Reclaiming the Subject: Decommodifying Marketing Knowledge?

This paper discusses commodification as an instance of the appropriation of life force; the substitution of the human for the non-human; the colonization of use value by exchange value; of the veiling of origins, involving processes of objectification, disassembling and reassembling; of the return of the repressed. Commodification is discussed in relation to the practice of marketing and to the scientific method. A discussion of the commodification of marketing knowledge counterposes Regulatory Marketing to its "shadow" Critical Consumption.

Introduction

The Perfect Crime

"The virtual camera is in our head and our whole life has taken on a zero dimension. We might believe that we exist in the original, but today the original has become an exceptional version for the happy few. Our own reality doesn't exist any more.

We are exposed to the instantaneous re-transmission of all our facts and gestures on whatever channel. We would have experienced this before as police control. Today it's just like an advertising promotion. It is irrelevant to get upset with talk shows or reality shows for they are only a specular version, and so an innocent one of the transformation of life itself into virtual reality." (Jean Baudrillard²).

Waiting for the Machines

"In 'Faded Genes', columnist Greg Blonder warns that, because of the relentless exponential growth in processing power, computers will soon rule the planet. According to his predictions, humans will be matched intellectually by machines by the year 2088; we will never beat

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a computer at chess after 2090: we will be lucky to merit pet status by 2001.

Reading his column, I get the impression I’m supposed to feel all gloomy and frightened. I don’t. The one thing this planet needs desperately is something more intelligent than *homo sapiens*. Will 2098 be soon enough?” (Name and address supplied3).

How would a marketer react to the above correspondents? No doubt she or he would seek to interrogate Baudrillard to find out exactly what he meant. What about the second person? Would they try to sell him a cryogenic programme to help fulfil his need or would they seek to suggest the futility and nihilism of his position which has signalled the final triumph of the machine culture in the industrialization of the human mind? As marketing theory has tended to restrict itself to the more “pragmatic” concerns of consumer behaviour rather than the philosophical reflection on consumer society, one would have to conclude that the former choice is the more likely of the two.

The term “commodification” is deceptively complex and difficult to elucidate. This is because in everyday parlance its meaning comes close to, but does not quite capture its theoretical meaning. It is difficult to elucidate because as inhabitants of what is sometimes cynically referred to as a post-industrial world, we are masters of commodification.

In everyday terms, commodification refers to the progressive industrialization of all aspects of the natural world, including humanity. In theoretical terms, this reflects the work of three major contributors: Karl Marx (1967), who developed the twin notions of alienation and the fetishism of commodities to describe what he saw as the progressive subordination of modern society under the rule of money and things; Max Weber (1976) who wrote of the “iron cage” of modernity which was to progressively capture all of nature through the instrumental calculation, bureaucratization and demagicalization of everyday life; and Lukacs (1923) who sought to reconcile both of the former viewpoints through what he described as reification of thing-like relations between people, and human-like relations between things. The aim of this paper is to relate the discussion of “commodification” within context in order to demonstrate the multiplicity of attributions and meanings of the term.

What is Meant by Commodification?

The term “commodification” is employed in a wide variety of contexts; as “industrialization”, (Enzenberger 1974), “MacDonaldization” (Ritzer 1993), “Coca-Colonization” (Cinquin 1987). Each of these is used to point out different aspects of what is a complex phenomenon. The intention is to address the complexity by referring to how the term is used in a variety of contexts where commodification is taken to involve one or more of the following: the *appropriation* of the subject’s life force or energy and the replacement of this by non-human technology; the *colonization* of use value by exchange value; the tendency for a *veil* to be drawn over the origins of products; and finally the pursuit of a fundamentally *reductive* logic.

including processes of objectification, dissembling and reassembling. The following examples are offered as examples of commodification. The first example concerns the packaging of the pop singer Olivia Newton-John:

"The transformation of Newton-John was not some mysterious force propelled by luck or fluke. It was the state of the art in the techniques of the Pygmalion Principle. The fitness craze of the '80s had created an opportunity for a performer to symbolize the energy and pace of a new social trend. So Newton-John was transformed to meet the market fulfilment strategy devised by her producer. Not unlike the development of Federal Express or large breasted turkeys, Newton-John was changed and fitted to a newly developing market." (Rein et al. 1987, p.194).

