of national bureaucracies, will control all resources and thereby determine how the wonders of scientific invention and technology shall be disposed. Since, by economies of scale, such corporate entities can only profit by continual growth, the entire globe will ultimately fall under the control of a single corporate monolith. Curiously, Russell sees this organization of the world into a single “producing and consuming unit” the only hope of avoiding global extinction; but that is largely because he thinks businessmen to be on the whole more rational than leaders of nations—a view that is open to dispute.

“Rival economic groups will presumably remain associated with rival nations, and will foster nationalism in order to recruit their football teams.” Things will be hard for the people of the world for a time, Russell speculates; but there will be stability and order and eventually life will improve...

Prescient, indeed! While Russell was not prophesying a gospel of modern corporate entrepreneurialism*, he did predict an unfolding institutional imperative that has indeed come to pass. Through their exchange of views, Haldane and Russell foreshadowed salient features of the corporate hegemony that would come to dominate the global economy by the Third Millennium.

2. THE CULT OF MARKETING (“NO JOB IS TOO BIG, NO FEE IS TOO BIG!”)

By the term “cult of marketing” I refer to America’s role as the greatest marketing civilization in human history, and to its obsession with economics and marketing, which is everywhere demonstrable. I use the term cult metaphorically throughout this essay, and specifically am not suggesting that modern capitalism constitutes a religious cult like Scientology or the Moonies. But, as Paul Ricoeur has pointed out in *The Rule of Metaphor* (University of Toronto Press 1978), metaphor referentially links discourse with the world: a metaphor possesses whatever reality and significance its referential object has. My purpose in writing this essay is to inspire an informed public discourse about two looming problems: the need to reassess our concept of *productivity* in the face of impending globalization and the possibility of putting world economy on a foundation that supercedes capitalism’s megalomaniac goal of exclusive profit-maximizing.

Broaching these subjects may seem to threaten various groups, interests and individuals. That is unfortunate and inescapable. But we will not dispose of the need to address these issues by devolving into squabbling factions. There is a way out of the social, cultural and political milieu of the last century. Whoever holds fast to a rigid moribund version of capitalism will end by watching the flotsam of watchwords, jargon and lives churning in a sea of economic catastrophe, while the opportunity for substantive transformation and renewal slips beneath the waves.

If capitalism is to take the next logical step in its development, it may have to trade some of its cherished notions about money and monetarism, finance, accounting, productivity and profits for a standard of universal credit that is superior to money and capital [what economists call M1, M2 and M3] in its flexibility and integrity and built on a foundation that is directly connected to existing

* I deliberately use the term, entrepreneurialism, both to suggest an ideological connection with a cult of marketing and to distinguish it from proselytizing entrepreneurship and enterprises like the Kaufmann Foundation in Kansas City, whose legitimate activities I in no way wish to disparage. Although the respective referential objects of both terms no doubt overlap, the distinction is valid. The particular mission and commitment to entrepreneurship of organizations like Kaufmann and other business incubators does not affect my argument, which holds that capitalism in its entirety as presently constituted is incapable of meeting global demands.

exigencies of human dignity and aspiration. Present day demands of marketing economy and planetary ecology will require a policy and strategy for intervention that is at once coherent, comprehensive and systematic. Only such a framework will prevent balkanized nation-states from pursuing fragmentary agreements and piecemeal negotiations that ultimately only serve to further confusion, collision and diplomatic suicide. If human rights and democracy are worthwhile goals for the entire world, then only a policy that effectively fosters them is worth pursuing by every nation. We need to ask ourselves: what is it that is truly valuable about work, labor, productivity and ingenuity? What in these cherished concepts is worth retaining? We need to separate the wheat from the chaff and the syntax from the semantics of capitalism as it has been practiced from the time of Adam Smith and Marx to Galbraith and Rawls. In order to achieve a realistic vantage point from which we might make wise choices, we shall have to accurately assess *where we are* at our present historic juncture.

Four chief defects mar capitalism in its present guise as a cult of marketing; these deformities condition our corporate hegemony, tainting every existing primary institution from family and politics to religion and science. First: American capitalism depends on advertising that tends to promote lying, self-deception, fraud and manipulation.* Second: American capitalism possesses deep credal commitments to self-perpetuating myths of celebrity, youth, and economy-as-lottery; such myths encourage corporate strategies that effectively keep consumer-citizens cowed, distracted and impotent to change. Third: American capitalism is driven by an insatiable need for continuous and unchecked profit-maximizing, organizational growth, monopolization of market resources, and total global domination. Fourth: American capitalism's fear-based corporate culture, obsessed with its own often-illusory notions of security, increasingly identifies its formal decision procedure and mission with those of intelligence organizations like the NSA, FBI and CIA. Corporate business has become effectively trapped by its own cultural identification with the spy game.

Advertising trades on gullibility and a willingness to suspend disbelief long enough to foster manipulation. When charlatan psychologist Peter Venkman proclaimed "No Job Is Too Big, No FEE Is Too Big!" in the 1984 hit movie *Ghostbusters*, he inadvertently put his finger on the pulse of Reagan-era corporate strategy, namely: that profits and profit-maximization would henceforth trump every other value and social purpose.

But the conditions under which capitalism originally emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries no longer apply; and capitalism has structurally transformed society beyond Adam Smith's wildest dreams. The strategies and techniques of rhetorical "persuasion" have not changed since Socrates haunted the marketplace of Athens; but the sheer potency, invasiveness and sophistication of electronic media now constitute a virtual reality superimposed over that of human institutions and the natural world.* Fear, intimidation, popular appeal and *ad hominem* labeling of opponents, competitors and perceived enemies remain the greatest fomenters of irrational belief; yet they can succeed only at the expense of cogent discourse, genuine understanding and a crucial search for standards of impartial objective truth.

* Melody Petersen's *Our Daily Meds* comprehensively illustrates this claim with respect to the pharmaceutical industry, demonstrating how the techniques of mass marketing to manipulate profits—not sound science—drives the whole industry, effectively corrupting the medical profession and endangering public health. Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation. The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Houghton Mifflin 2000) and Benjamin R. Barber's *Cconsumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Ltd. 2007) provide solid empirical documentation for the view, consistent with the view expressed here that "capitalism is in real trouble." (Barber).

* Robert Reich's *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life* (Knopf 2007) offers substantial independent confirmation of several of the views expressed here.

Directed by advertising and marketing, corporate culture has come to rely on a familiar formula of sheer expedience that is the Achilles heel of every naïve utilitarian ethic: “The end justifies the means.” Though far removed from the refined notions of economists and monetarists, it is precisely this kind of inflation or “mark-up” that has come to define modern corporate planning. “No Job Is Too Big, No FEE Is Too Big!”