The second passage was written by Henry Miller (1945):

"Everything is caricatural here. I take the plane to see my father on his death-bed and up here in the clouds, in a raging storm, I overhear two men behind me discussing how to put over a big deal, the deal involving paper boxes, no less. The stewardess, who has been trained to behave like a mother, a nurse, a mistress, a cook, a drudge, never to look untidy, never to lose her Marcel wave, never to show a sign of fatigue or disappointment or chagrin or loneliness, the stewardess puts her lily-white hand on the brow of the paper-box salesman and in the voice of a ministering angel says 'Do you feel tired this evening? Have you a headache? Would you like an aspirin?' We are up in the clouds and she is putting on this performance like a trained seal. When the plane lurches suddenly she falls revealing a tempting pair of thighs. The two salesmen are now talking about buttons, where to get them cheaply and how to sell them dearly. ... The girl falls down again — she's full of black and blue marks. But she comes up smiling, dispensing coffee and chewing gum, putting her lily-white hand on someone else's forehead, inquiring if he is a little low, a little tired perhaps. I ask her if she likes her job. For answer she says 'It's better than being a trained nurse'. The salesmen are going over her points; they treat her like a commodity. They buy and sell, buy and sell. For that they have to have the best rooms in the best hotels, the fastest, smoothest planes, the thickest warmest overcoats, the biggest, fattest purses. We need their paper boxes, their synthetic furs, their rubber goods, their hosiery, their this and that. We need the banker, his genius for taking our money and making himself rich. The insurance man, his policies and talk of dividends — we need him too. Do
we? I don’t see that we need any of those vultures.” (Miller 1945, pp.28–29).

Third, consider a 1995 BBC Radio 4 programme “Face the Facts” where the chicanery of a financial services fraudster was “exposed”.

“Several ‘victims’ noted that it was not so much the loss of money that was the worst thing. What was worse was that the fraudster had become a family friend, had brought little presents on people’s birthdays, had been given their trust, which he had then abused. It subsequently transpired that the fraudster had compiled a database on which to record ‘prospect’ details and had even written books advising others of this indispensable means for cultivating clients.”

Finally consider the following brief example.

“The adolescent preparing for interview who is told that to ‘get on’, s/he has to ‘sell’ him or her self.”

Discussion

The above constitutes a very limited repertoire of instances of commodification. However these examples do help illustrate some key points. The first is perhaps how mundane and indeed unsurprising these illustrations may seem to be. No doubt the reader can (painfully) reflect on a myriad of such instances. The second point is that “commodification” can also tend to be an attribution by another rather than the felt state of the “victim”. Take the second example where the resulting “commodity”, the stewardess, does not herself seem to feel commodified, if her answer to the author’s question is anything to go by. Miller could be accused of having it both ways; on the one hand, he assumes the moral high-ground of a unique sensibility, on the other hand he doesn’t himself seem to be impervious to the “tempting pair of thighs”. He therefore lays himself open to a criticism that, just like the film censor, he places himself in a position where he can simultaneously condemn and enjoy at the same time.

Commodification as the Appropriation of Life Force

“The process of converting more and more elements of natural environments and human qualities into objectified forms — commodities — constitutes the very essence of an expanding market-industrial economy.” (Leiss et al. 1990, p.323).

The notion of psychic energy was central to the argument of the early Marx. Within this view, when someone invests energy in an object — a person, thing or idea — that object becomes charged with the energy of the agent, part of the person’s life force has been transferred to the object to the exclusion of other possibilities. With the rise
of the market and the money system, Marx foresaw the progressive enslavement and humiliation of humankind before an idol of its own making. He referred to the appropriation of life force as self-alienation and estrangement, or later fetishism and dehumanization. The elevation of money and the market to the status of a god in capitalist society diverted energy away from the development of a critical self-consciousness and self-determination, towards a form of slavery to the dictates of the market (Kavanagh 1981). This raises the implication that in capitalist society, all needs are skewed away from real human needs to those false aspirations imposed by the money system with the resultant alienation of “man” from his product. To Marx there was something monstrous about this alleged type of self-abasement to the money system which reduces all goods and transfers them into commodities (Kamenka 1969, p.12).

In the Olivia Newton-John example, the real person has been sucked out so that all that remains is the husk of the celebrity which has been refashioned to serve the dictates of the music market. The commodification which takes place is the dissembling of the “real” person and the positioning of the “celebrity” in the resultant gap. Looking at the second example, the implication is that within the logic of a consumer society it is deemed to be more appropriate for the energies of the stewardess to be spent in ministering to sales representatives than to patients. In the third example, one can refer to the misdirected life force expended by the unfortunate dupes in welcoming and trusting someone whose ends were motivated purely by rational calculation. In the final example, the person must invest life force in a shifting fabricated image.

**Substitution of the Non-human for the Human**

This is linked to the previous discussion of life force. In one respect it reflects the actual replacement of human labour by machine labour. In another respect, it describes the general processes by which the life-world is subjected to principles of efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. For example, one can detect a Weberian strand in Ritzer (1993) who uses a wide angle lens to view what he describes as the “McDonaldization” of society.

The development of machine technology from the 18th century onwards placed humans in the unique position of being able to absorb all of the physical energy that they could find and reshape it to their purpose. To Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981), this ability to extract surplus energy coupled with a narrow focus on utility were creating a diabolic condition which threatened the future existence of the planet. More recently critics have argued that the machine has become transmogrified (from clockwork through computer through biomutation) such that it is no longer sufficient to describe it as a powerful metaphor to explain the human condition; rather the machine has begun to shape it and replace it.

Critics ranging from McLuhan (1951) to Ewen (1976, 1988) have described how advertising fetishized body parts by granting them an autonomous life of their own. This machine-oriented approach has brought a range of technologies to bear in replacing the human with notions of the “hard body”, a fragmented selection of body parts, which can be honed, worked on, drilled, sucked out; a body which is almost totally dissociated with the consciousness that is imprisoned within it. This
cult of the hard body is perhaps exemplified most vividly in the sickening work of Brett Easton Ellis and in the "ironic" surgical displays of Orlan. With developments in genetic engineering, bioengineering and virtual realities gathering pace, there is a groundswell of opinion arising that the fusion of the machine and the human is an inevitable stage in the evolution of the "River of DNA" (Dawkins 1995). Some argue that when humans are preparing for the conquest of outer-space, when their reality is becoming conjoined with cyber-space, the body becomes a primitive hangover, an embarrassing encumbrance. The feeling arises that machine culture is out of control; that it has attained a momentum of its own. This was the nightmare scenario painted by the Frankfurt School from the 1940s to the 1970s. In the 1990s, some people welcome it (Kelly 1995).

And of course one great thing is left (almost) unsaid—the differential power of discourse working on and through the body in relation to the constitution of gendered subjects (Foucault 1982). Within for example in Women on the Market, Irigaray (1985) seeks to account for the subjugation of the feminine as a form of commodification. With respect to Levi-Strauss, she claims that the modern cultural order is homosexual—a fact which is masked by a heterosexual economy of exchanges of women between men. Heterosexuality is an alibi for the "smooth workings of man's relations with himself". Women are commodified, reduced to reproductive use value and exchange value. Irigaray's theories replay the descriptions of Ewen (1988) in describing the idealized smooth, hard ideal-images of consumer society which are reflected in corporate identities.

Colonization of Use Value by Exchange Value and Sign Value

It is difficult to imagine anything in the world which is not subject to exchange, from "traditional" areas of consumption such as food, shelter and clothing, to self-improvement through education, and the development of self-religions, where ultimate knowledge can be revealed at a price (Heelas 1991). The existence of markets depends on individuals who are willing to enter into transactions in order to increase their utility. According to Csikzentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, the philosophy of utility is based on a series of discrete individual sensations of pleasure. The raising of utility and unlimited differentiation to the level of an ultimate goal within modern capitalism shredded the filaments of the seamless web of purpose which bound an individual's goals and integrated them with others (1981, p.228).

There is a debate and indeed a disjuncture in views of the relation between use value and exchange value. For example in a major early work, Consumer Society (Baudrillard 1981a), Baudrillard applied a Lacanian reading of Marx, replacing the notion of need with that of the desire for the Other, for difference. Baudrillard's reading of commodification thus oriented discussion towards signification, with consumption characterized as a flight from one signifier to another within a world of objects and needs which had the characteristics of a general hysteria. This view is paralleled by Williamson (1978) who describes the exchange by which a person "recognizes" the meaning of an ad by transferring the significance of the objective correlative from the referent system to the product system. Thus what is "consumed" is not only the product but also the sign of the product. Baudrillard
(1975, 1981b,c) goes further to argue that satisfaction is now gained not from consumption of the thing itself, but from its sign value as it is this which confers the all-important mark of cultural distinction (Bourdieu 1984). This was to become the jumping-off point for further developments of seduction, simulation and the hyper-real.

Jhally (1990) differs with Baudrillard, arguing the latter has "naturalized" the meaning of use value. I would argue that this is not necessarily the case as denotation does have a symbolic component, although it is tied more closely to the object than is the connotation which is built upon it. However Jhally's close reading and development of Marx does present a powerful argument for locating commodification in the material rather than in the cultural domain.