But profit-maximizing’s connection with employment, actual productivity and human or social improvements may be far more tenuous than is commonly believed. Under modern conditions, capitalist rhetoric about the “free market” is empty jargon at best; at worst it is surreptitious code for an unquestioned right of commercial interests to bully and override the public good. Strategic planning is, by all accounts, an integral part of the corporate enterprise, which has for one hundred years been vastly better funded than government. This means that, to whatever degree it is humanly possible, the game of corporate business is rigged. When combined with artificially manufactured “desires” and a technical ability to manipulate mass-market behavior, the specialized craft-knowledge afforded by marketing research provides the *means* by which the game is rigged.

To confirm the economic underpinnings of a cult of marketing, one need only consider the abrupt rise in advertising profits and the growth in advertising expenditures across all industries, roughly since the mid-1950s, when television was introduced to popular American culture. These figures tell the real story of the siphoning off of capital resources and productivity, the betrayal of American business and the enslavement of the American middle class.

Advertising’s influence and power has been largely due, in other words, to an accident of technology. That accident was television. Even though radio, cable networks, video and computers, the internet and wireless communication gadgets are all integral parts of the electronic media and the new empire of modern telecommunications, it was television that first signaled the potential for enormous profitability.*

Advertising merely exploits that profitability. That is why every attempt to reform political campaign financing that fails to also reform and regulate advertising and public relations is doomed to fail (especially corporate excesses regarding the public airwaves, hijacked by private industry long before the Telecommunications Act of 1996, and concentrated in fewer and fewer hands with the media mergers since 1980). The problem isn’t merely greed or venality, it is the insurmountable cost of television advertising, which no one seems willing or able to restrain or circumvent, and the unavoidable nature of television as the preferred medium of communication.

For appearance to overthrow reality, objective truth must be discarded. Here, modern advertising truly delivers its payload. Contrary to widely circulated rhetoric, advertising conveys no useful product information; indeed, it conveys no information at all, except for the recondite sense in

* While Reich sees increased competition rather than greed as the hallmark of supercapitalism, I doubt that any attempt to distinguish greed from unbridled profit-maximization will survive critical scrutiny. Cornell economist Robert Frank appears to agree with Reich, but the following remark shows the weakness: “Once some companies discovered they could gain an edge by influencing government decisions in their favor, rivals had little choice but to join the fray. And once some candidates began altering their votes to attract contributions, others faced strong pressure to follow suit. Reich documents in lurid detail the explosive growth of corporate lobbying expenditures and campaign contributions since the 1970s.” This certainly sounds like greed. Reich probably intends to discredit psychological greed as a moral and religious motive in favor of the more circumspect and dignified notion of economic competition as “the culprit” here. Compare Frank’s recap of Reich: “Things changed when the Internet and other new communications and transportation technologies enabled the economy’s most able producers to extend their reach.”

which philosophers of language use this term (“syntax plus semantic content”).^{*} Except for broad slogans like “She’s Got the *Urge* to ‘Erbal!”, “Think Outside the Bun”, “GE—Imagination at Work” and “*Only At Old Navy*”, advertising employs very little language.

To get the job done—the job of hijacking rational thought for pecuniary purposes—a cult of marketing replaces articulate discourse with highly potent visual imagery. Sometimes these images tell a story, sometimes they merely suggest a mood or attitude; but they are always designed with a particular manipulative strategy in mind. Effective ads may compel consumer purchasing but never through means of honest persuasion or a fair presentation of fact. Commercial advertising invades a vulnerable corner of the psyche and seduces, threatens, bullies or cajoles potential consumers into submission. The best, most lucrative ads do so surreptitiously, without leaving a mark on their victims. “The circuit is complete!” as Darth Vader might say.

Even where ads appear to present facts (for technically-sophisticated products like automobiles, computers, hi-fidelity sound systems or pharmaceuticals), every word, sentence and paragraph is tightly harnessed to whatever rhetorical strategy and scheme is the focus of that particular ad campaign. And such copy always takes a back seat to the eye-catching visual imagery.

Under this dominion, corporate advertising for alcohol, tobacco, caffeine-and-sugar-riddled soft drinks and prescription medicines all seem to resemble illegal narcotics trafficking—after all, it is much easier to manipulate consumers into purchasing a product to which they are already addicted!—and it is also why *all other* product ads imitate those for beer and liquor, caffeine, nicotine and prescription drugs. Like acolytes of image magic worshipping a talisman, everybody wants to mimic a gospel of success.

Advertising and public relations therefore depend on lying, self-deception, fraud and manipulation. There are no real exceptions to this. I defy anyone to find a television commercial that can withstand more than five minutes of analytic scrutiny without confirming this claim. Commercial advertising, as presently conducted, is uniformly intended to divest consumers of their rational autonomy by manipulating and ultimately defrauding them with respect to the allocation of their economic resources.

Every TV commercial is more or less harmful. Take the Old Navy slogan: “*Only at Old Navy.*” — Is Old Navy the *only* store that sells shirts and sweaters? Since the answer is plainly no, the slogan is either false or trivial in what it purports, and is probably gibberish to boot. What could the slogan mean? Every retail store obviously sells only its *particular* merchandise; only a moron would need to be told that. And wouldn’t we already have hit the remote were it not for the lanky, slinky, sexy babes strutting their stuff across our TV screen? “Sex Sells” may be an advertising cliché but we should be on guard when Kraft resorts to Barry White in order to hawk cheese slices to middle school kids (“It’s A Love Thing”).

As for “She’s Got the *Urge* to ‘Erbal!”, to suggest any connection between shampooing one’s hair and having an orgasm betokens, if it does not depend on, a kind of brain damage. This ad campaign is degrading to women because it trades exclusively on the aforementioned connection regarding that gender; and it is degrading to men by implication. The issue is not the popularity of (or yearning for?) orgasms—*that* is the hook. The issue is the expropriation of mind by repetitious exposure to advertising and marketing.

^{*} The ads for GE, ADM, Herbal Essence, Taco Bell and Old Navy referred to here were current at the time I wrote this essay in 2001 and 2002. Old Navy has since dropped any semblance of a slogan in favor of a sexy music video format for the purposes of branding itself for consumers.

Every TV commercial distorts reality. Some undeniably use humor. What of it? Do you care that the thug hijacking your car tells funny jokes and even makes you laugh? Advertisers are betting that you do.