Returning to hyper-reality, both Baudrillard (1981c, 1988) and Eco (1987) link the hyper-real scene of contemporary society ultimately to commodification. Both paint on a large canvas, that of the USA and the emergence of "deterrence mechanisms" such as Disneyland and Watergate. To Baudrillard, the hyper-real is the result of the plundering by capital of established referent systems to create the universal equivalence of signifiers. This has led to a condition where one can no longer differentiate between the true and the false, the good and the bad. Eco takes a less apocalyptic view, suggesting that the hyper-real is a form of control device for consumption, leaving open the road for the critique of the productive apparatus which lies behind this. By comparison the example of simulation offered here (example 3), seems rather drab and mundane. After all, what could be more common-sensical than for a marketer of financial services to gather biographical data on prospects—names of pets and children, birthdays and the like—and to enter and store these on a database and use them in marketing his services. This is the stuff of many contemporary textbooks after all (including, it would seem, one of the fraudster's own). An immediate response would be to say that, were it not for the fraud, everything would have been alright. This explanation does not stand up. The "victims" said that what was really upsetting was the thought that what they had taken to be unprompted altruism and kindness had the deepest and most cynically rational calculation as their motive. What had been destroyed was their ability to trust, the real victim of the rational calculative game. This has been achieved by the trickster's simulation of trust, in Baudrillard's understanding (1981c) which threatens the difference between "true" and "false", between "real" and "imaginary". Since the simulator produces "real" symptoms of "trust" (signs of affection, remembrance, connection), is he trustworthy or not?: The simulator cannot be treated objectively either as "trustworthy" or not "trustworthy" and this can lead to a profound sense of ambivalence (Bauman 1988). It will be seen that this effect of rational calculative systems can come to threaten the whole process of meaning production.

The Veiling of Origins

A central aspect of Marx's notion of the fetishism of commodities is that when presented in the marketplace, commodities hide the real social relations objectified in them through human labour. Most recently Jhally (1987) and Leiss et al. (1990) have taken this as their subject of interest. According to the views expressed in these
studies, commodities reveal and conceal; they reveal their capacity to be satisfiers and at the same time, they draw a veil over their origins. Jhally (op. cit.) provides a list of the means by which commodities conceal their origins.

Objectification, Dissembling, Reassembling

What is the process by which commodification works? What are its dynamics? How does it work? The explanation provided by Bauman (1989) is very important in that it provides the means for understanding the process by which commodification reduces all subjects to the status of objects. Bauman places morality at the centre of his explanation. Commodification involves the process of rendering the subject adiaphoric, or morally neutral. Contrary to the prevailing wisdom, Bauman draws upon the work of Emmanuel Levinas to suggest that all moral behaviour is triggered not by some form of code or organizational constraint, but rather an existential responsibility, the recognition of the other as a face.

"The Other demands without threatening to punish or promising reward; his demand is without sanction. The Other cannot do anything; it is precisely his weakness that exposes my strength, my ability to act, as responsibility." (Bauman 1991, p.214).

Within this view, moral behaviour is an existential act, which is prior to the codes of organization and society. Indeed Bauman argues that the spontaneous recognition of the "face" of the Other demanded by moral behaviour, poses a threat to the structured monotony and predictability of organization and its instrumental or procedural criteria for evaluation. Thus organization must act to suppress the moral drive. It does so by rendering social action adiaphoric—neither good nor evil—measured against technical (purpose-centred or procedural) but not moral values. This is achieved by means of the following:

1. Stretch the distance between the action and its consequences.
2. Exempt some "others" from the class of potential objects for moral conduct. Remove the "face".
3. Dissemble the other human objects of action into aggregates of functionally specific traits, held separate so that the occasion for re-assembling the "face" does not arise.

The removal of action beyond moral limits frequently involves mediation of

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4 Jhally states that the following types of information are systematically hidden in capitalist society:
The process of planning and designing products;
The actual relations of production that operate in particular factories around the world;
The conditions of work in factories;
The level of wages and benefits of workers;
Whether labour is unionized or non-unionized;
Quality checks and the level of automation;
Market research on consumers;
The effect on the environment of producing goods through particular industrial processes;
The renewable or non-renewable nature of raw materials used; and
The relations of production that prevail in the extraction of raw materials around the world.
All of these things constitute part of the meaning that is embedded in products.
action — actors rarely need to see the consequences of their actions, be it upstream, for example child slave labour in the production of textiles; or downstream, the massive quantities of waste and pollution generated by the modern machine process. This is also facilitated by rational problem solving styles such as means-end analysis, where the “problem” is broken down into “sub-problems”. In “effacing the face” the subject becomes a moral object, excluded from the class of “beings” and therefore capable of evaluation in terms of technical or instrumental value. This is a device used to reduce humans to the status of object. The Cartesian separation of knowing human mind from body, the sacred from the profane, brackets all of those things without minds into the status of an object; thus the animal kingdom and the natural world are already objects. Finally the self is destroyed as the totality of the moral subject is reduced to a collection of parts or attributes.

As “moderns” we are all habituated to such modes of reasoning, classification and action. It would not be stretching the point to say that this comes “naturally” as we are inculcated with the logic from our first day at school. In classifying the world in this way, we objectify experience and play around with this object, so much so that we take this object as the real thing. While Bauman is concerned with the objectification of the human being, the scope of this paper is wider. One might tentatively add:

(4) The components are recombined into a newly reconstituted whole.
(5) Acquire a new face via marketing.

To Leiss et al. (1990) the establishment of a market economy involves a process of unravelling and recombinant, not only of specific things, habitual routines and norms, but also the integument holding them together, their sense of collective identity and fate. These processes are an integral part of the Cartesian project of the Enlightenment. Thus one may discuss them with respect to the development of scientific method and to processes of commodification. For example the “classic” Marxist explanation of commodity fetishism may be explained as a process whereby labour is split from its product, where no one worker has visibility of the whole process; where the process itself is one of disassembly and reassembly, of the evacuation of meaning and its replacement by something else. Alternatively a “revisionist” view would imply that the great fetish of consumer society is the self, which has come to be defined through commodities. Within this view the argument is that marketing, in particular advertising, plays a crucial role in deconstructing the person (as an array of replaceable body parts and problem areas), only to offer the possibility of a (momentary) reconstruction by investment in commodities (Bauman 1991). It offers the possibility of the “DIY self” (McLuhan 1951, p.206). Elias (1982) describes how the individual’s quest for freedom has been transferred from the progressively rationalized sphere of production and into consumption where s/he can shop around in the supermarket of identity by selecting from the large pool of goods on offer. Bauman (1988) tells us that selected symbols may be put together in all sorts of ways, thus making for a great number of “unique combinations”.

“The market way consists, as it were, in building up the self using images. The self becomes identical with visual clues other people can see and recognise as meaning whatever they intend to mean. Visual clues are of many
kinds. They include the shape of one's body, bodily adornments.” (Bauman 1988, p.63).

The Return of the Repressed

This is associated with the effect which Ritzer (1993) has noted; the production of irrationality, inefficiency, lack of control by rational calculative systems. Within a Lacanian framework, this would be described as the return of the repressed; in the attempt to reduce everything to the same logic, difference will return.

Science and Commodification

The agenda for science as we know it was set by Comte, who described knowledge as moving progressively from theology, to philosophy to a positive science which would enable humans to reach the zenith of understanding (1853, p.2). It was at around this time that the notion of the soul was replaced and replaced with that of the self (Fine 1986). This was a tremendously important development in terms of the nature of commodification. The objective disengagement of a self from the collective theocracy was also a vital precondition which opened the path for the industrialization of the human mind (Enzenberger 1974). From here on science would provide the prism for the mediation of all of human experience, including religion (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989) and, together with the development of the nation-state, would shoulder the pre-eminent responsibility for meeting the needs of mankind (de Certeau 1984). Rose speaks of the optimism of scientists:

"Those apologists offer us a breathtaking image of the prospect of a world, a nature, including human nature, made over in humanity's image to serve human needs." (Rose 1986, p.26).

The Baconian ideal stressed the notion that science should not only seek to "uncover the veil" by explaining the laws of nature, it should enable mankind to dominate over nature. This necessitated the development of an accompanying technology. Darwin exhorted scientists to remake the world in the image and likeness of mankind, to reshape it so that it conforms with our ideals. Accompanied with this was the notion that the history of the sciences would equal the progress of mankind (Passmore 1978).

The development of the classic scientific model can be modelled closely on the system of rational calculation described by Bauman (1991). The method is based on reductionism, the Cartesian separation of a knowing subject from an object of knowledge. The tendency to objectify, reduce and dissemble is the very principle of science and technology. Thus in "natural science" an object is dissembled into parts which are somehow more "fundamental" than the wholes they compose; in "social" sciences problems are subjected to means-end analysis whereby the "problem" is broken down into a number of sub-problems, which are parcelled out. While undoubtedly this process of enquiry has yielded a huge amount of understanding and immensely powerful technologies, there remains the question that in removing
the "face" of an object, the scientist studies a dead thing. A central assumption of the Cartesian approach is that once all the separate problems have been solved, the system can somehow be put back or reassembled. Cramer (1993) argues that this may seem valid for simple systems, for living systems this is not the case as the whole is greater than the sum of its parts:

"When we dissect a living system into its parts we examine a dead thing only. Life, a property of the whole system is lost upon dissection." (Cramer 1993, p.12).