Employing psychological strategies combined with images designed to ratchet up fears of governmental excess, abuse of power, or hot-button issues like children's education, race relations, gun control and legalized abortion, those positioned to profit most—advertisers and entrenched transnational interests, the new barony of top management—manage to foster, foment and maintain a frothy level of public distraction, keeping citizen-consumers bolted to their seats, eyes facing the mesmerizing dance of fire-lit shadows on cave walls. These high priests of hyperactive hornswoggle render their prey at once docile, fearful and highly suggestible by promulgating mass hallucinations like the myths of Big Government Conspiracy, The Need for Perfect Data, and Economy-As-Lottery (otherwise known as *entrepreneurialism*). The old *X-Files*' slogan "Trust No One" tapped into the first myth's ubiquity; it has fueled the delusions of tax-cheats, paranoid nativist militiamen and ordinary citizens alike—to our collective detriment.

As to the second myth: like politicians maintaining the *status quo* with blue-ribbon panels, vested corporate interests always advise more "study" of problems rather than anything so seditious (or potentially damaging to well-planned corporate strategy) as decisions and actions that might actually affect policy. It's a dodge, a way of pursuing *business as usual* with impunity. Ask anybody at the American Petroleum or Tobacco Institutes. Meanwhile: Americans are wondering whether hundreds of billions of tax dollars earmarked for Pentagon contracts to arms dealers might not be better spent on education and healthcare.

What about the third myth, Economy-as-Lottery? The hook here is not the truism that anyone may become a millionaire but rather the lie that everyone can do so, that there is a marketing formula or secret recipe to guarantee success in business.

While bemoaning the failure of our primary social institutions, we mindlessly praise an organized corporate confiscation of our common welfare and societal resources, never noticing how our two-headed cynicism regarding these same social institutions pollutes the health of our cities and our quality of life, the consequences of which we are doomed to bequeath to posterity, our children's children.

3. THE INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGE ("FREEDOM IS CALLING YOU!")

Much has been written in the last ten years about the need to devise a new vision for international relations, in light of the implosion of Soviet-style Communism and America's ascension to its perhaps unenviable position as sole superpower. Yet our political leaders seem to think it is still 1945 and Winston Churchill the only possible prototype of political excellence. That world is and has been gone since 1945. Failure to realize this and its implications for the transformations of work and productivity, family and society, which have subsequently overtaken America and the world, now jeopardizes our capacity for adequate understanding, realistic evaluation and effective action.

It is time to rethink the principles and substance governing the practices of western corporate hegemony. America needs to end her subservience to a cult of marketing and the *de facto* rogue capitalism that it has spawned as primary vehicles for expressing our rich political culture; and to redesign a viable international strategy based on honesty and understanding instead of that sophisticated tolerance of deception and fraud, which has come almost exclusively to dominate western advertising and marketing. We can stop jamming a distorted version of the American way of life down the throats

of traditional and developing countries. Does America *really* want to refashion the whole world in its mirror image? Or in the image of what is *best* about our unique culture and civilization?

If the former, then our vision must include: a glut of superhighways and gutted cities, growing industrial and petrochemical wastes, rampant alcoholism and chemical abuse, a proclivity for reactionary violence and the highest infant mortality rate in the industrialized west.

By vivid contrast, the latter choice might embody our Constitution and other sacred political documents, native invention, a rich heritage of literary wisdom addressing the nature of American social identity, achievements in the arts and sciences and an abiding faith in essential human goodness that, while often tested by experiments in depravity, is what really makes America “the last best hope of earth”—namely: America’s resistance to cant and drivel, formula and convention, and our pragmatic willingness to embrace what is new and unorthodox.

Even if we had the power to reconstruct nature and the world of nations in our own likeness, we would never achieve the desired result but would instead produce a perverted caricature of America, of which we have had many glimpses in the relationships formed in years past—perhaps ineluctably—with petty dictators like the Shah of Iran, Somoza, Pinochet and Saddam Hussein.

Conservative economists like to brag that choice is one of the cardinal virtues of our way of life. Why not spread this value around a bit more, at home and abroad? The more we let less developed countries pick and choose whichever elements of market capitalism work best for their people and societies, the sooner we shall see them evolve institutions of democratic freedom and political responsibility. No doubt such an evolution will produce surprises, as other nations find ways of expressing democracy that are unique to their respective cultures. But that is how America works to discover and bequeath to subsequent generations what is best in our democratic heritage. Perhaps we have as much to learn about the intrinsic nature of democracy from other nations as they do from us.

Along these lines, we will have to rehabilitate that old devil-word “socialism,” exploring a deeper and more robust appreciation of our own labor and corporate history. America’s socialist attainments in child labor laws, forty-hour workweek and social security were all achieved during FDR’s presidency. Isn’t it high time we had some *new achievements*, relevant to the exigent circumstances we presently face?

Our intelligence services are outmoded and in dire need of rejuvenation and repair. The CIA inherited an organizational schism already inherent in its predecessor model, the Office of Strategic Services, an institution created for the specific purpose of defeating the Axis powers in World War II. Instead of creating a new peacetime intelligence apparatus from the ground up, we simply renamed the OSS, rendering it an *ad hoc* arm of the executive branch of our federal system. This institutional division between operatives who favor covert action and analysts who prefer careful scrutiny and sifting of data by human intelligence generated an internal fracture that widened over time, effectively undermining peacetime interests throughout the Cold War era, a period of roughly 50 years.

While it is understandable how such a rivalry arose in the context of war, institutionalized competition between the two factions has subsequently led a life of its own, with increasingly deleterious consequences for America’s foreign policy in the decades since the end of the Second World War. The conflict engendered continues to condition and misinform our otherwise inexplicable culture wars and partisan enmities.

The threat of an essentially rogue organization resides in the CIA’s utter loyalty to the Presidency, amply demonstrated by Director Tenant’s willingness to shield Bush and Cheney from the lies about WMDs in Iraq, even though it was their insistence on tailoring intelligence to fit the policy of preemption that ultimately forced Tenant’s resignation. Whether relegated by Cheney to a place inside

the Pentagon or subordinated to the mysterious guidance of a Negroponte, the CIA's relationship to the executive branch—its proximity and intrinsic vulnerability to the vicissitudes of executive power—now imperils our democracy.

Among the catastrophes in which the CIA has played a major role, one must rank that agency's having engineered (with the help of transnational corporations like ITT, Anaconda and Kennecott Copper) the deliberate destabilization of Chile's government, resulting in the 1973 assassination of Salvador Allendé, Chile's first democratically elected socialist leader, and the 1976 assassination of Chile's economic minister, Orlando Letelier, in front of the U.S. capitol. This is not the place to detail that sordid history, the long list of U.S. corporations and executive "personalities" involved, or the role that ad agencies like McCann-Erickson and J. Walter Thompson played in efforts to manipulate Chilean politics going back to 1962. Long before 9-11 and Iraq, these shameful events remain a blot on America's conscience and record, second only to the prolonged agony of Vietnam.