By removing the "face" from the object of enquiry, by disassembling it to study its "fundamental" structure, something is lost. That which was lost is now returning. For example Chaos theory is based on the critical importance of what previously had been regarded as superficial and trivial (Gleick 1988). By striving to find the ultimate, perfectibility, scientists must grapple with the contradictions imposed by their utopian ideal (Dunlop 1985). Rose contends that there is a fallacy at the heart of all reductionism which is that in striving to understand the whole, to develop a theory of everything, the (false) assumption is made that the parts are ontologically prior to the wholes they compose. In seeking to read the "Mind of God" scientists might first want to sort out the answer to the question of whether the universe is a symmetrical or computational system (Barrow 1991). By reducing our explanation to that which is caught by one metaphor, other possibilities are displaced.

The perfectibility of scientific progress has been cast into doubt as its accompanying technology has brought in its wake:

"The technology of automation, nerve gas, germ warfare and atomic destruction have driven home the lesson of human helplessness directly proportional to 'control over nature'." (Barzun 1964).

The list cited above has grown somewhat longer since then.

The process of scientific enquiry lead to an adiaphoric state:

"The scientists heart is pure, his intentions beyond reproach; he cannot be blamed if the greedy, the lazy, the vain and the arrogant seize upon his discoveries for their ignoble ends, whether in the pursuit of ignoble gain or party power."

Passmore (1978) argues that scientists have been anything but neutral, and that scientific questions which claim to speak for the universality of the human condition and to speak "disinterestedly" to make over the world of human needs, are in fact speaking for a very precise group. He argues that the universality of science turns out to be a projection of the needs, curiosities and ways of appreciating the world "not of some classless, raceless, genderless humanity, but of a particular class, race and gender who have been the makers of science and the framers of its questions indeed from Francis Bacon onwards" (Passmore 1978, p.26). To Passmore, the solution is to ask the right (rational) questions. The notion of what constitutes an appropriate question for science constantly deserves scrutiny. Thus the question "Is in vitro fertilization a good thing?" is not the right question to ask so long as the prior question "How can we increase the number of wanted, healthy babies?" has not
been asked. However Passmore's position depends on the establishment of a universal, rationally accepted criterion.

Commodification of Scientific Knowledge

While the principle of rational calculation lies at the heart of the scientific enterprise, it is interesting to note how contemporary scientists have become concerned at its infiltration into the academy. One might accuse them of irony, maybe naivety, perhaps even duplicity in making such claims. For the outsider it is perhaps ironic to note this concern to preserve the integrity of the academy, when considering its approach towards its own object of study and to the manner in which, as Brownlie and Saren point out, academic prestige is earned via the accumulation of cultural capital in the pursuit of academic excellence (Bourdieu 1984).

In The Consciousness Industry, Enzenberger (1974) focuses on what he sees as the industrialization of the human mind, as it is subjected to a process of instrumental rational calculation through technology. To use Ritzer's term, the mind of the scientist is "McDonaldized" by the mind industry:

"The mind industry can take on anything, digest it, reproduce it, and pour it out. Whatever our minds can conceive of is grist to its mill; nothing will leave it unadulterated: It is capable of turning any idea into a slogan and any work of the imagination into a hit." (Enzenberger 1974, p.5).

However Enzenberger also points out that this is also its vulnerable point as it depends on the substance it must fear most, and must repress, the creative productivity of people. He presciently relates that:

"While we still indulge in controversies over curricula, school systems, college and university reforms, and shortages in the teaching professions, technological systems are being perfected which will make nonsense of all the adjustments we are now considering. The language laboratory and the closed-circuit TV are only the forerunners of a fully industrialized educational system which will make use of increasingly centralized programming and of recent advances in the study of learning. In that process, education will become a mass media, the most powerful of all, and a billion dollar business." (Enzenberger 1974, p.6).

In the 1990s we are seeing the actualization of Enzenberger's vision with the creation of international "electronic" universities, which are fed and maintained by groups of technicians. Academic talent is bought in to homogenize the intellectual fast food in a manner which is compatible with the requirements of the customers of the operation.

Within the UK setting, the respected scientist/academic John Ziman (1994) stops short of referring to the industrialization of scientific knowledge; he feels that the
situation is more complex than this. However he does question what he sees as the extension of a narrow form of rational instrumentalism into the scientific domain. Ziman argues that the question of how science is done in the UK has changed fundamentally since the mid-1970s; he also states that by and large he agrees with the intentions underlying such changes. For example he agrees that science has always been treated as a marketable commodity, that demands for competitive excellence, the efficient use of resources, managerial efficiency and the systematic exploitation of scientific discoveries are all perfectly reasonable demands. However he is despairing of the consequences which the implementation of such practices are having for the quality and indeed the survival of UK science.