If McCarthyism was a mistake, why did its paranoia dominate our Cold War strategy? Perhaps a better question would be: why does it continue to do so under the shabby façade of anti-terrorism, homeland security and a Patriot Act? If Western Capitalism defeated Soviet Communism, why not acknowledge Cuba as a neighbor who shares our hemisphere and energize trade relations to actually encourage Castro to solve his problem of succession by restoring Cuba to a workable democracy? And by "workable" I mean workable according to Cuban—not American—standards. The virulent Redbaiting ideology that dominated our Cold War era did not convey any confident strength or resilience of American capitalism but rather its own fearful projections, economic paranoia and geopolitical insecurities.

4. TWO VISIONS OF THE CORPORATE BODY (*"THE NATURE OF WHAT'S TO COME"*?)

Two visions* of the future of Corporate Democracy exist. The first is a vision of continuing corporate hegemony, capitalism as ironclad ideology and a cult of marketing pursuing *business-as-usual* with all the fervor of a fanatical religion. Corporate monoliths, ever more invasive and fewer in number, control all the earth's resources and society's capital; every activity and endeavor is subjugated to the lofty purpose of corporate profit-maximization. Such a world will be dominated by alternating distractions of war and recession, all part of planned corporate strategy. The gap between haves and have-nots will widen, the have-nots growing ever more numerous. The majority of Americans will be grateful for the privilege of a \$20K-a-year job. In a world of totalitarian despair where boredom is offset by state-provided drugs, the power of celebrity and the fantasy goal of attaining upper class status will be kept alive by the lottery of entrepreneurialism and by a numbed populace relying on ever crueller "reality-based" recreations and diversions in order to distract itself from the degradation and slavery into which it has sunk. In such a world, individualism will continue to be praised as *the* corporate virtue

* Critics may point to my neglect of 'natural capitalism' and sustainability as a shortcoming. Despite my admiration for the inspiring work of Nobel laureate Al Gore, Paul Hawken and Amory and Hunter Lovins of the Rocky Mountain Institute, such movements do not address the issues raised, which go directly to the heart of capitalism, money and profits, none of which are questioned by these writers. By improving efficiency and eliminating waste via innovative technology, Lovins *et als* endorse the solution of technical expertise, whose record of managing capitalism's innermost propulsion and corporate culture is one of sheer impotence. Such positions leave untouched the underlying assumptions of our current capitalist model and its overarching goal of profit-maximization. Any change that is truly responsive to the exigencies of contemporary globalization requires a far more radical undertaking than any of these proponents imagine.

while human individuality will either be forgotten or else condemned as unnatural aberration, criminality and vice.

The future foreseen by George Orwell in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* will have come to pass, in substance if not in every detail. The nation-state, whose doom is already being predicted by experts, will have withered globally, as Marx once predicted it would. Functioning as mere ornaments to the new corporate state, governments will exist only for purposes of marketing and propaganda.

To summon such a future world, we have only to keep treading water and maintain the *status quo*.

There is a second possibility, however, although it does not seem likely. On this scenario, the American people reawaken to their public duty, wresting back control of basic institutions from corporate cartels, their greedy shills and minions, the whole greasy congregation of agents, lobbyists and power-brokers. Reasserting the rule of law to regulate multinational and transnational giants, citizens and elected officials will move to break up monopolies and concentrations of power and interest; to severely curtail the absurd practice of regarding advertising and marketing as “free speech”; and to criminalize the practice of pursuing frivolous lawsuits as if they were a constitutionally protected political strategy.

Special taxes may be levied against and collected from corporate ogres like GE and ExxonMobil in exchange for granting these entities the privilege of reaping titanic profits. New laws can be implemented, requiring corporate juggernauts to underwrite worthy enterprises like public television and radio, free public education for our children and prudent health care benefits for all citizens.

Similarly, in a deliberate effort to redistribute institutional influence and corporate power more equitably, Congress might enact laws applying exclusively to small businesses (of 500 or fewer employees), awarding tax breaks and subsidies for increasing the number of jobs, creating new jobs or solving societal problems through innovative cost-effective measures. To reward small businesses for staying small instead of punishing them for not becoming behemoths is the way to ensure diversity and competition in an economy that is strong, resilient and flexible *because* it is well-regulated.

In such a society capitalism is restrained by social impulses and humane principles; it knows its place and performs its vital work with pride, no longer vying with or violating primary institutions of family, education, science, sex and religion. Instead of worrying about outcome studies and test scores, we must educate with a view to children’s mental health, encouraging and rewarding emotional I.Q. and social cooperation as well as creativity, discovery and the mastering of particular competencies in the traditional humanities, arts and sciences. Not literacy alone but an ability to read with real comprehension and understanding is the birthright of every citizen and should be the standard for which we strive.

Far from disappearing, advertising and marketing may rise to the challenge of telling the truth, perhaps becoming a legitimate source of product information after all. If advertising no longer exploits reality for the sake of appearances, substantive public discourse may begin to flourish once again as we begin to face the problems of environmental pollution, drug abuse and slavery as these practices (and the institutions maintaining them) actually exist in our world today.

The American people have faced such obstacles and exigencies before and proven equal to the challenge, often in unexpected ways. It should not surprise us to find that, by addressing these problems, we shall overcome our aberrant tendencies toward shortsighted xenophobia and reactionary violence, discovering what actual progress has already been made in race relations during the past half-century. Redefining our collective enterprise, changing and adjusting the paradigms, norms and standards by which we appraise and evaluate both concepts and actual practices of productive work, we may find that employment, like resurgent economic value itself, is virtually boundless.

5. CONCLUSION: 'RENEWING A COMMON WORLD'
(*"ARE YOU IN? WAKE UP AND DRIVE."*)

In spite of the agonizing of business mavens following the collapse of Enron and Global Crossing and the more recent anticipations of a worldwide recession, economists and business leaders still don't get it. To implement a truly global economy, we will have to embrace a changed world, all the features of which we may never adequately anticipate.

Three central questions face globalization in the 21st Century:

1. As presently constituted (i.e., based on monetarism, narrowly quantifiable profit-maximizing, and conditioned by a cult of marketing), is ideological capitalism even capable of meeting the actual needs of a global economy?