Interestingly Ziman's preferred metaphor for describing the scientific process is as a garden (cf. Bauman 1990), tended by gardeners who are trusted to "know best" because they are attuned to the rhythms of the garden and its cyclical movements, who converse openly regarding new achievements in their areas, and who allow space for the "maverick" who may come up with the development of new and interesting species. By contrast to this idyll he describes the encroachment of scientific management involving an increase of controls over what scientists can study (as their power has been eroded by the creation of an elaborate apparatus of committees and administrators assigned to provide policy and to co-ordinate national programmes of directed research); secondly over what happens to results (as results of even basic research can quickly acquire commercial/military value). To Ziman, the creation of such foci threaten the creative, serendipitous nature of research which has provided the spark for many important discoveries; growing pressures for commercialization and the creation of intellectual property, can encourage researchers to keep quiet about what they have discovered and may threaten the traditionally free flow of knowledge between scientists. While Ziman does not object to notions such as "accountability", "efficiency", "appraisal", "assessment", "exploitation?" or "selectivity", he laments their "narrow instrumentality" of practical application:

"Nevertheless, excessive zeal in the interpretation of these requirements has given birth to practices that are quite out of keeping with the research process. Many of these practices are so ill judged that they could do lasting damage to the health of science and its efficiency as a social institution." (Ziman 1994, p.252).

In Ziman's garden, accountability was a matter of honour, a matter of mutual trust between the gardeners that they would work in the garden's best interests. Accountability has been reduced to efficiency, which in turn has been reduced to "value for money" — the hypothetical profitability of projects at the expense of their contribution to knowledge. Carried to extremes, Ziman argues that this attitude could be quite devastating (1994, p.254). While he sees the rationale behind accountability linked towards the restructuring of the UK Research Councils as impeccable, he believes that this is quite blind to the incalculable but equally genuine effects which are sure to stem in the long run from less accountable research (suggesting that Einstein, Newton and Darwin would not have fared too well under peer review). Ziman also criticizes the role of evaluations; the crude manner in which the assignment of numeric indicators determine the grant received by each
academic department; what he regards as the incompetent implementations of many evaluations; finally the size and cost of the exercise relative to its worth. He suggests that "a succession of such events within the same cycle has all the effects of pulling up a seedling by the roots to see how well it is growing". The focus on narrow instrumental evaluations invites a simulated response: "into putting a good public face on work that one knows privately to be perfectly sound" (p.256). The effect on staff has been:

"They see their research careers as being shaped by "evaluation" procedures which they widely regard as hollow, maladroit and sometimes insensitive to the point of rank injustice. They can be forgiven the cynicism when their attempt to boost their ratings by flooding the data banks with low quality papers or mutually favourable citations." (Ziman 1994, pp.257-258).

While Fairclough (1993) hesitates to draw firm conclusions regarding the growing "marketization" of the universities, he does express concern regarding the changing discourse, shifting authority relations and shifts in self-identity among academics. He notes a colonization of universities by "marketing speak", and a widespread instrumentalization of discursive practices, for example, towards synthetic personalization, the simulation in institutional settings of the person-to-person communication of ordinary conversation. This involves a transformation of the sense of professional identity among staff.

'We are of course all constantly subjected to promotional discourses, to the point that there is a serious problem of trust: given that much of our discursive environment is characterized by more or less overt promotional interest, how can we be sure what's authentic? How, for example, do we know when friendly conversational talk is not just simulated for promotional effect." (Fairclough 1993, p.142).

Ahonen (1985), in discussing the discipline of economics, traces a different trajectory by locating a form of commodification in the shift from a scientific realist focus to a methodological instrumentalist focus. In noting the discipline's relative isolation from other sciences and the poverty of its use among these, he reflects that the drift from realism to instrumentalism implies that critical arguments referring to a lack of correspondence between the assumptions and propositions of a science are prone to be accepted at the beginning of the development of a science but are considered less legitimate as it matures (1985, p.8). Thus he suggests that criticisms reflecting a lack of realism⁵ and against the cognitive structure⁶ of the discipline are unlikely to be heeded. Ahonen asserts that classical economists response to criticism

⁵i.e. including assumptions relating to maximization; the psychological and social meaning of work; the rationality of consumers; concerning the marginal nature of choice.