2. Can the world's resources, goods and services be redistributed more equitably among the nations and peoples of the world, without causing either cataclysmic upheaval in the industrial west or civil war and economic implosion in the less developed nations?

3. Can capitalism meet this challenge?

While the first question can probably only be answered by sustained political action, the second and third questions must be answered with a resounding no, for essentially two reasons:

First, Russell's analysis of corporate behavior is empirically correct. Large corporations (MNCs and TNCs) are basically predatory and monopolistic; for all its glib posturing and brave attempts to wear the garb of enlightenment and modern science, corporate culture remains as proprietary and paternalistic as the court of Louis XIV or the Dutch East India Company in the 19th century. Under its present form of organization, market capitalism is impotent to solve the problem of redistribution of goods among less developed nations because it simply has no motivation to do so in terms of its own ideological presuppositions.

Consider the failure of modern western capitalism to seriously address either worldwide famine or the AIDS pandemic; the wildly inflated research and development costs consistently supplied by pharmaceutical companies, and their preferred position on the issue of making HIV drugs available to the poorest and most afflicted nations—or those corporations, which are most heavily invested and engaged in biotech research, on the issue of intellectual property and patent rights—and you will have an idea of what we may reasonably expect from private industry as far as substantively addressing the needs of the world in a truly global economy is concerned.

As an empirical matter, we can set aside questions of the social audit and whether transnationals will ever make good corporate citizens.* Though these questions, like all empirical matters, involve an element of contingency, the rosy ad-copy of ADM, GE, Boeing and ExxonMobil on the future of the planet may be safely ignored: you would not bet your 401(k) on the predictions implicit in their TV ads. When ADM switched its campaign slogan from "The Nature of Things to Come" to "Resourceful by Nature," was it making a meaningful revision or revealing its own imperative?

Second, there is a more serious problem than those of basic corporate structure, culture and disposition, or whether it is even possible to guarantee full employment by redefining work and productivity. Has capitalism become the unwitting victim of its own extravagant success? Have money,

* Once again, economist Robert Frank highlights our point of mutual agreement: "Can other institutions assume government's abandoned role? Reich thinks not. Reliance on voluntary 'corporate social responsibility,' he argues persuasively, is a pale substitute for effective laws against corporate misconduct."

capital and quantifiable profit-maximizing become obsolete under recent conditions of globalization?• Is ideological capitalism simply incapable of providing a foundation for human and societal advancement and a method of “bookkeeping” for those transactions necessary to the world’s well-being in the Third Millennium?

If capitalism is not up to the challenge of securing a world that contains more of the features people desire, then we will have to find an alternative to money, capital and the bottom-line, and to devise institutions better adapted than IMF, WTO or World Bank for the purpose of achieving specific goals, among which I would include: securing a cleaner, safer environment by ultimately reversing the process of global warming; reallocating resources to allow citizens to rebuild their crumbling core cities, infrastructure and schools; and establishing real peace, security and stability worldwide by allowing citizens of all countries the freedom to participate in a world economy in ways *they* see fit to develop their natural, cultural and human resources.

In retrospect: attempting to secure global carbon emission caps in Berlin and Kyoto may not have been the place to start the process of reversing global warming. Getting the entire global community to accept a fair regulatory framework is probably more important. Ensuring that everyone is on the same page regarding the threat, the potential hazard, agreeing on the science and scientific standards for determining measurable outcomes of what will constitute planetary success; perhaps delaying specific restrictions and emission standards for a few years where emerging economies like China and India are concerned, while the advanced industrial nations of the west demonstrate their commitment to leading by example—concessions like these might well pay huge dividends for all of us in the long run. If China and India (not to mention Korea, Iran, Russia and Saudi Arabia!) are to move away from dependency on fossil fuel, they will ultimately do so not by being compelled or forced to it against their will but by recognizing that there is indeed a better way, i.e., for the same reasons the rest of the world will choose to do so: out of a concern for the health and health care costs of their citizens, the consequences of degrading the natural world, and fear of becoming a pariah in the global community. A desire for respect among the community of nations is as decisive a motivation as human dignity among individuals.

Adopting a tolerant and flexible approach to the spread of capitalism by embracing the actual interests of people throughout the international community—instead of simply viewing them as

• In spite of a sincere desire to put a brave face on economics and entrepreneurial capitalism, Reich and Frank ineluctably provide cogent support for my contention that money and profit-maximizing have been substantially redefined by capitalism as conditioned by a cult of marketing. To cite Robert Frank’s synopsis of Reich: (1) in the decades following World War II “limited competition enabled large companies to earn high profits”; (2) “financial deregulation increased the influence of capital markets on corporate behavior”; (3) “Competition has driven salaries of the best performers in every sector to unparalleled heights, while the incomes of all others have stagnated. Today’s more competitive environment has also made it harder for us to insulate ourselves from risks, especially those related to health and employment security.” (4) The “only remedy” for corporate misconduct is “to purge corporate cash from the political system.” (5) The entire process of recent capitalist competition “resembles a wasteful military arms race.” Taken together, these premises all support my argument that competition, capital and profit-maximizing are indeed the crux of the problem. Frank’s conclusion—“But firms can still cut their unit costs by expanding their markets, just as in the 1950s, and heightened competition creates more pressure than ever to do so.”—fails to acknowledge that markets are finite, and heightened competition is precisely why they cannot be expanded indefinitely. Perhaps that is why Frank says next: “For present purposes, nothing of importance hinges on that point.” But how could that be so, given that ever shrinking market share and continually intensifying competition are constitutive of modern globalization?

potential markets to manipulate and exploit—will save everyone a lot of time and trouble in the long run, especially a superpower isolated by virtue of its unique position and place in recent history.

We can either have a world in which full employment flourishes or one in which corporate dinosaurs rule the earth, dictating human affairs; but we cannot have both. How has corporate industry taken care of our environment and health in the last hundred years? Large corporate organization has given us

penicillin, telecommunications and organ transplants; but it has also saddled us with death-camps, hydrogen bombs and a world that seems increasingly poised on the brink of self-destruction. Given the entrenched power and stubborn resistance to change of corporate interests—curiously at one with the policies and actions of the Bush regime—a redefinition of work can only be accomplished by reining in that power; and this requires a political will that appears very distant from entrenched political sentiments. Whatever his motives may have been, Donald Rumsfeld was partly right when, on the tenth of September 2001, he declared war on the Pentagon, insisting that an inefficient, wasteful bureaucracy needed streamlining. Perhaps worldwide cooperation in combating global warming can provide a cooperative model for a similar multinational scaling down of weapons of mass destruction.

To pursue effectively a middle path between isolationism and empire demands that our people and our leaders take a hard critical look at America's political, military and intelligence policies of the past 50 years, engage each other in serious discourse, and together take up the challenge of devising a new strategy that better accords with the actual conditions of our planet.*

* The restructured foundation envisioned here must achieve full employment, univocal global replacement of money by e-credits or solar capital, and the securing of human rights by abandoning the profit motive as inadequate to advance present human and societal needs. I have addressed this question in an unpublished paper, "Quality of Life Measurement and the Elimination of Capital" (the basis of a proposed book, *Redeeming Capitalism: Assessing Quality of Life*), in which I suggest six measurable criteria as the basis for assessing and distributing resources globally: *childcare and mental health, education, work, economic health and development, nonviolent democracy and diversity, and science and creativity.*

Scott Million 3914 Washington Street, Kansas City, MO 64111
(816) 213-9279 e-mail: sita.dcw@gmail.com

Scott Million is the *nom de guerre* of poet, novelist and philosopher, Dennis Weiser. Born in Philadelphia in 1951, he is a former regular columnist for *The Kansas City Business Journal* and book reviewer for NPR affiliate KCUR-FM in Kansas City, Missouri, where he has lived since 1981. An excerpt from *Plum Skulduggery** (“Tzytzyan Ysalane”) won first prize for prose fiction at the Printers Row Book Fair in Chicago and was published in *Things That Go Bump in the Night* (Outrider Press 2004). “Excellence”, his parable about race hatred and genocide, was the featured “Original Fiction” in the April 2004 issue of *The Illuminata*. Dennis has given readings at Barnes & Noble, Borders, Duff’s, Prospero’s Books, The Way Out Club, Venice Café, The Writers Place and Westminster College. He also taught philosophy for ten years in Kansas City, Missouri and defended his M.A. thesis, HANNAH ARENDT AND DE JURE AUTHORITY, in February 1991 (the day G. H. W. Bush carpet-bombed Baghdad). Dennis delivered an invited paper, “Morality’s Weaker Argument: *De Jure* Authority in Plato’s *Gorgias*”, at the Plato Symposium at the 1992 APA Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Other technical publications and writings include: “Cruzan and Anomalous Standards” presented at Society for Social & Political Philosophy annual meeting, Westminster College 1991 and “A Vivid review of John Gardner’s *The Art of Fiction* and Its Challenge to American Letters (1984) 107-109. An early version of and Its Challenge to American Sept./Oct. and Nov./Dec. [2003] issues of committed to conservative-liberal the press, edited by Amanda Lynch. While a community editor at *New Letters Magazine* in the early 1980’s, at the invitation of editor David Ray, Dennis taught a course in “Advanced Creative Writing: The Short Story” at UMKC. His articles, poems and stories have appeared in *Abramelin: The Journal of Poetry and Magick*, *Chouteau Review*, *New Letters*, *p.r.n.*, *Thorny Locust*, and several anthologies from Outrider Press. A former member of Chicago’s TallGrass Writers Guild (1999-2004) and Kansas City’s The Writers Place (2005-2008), Dennis is currently a member of Poets & Writers (www.pw.org). His profile is included in *Who’s Who in America* (2007) and *Who’s Who in the World* (2008). “Hidden Song” appears in *The Sixth Surface: Steven Holl Lights the Nelson-Atkins Museum* (Kansas City: Topo/Graphis Press 2007). Dennis holds a B.A. in Liberal Arts from Westminster College (1978) and an M.A. in Philosophy from The University of Kansas (1991). A 1972 Rockefeller Fellowship nominee and 1977 winner of the Samuel Robins Prize in Religion, he recently applied for a Guggenheim Writing Fellowship to complete a draft of his third novel, *Soul Snatchers of Java*, a thriller set against the backdrop of the Wahabbist Aceh War on British and Dutch colonialism in 1879. He has three adult daughters and seven grandchildren by his 1991 marriage to licensed psychologist and holistic healer, Helen Weiser.



AMERICAN WEIMAR

Scott Million

America is at a crossroads once again: the decisions and dispositions of its people and their institutions will, over the next 25 years, determine the fate of the planet and the future of humankind. Whether it will be “business as usual”, pursuit of short term profits under conditions of intensified global competition for steadily shrinking market share, further barbarization of the electorate sparking ceaseless civil war, bloodshed, descent into ignorance and the vanishing of the youngster, Democracy, from living memory or mark a breaking of dead history’s iron grip at last, a change in the attitudes of all six billion of Earth’s inhabitants, a re-measuring of our institutions and the principles and practical standards according to which we assess and hold them responsible—this remains to be seen. Shall we continue to pursue the present folly and structure of the Transnational Corporate State and go the way of Bismarck and the German Empire at Weimar? Or will America breathe in its own most sacred political texts, trust its experience and light out for the Territory of a new world, with dimensions and boundaries as yet unfixed, unsettled, unattained? In this choice, the luck and happiness of not only our grandsons and granddaughters, but of untold generations, lies waiting, unborn.

This is a clarion call to order, to rise to consciousness of time and place, of who we are and are to be.

America’s unacknowledged religion is the entrepreneurial trinity comprised of the twin cults of marketing and celebrity, underwritten by a gospel of success. This is in reality a religion of the lottery, which deifies chance and raises hazard to the status of grace. “No pain, no gain” and “High risks, high rewards” are not merely the wildcatters and hedge fund managers mantra, but the talisman of that paragon of high risk behavior: the addict. Whether the object is drugs, gambling, sex, politics or power, the arc of behavior is identical to that of any high stimulus salesperson. There are massive chinks in the armor plating of America’s concept of individuality.

Even more serious problems exist in the manner in which the mandate of individualism has evolved over the last two hundred years as an expression of American social and political experience. The conundrum and tragedy can be expressed in a single phrase: “the Corporate Person.” Far from the quaint legal fiction the term seems to suggest, the compact phrase marks perhaps the most astounding conflation of fact and fancy imaginable, giving rise to a de facto race of immortal giants in a world of otherwise free men and women. What have GE, ExxonMobil and Microsoft to do with the facing of the wilderness or settling the frontier? Literally and strictly speaking, of course, “nothing” is the correct answer, but it is a technical correctness only; for the testimony of advertising

yields another answer, which speaks in a profoundly evocative way to the unconscious mind of American consumers, which is only another way of saying: to the national temperament. If the psychological and mythic content of commercial advertising testifies eloquently to the substantial reality of the modern “Corporate Person,” invoking the Kantian sublime of gigantic bottles of beer to be scaled like Everests or drawn like Leviathan itself from arctic waters, the economic and financial record of the advertising industry is as tantalizingly authoritative as scripture: Since 1950, a doubling of revenues every year! One has only to look at the steady progression of advertising expenditures, industry by industry, in print, radio and television media, and of revenues for the big ad agencies like Ogilvy, J. Walter Thompson, and Saatchi & Saatchi to witness the transformation of the American economy. To do so is to recognize the often neglected yet underlying meaning: that America’s shift from a manufacturing economy based almost entirely on fossil fuel extraction to a knowledge-based, service sector economy was both heralded by and heavily dependent upon the exploitation of visual images by corporate advertisers.

When one reflects on the fact that advertising produces no tangible product that humans need but only manipulates images in order to stimulate impulse buying in the aggregate, the import of the diversion of resources and revenues to the advertising sector during the second half of the 20th century and the concomitant deformity of American capitalism becomes shockingly apparent. When it works, the wholesale manufacturing of desires and its translation into patterns of mass consumption is certainly a neat trick, not without serious economic repercussions. But this should not blind us to the brute fact that modern advertising, and with it corporate industry’s addiction to advertising and public relations, is completely dependent upon and conditioned by the electronic media, especially the visual medium of television. Without this preexisting condition and a channel to sustain a continuous barrage of invasive and manipulative images and carefully orchestrated ideological propaganda about “free markets” and “choice,” advertising would dry up overnight.

To remark the ascendance of modern advertising over agriculture, manufacturing, and every other form of human enterprise is really only another way of saying that modern capitalism is entirely driven by marketing. To add that profit-driven marketing has necessitated a profound identification of productivity with consumption is merely to state a tautology.

Is Advertising lying? In the general parlance of American English (and, I suppose, English English), the term lying is used broadly to include: deception, fraud, even self-deception. “Your lying to yourself,” Mulder tells Scully, “if you believe that.”

Technically speaking, a lie or an act of lying always involves at least two parties, one of whom presents a proposition (a sentence or statement) to the other with the intent to deceive them (motives here of the liar range from advantage and profit to carelessness, outright maliciousness, and whimsy; but all are tinged with hues and shades of satisfaction and pleasure). The particular proposition may be false and presented as true, or it may be true and presented as false to the

potential victim; all that matters is that the person being lied to not know the actual truth or falsity of the statement as proffered.

Actions missing one or more of these three crucial elements (1. two or more parties/persons, 2. a proposition, and 3. intent to deceive) do not, strictly speaking, constitute lying. Actions that lack a propositional element cannot therefore be lies. They may be deception, fraud, fantasies, reveries, dreams, epiphanies and myths, and they may involve gross violations of decency.

Since the visual art of commercial advertising, whether in print, television, movies or some as-yet-unimagined digitized visual medium, appears to lack a propositional element, let us defer our original question to the end.

Commercial advertising on TV certainly involves gross deception. There is an ad for a certain kind of rugged vehicle, which cruises effortlessly around falling boulders, earthquakes, near-collisions at a hefty speed, as if on tracks or by magic, only to arrive (Whew!) safely home. The message is clear—the same as Oliver North’s: “The world is a dangerous place.”—and this vehicle promises safety and security with a lush tongue. Yet a too lush tongue may be rife with infectious bugs; and this ad is no exception. Rhetorical designers of this particular commercial may never have had the model of a theme park ride in mind; but we would do well to recall that even the safest theme park rides fly off the rails sometimes, resulting in death or dismemberment. Modern advertising is a juggernaut of fear-mongering paranoia. Just as Anheuser-Busch’s campaign from decades past, *The Night Belongs to Michelob*, employed the leitmotif of a stalker or sexual predator to get the hormonal juices of consumers flowing, so ads for cars, cosmetics, fast foods, and computers all resort to, and regularly rely on, this time-honored technique of intimidation or fear-mongering. When the chips are down and the pressure is on to corner market-share, fear works.

Well, maybe. No doubt manufacturers of the vehicle presented felt this particular ad effectively conveyed a respectable message, one that their top executives, directors and shareholders powerfully believe in: *You can trust this vehicle of ours. This vehicle will get you home safe to family and dog.* But what about the context of this message? No vehicle drives as effortlessly as the one depicted in this ad, not even one driven by an expert, professional driver. Few if any drivers will face so hostile a world, with so many orchestrated catastrophes in a 30-second or 60-second interval. The world does indeed hold dangers, but not like the ones presented in this ad.

If fear mongering is big (and it probably accounts for half of all commercials), the appeal to popularity is even bigger. Classical rhetoric knows this particular flavor of fallacious manipulation and pseudo-reasoning as: *appeal to the mob* (in a democratic age, we like to think of the “mob” as peaceful and law-abiding, since we are the mob, so you don’t hear this term much anymore; also mob is almost entirely subsumed under synonyms like organized crime, *La Cosa Nostra* and *The Sopranos*).

This fallacy admits of nearly infinite variations and is single-handedly responsible for the popular belief that television watching (watching TV ads?) causes or involves a “dumbing down” of its audience (sheep, suckers, rubes, otherwise known to advertisers as: consumers).

But is it truly dumbing down, rather than sophisticated chicanery, which puts viewers into a near hypnotic trance of vulnerability, feeding them carefully prescribed images, keeping them in a fever pitch of hormonal imbalance, the only cure for which is to gorge themselves on a bulimic feast of impulse-buying? How could we tell which is which, one from another?

Anheuser-Busch may have pulled *The Night Belongs to Michelob* ad series before anyone complained. No one did complain about the ads, as I recall, which started in the late '70's and ran a few seasons. Did Henry Lucas—infamous for his remark “Any woman I picked up hitchhiking *belonged* to me”—ever see these commercials? It's a dead certainty that Ted Bundy did, who used to drink beer while watching TV to get supercharged before a night out. —Of course, one can only speculate about the extent to which such commercials may have influenced his behavior, right? I mean: that is why millions are poured into marketing research, demographic studies of preferences and behavior patterns—because nobody really understands or knows how deceptive techniques of psychological manipulation combined with the most powerful graphic imagery ever conceived could possibly influence human consumer behavior.

Right?

—Duh! *Wrong*.

Do ads really ever work? As it turns out, a lot of the time they don't. Clients have fired entire advertising staffs for this very reason, once obvious, now lost in the mists of the 20th century. If we start questioning the rationale and proclivities of advertising's “best practices” and standards, where might it end? Maybe we need to ask some fundamental questions of capitalism itself, at least in its present deformed embodiment as exclusively marketing-and-profit-driven. Questions like: when did capitalism cease to be a form of economics and start behaving like an ideology, even a religion? What effect is it having on our lives and institutions, on the souls of our children? When did the sphere of economics become so all-inclusive and all-permeating, an absolute tyrant? Can economics (or capitalism, for that matter) really substitute for culture, politics, family, art and science, or replace the qualitatively different decision-making procedures appropriate to these spheres? Can the corporate will of multinationals provide a decent, habitable future for our children and grandchildren, in a world that is still accessible and worth living in (not merely existing or serving time in)?

Lastly, as to lying and advertising: Just because a statement or proposition is not explicitly stated or visibly embodied in linguistic or semantic tokens does not mean that no assertion is involved. Here we approach an arena of secrecy, of covert operation of the mind, one seemingly more appropriate to NSA, CIA and FBI than to the large corporate bodies that dominate our lives and the

world, institutional bodies that have internalized the ‘culture’ and the decision-making procedures of espionage and intelligence agencies.

Is Advertising lying? Even if this question could not be answered unequivocally once and for all, is it conceivable that the individual human talents brought to bear in overseeing and developing advertising campaigns could be unaware of the linguistic and rhetorical implications of their highly technical collaborations? In order to effectively lodge their messages in the public psyche, the individuals who design these ads must have an intimate grasp of what there is to conceal and must know what they can safely reveal, without appearing to manipulate consumers—in other words, they must *know that they are lying when they are lying*. To answer unequivocally the question of *when advertisers are lying*, we need look no further than the testimony before the United States Senate of a select group that perfectly represents the interests typically served by advertisers:

REP. WYDEN: Let me begin my questioning on whether or not nicotine is addictive. Let me ask you first, and I’d like to just go down the row, whether each of you believes that nicotine is not addictive. I heard virtually all of you touch on it. Yes or no, do you believe nicotine is not addictive?

MR. CAMPBELL (President of Philip Morris U.S.A.).
I believe nicotine is not addictive, yes.

REP. WYDEN: Mr. Johnston?

MR. JAMES JOHNSTON (Chairman and CEO of RJ Reynolds Tobacco Company). Mr. Congressman, cigarettes and nicotine clearly do not meet the classic definition of addiction. There is no intoxication.

REP. WYDEN: We’ll take that as a “no.” Again, time is short. I think that each of you believe that nicotine is not addictive. We would just like to have this for the record.

MR. TADDEO (President of U.S. Tobacco).
I don’t believe that nicotine or our products are addictive.

MR. TISCH (Chairman and CEO of Lorillard Tobacco Company).
I believe that nicotine is not addictive.

MR. HERRIGAN (Chairman and CEO of Liggett Group).
I believe that nicotine is not addictive.

MR. SANDEFUR (Chairman and CEO of Brown and Williamson Tobacco Company).
I believe that nicotine is not addictive.

MR. DONALD JOHNSTON (President and CEO of American Tobacco Company).
And I, too, believe that nicotine is not addictive.

Advertisers lie because it is in the selfish interests of their clients to lie. Whether self-deception is required to make the lie more palatable, or is itself the consequence of intention, necessity is clearly the mother of invention.

All around we see the hemorrhaging and detritus of America's unofficial and all-but-acknowledged religion, the triadic cults of marketing, celebrity and entrepreneurialism. Some will no doubt misinterpret what I have written here, erroneously reading it as blasphemy and slander on American Social Gospel. It is not.

For language users, thought is itself propositional in nature. It is a question of the condition—and the conditioning—of the mind that is at stake in this discussion. For a civilization in which appearance is so blithely permitted to dominate reality, there are no standards for the mind, no arbiter of taste but the latest trend: a place where modern advertising is mind control, if anything is.

Consider this newspaper report, from *The Kansas City Star* for Friday, March 9, 2001:
Infrastructure crumbling, report says:

[The] American Society of Engineers says “\$1.3 trillion” needed in next 5 years “to remedy the wide-ranging bottlenecks” in national system of transportation, schools, power plants. “Yet environmental concerns and local opposition to disruptive projects have made the politics of infrastructure development almost impossible,” [Jim Davis, executive director of the Society, said].

Or this from two days before: **Experts discuss school violence, culture:**

...The average American child has witnessed 8,000 murders—through television, videogames and the Internet—by the time he finishes elementary school.

“...the bottom line on school violence is the availability of guns.”

What explains the delay in repairing our cities' crumbling infrastructure, or our inability to restrain gun violence? No simple-minded answer of television's “dumbing down” influence or of the NRA's intellectual superiority regarding interpretation of the second amendment will satisfactorily explicate our collective, mind-numbing deficiency here. The late fiction writer, Stanley Elkin (for whom *homo economicus* and the American businessman in particular was a central study, perhaps even Elkin's Job), bemoaned our modern dysfunction and inability: “Nobody knows how *to do anything* any more!” Gun violence and crumbling infrastructure are only compounded by drug trafficking and addiction, a moribund auto industry, failures to reform campaign financing, improve the quality of education in our schools, ease international tensions, modern child and female slavery, arms trafficking. The list of problems we seem unable to face goes on...

In retrospect, it was a mistake for the U.S.A. to identify productivity so exclusively with consumption—now clearly *consuming us*. Whether we can recalibrate our institutions, change directions, and confront actual needs with clear-minded vision remains to be seen. Though McCain was a late convert, both he and Obama now voice the call for *Change*.

Pericles, Augustus and his successors, and Bismarck are watching us from the shadows of history. Whether we follow the examples Athens, Rome and Germany will largely depend on our

capacity to understand and act in a way that allows us to adapt to change. We cannot separate our own from the rest of the world's changing needs. Can we embrace a vigorous, secular, Muslim democracy like Indonesia? Will we be able to break out of old Cold War modes, overcome the rabid anti-Communist ideological mindset, give up the sort of crippling jingoism that has too longed distorted our international thinking? Can we repair the damage done to Iran, Nicaragua and Chile by supporting thugs like Shah Reza Pahlevi, Somoza, and Pinochet. An American Weimar is not out of the question and may already have overtaken us. It took only 14 years of the Weimar Republic plus WWI to bring a Hitler to prominence. Without provoking the cliché about history never repeating itself, we might well ask ourselves what a 45 year Cold War brought to boil with Korea, Vietnam, Two Iraqs and an Afghanistan is likely to produce. Our history and aspirations argue for a better performance and a different dénouement. But make no mistake: it is precisely this issue of change, of societal transformation and the ability of this republic to reject an imperial destiny, that our future depends.

Contact Information: 3914 Washington, Kansas City, MO 64111
Phone: 816-213-9279 e-mail: sita.dcw@gmail.com