⁶i.e. including lack of interest in the empirical testing of theories; the fundamentally abstract nature of the science; methodological individualism; methodological atomism, economic versus non-economic demarcation; implicit acceptance of the existing distribution of income and wealth; the instrumental concept of efficiency; the oversimplification and misleading conception of knowledge and information; the exogeneity of preferences; the incompatibility of micro- and macroeconomic theory.
was to ignore it by means of "immunizing stratagems". So why did neo-classical economics become transformed into a science? "One reason often suggested is that it offered an explanation as to why a system of commercial transactions was morally defensible, based on a partial reading of Adam Smith, where Smith the empiricist and sceptic was sidelined. The role of marketing within such a system is to plunder established referent systems for their forms, as Ewen (1988) says to "strip them of their skins". These "skins" then come available in the supermarket of desire, where they can be assembled to provide the simulation of identity.

Ahonen makes no bones about why this was the case: "The very reason why economics was given social status from the beginning of its existence was its ability to legitimise the competitive economic order." (1985, p.27). Due to this, alternative explanations, particularly those based on the labour theory of value had to be removed, as a consequence of the subsequent reduction of social welfare to individual utility coupled with a reductionist reasoning based on marginal choice and the conditions of a competitive atomistic economic order.

At this point it is interesting to draw parallels with the examples provided at the start of this paper. Commentators discuss the encroachment of "marketization", "narrow instrumental calculation", bringing in its wake a feeling of ambivalence among scientists and academics, a growing lack of trust and an increase in simulation as scientific study is progressively removed from its subject.

Commodification of Management Science

In the previous section, the principle of science was described as the practice of ontological reductionism (the primacy of the parts over the whole). It is important to consider this in relation to management science as Hales (1986a) describes as the pecking order of the sciences, with the most radically reduced explanations at the top and the most-nearly experiential at the bottom:

"The lower down it is, the more chance there is that a science will be accused of being tainted with social, political and ideological assumptions. Economists will say it of sociologists, psychologists of sociologists, ethologists of psychologists, physiologists of ethologists and psychologists, biologists of all the human and behavioural sciences no matter how hard they try to pin numbers on things." (Hales 1986a, p.323).

Hales suggests that this carry-over of the ideals of the "natural" sciences into "management" science breeds a pre-occupation with technique at the expense of knowledge; rather than asking what one would like to know and what would be of decisive importance for the next step in social development, the management scientist attempts to be content to attribute importance to what is measured because it happens to be measurable. (1986a, p.125).

In a study of Operations Research (OR), Hales (1986b) argues that OR researchers reduce society to a matter of money and markets (1986, p.65) and of exhibiting a "profoundly ideological caste" (p.62).

The previous discussion has centred on the role of science as a rational calculative
system together with claims that the production of scientific knowledge is itself subject to progressive commodification. In response to the former, some critics have suggested that a widening of scientific discourse to allow debate as to what constitutes the “right” scientific questions, would be helpful. However given the spread of simulation, with indeterminacy, fluidity and distrust following in its wake, one wonders how an extension of rationality can avoid the seduction of appearances?

**Commodification of Marketing Thought**

The discussion in the first section of this paper explored the close links between interpretations of commodification and the technologies developed by marketing practitioners. In the second section it was seen that similar technologies are built into the fabric of the classic scientific method, with concurrent outcomes such as loss of “face”, appropriation of life force, the reduction of use to exchange as the result of processes of objectification, disassembling and reassembling; and finally the adiaphoric nature of the process which renders the object of scientific research morally neutral.

How should one proceed to discuss commodification in relation to marketing knowledge? Hales (1986a) provides a useful scheme which describes the ways in which “the market has entered science, science has entered the market” under the headings of profit, patents, wage work, and career capital (1986, pp.112–123). While several of these are relevant to the study of marketing knowledge, others (patenting of marketing knowledge?) are less so. One might also wish to incorporate the later observations of Ziman and Fairclough (op. cit.) who refer to the penetration of academic discourse by further principles of rational calculation.

A key aspect of commodification is veiling, the notion that something is masked through the “mysterious” appearances of goods in the marketplace (Jhally 1990). This involves referral to the backstage behaviours of the academy, the “veiled” productions which are masked by the appearances of seamless academic products in journals, the elevation of some, the damnation of others in the battle for reputation and career capital. In order to consider these issues the following scheme from Baudrillard (1981) has been adapted.

— It is the reflection of a basic reality;
— It masks and perverts a basic reality;
— It masks the absence of a basic reality;
— It bears no relation to any reality whatsoever.

**A Subject True to Itself and its Object?**

If the first position is accepted then one must conclude that marketing is true to itself and to its object of study. But can such a position be sustained? What can this mean? If one takes a Popperian view (1959), then theories should be rigorously tested and open to challenge. However within this view the academic is separate from the knowledge which is generated. On the other hand if we take a Kuhnian view (1970), we may be much more aware of the social dimension to the generation of academic
knowledge. The stock of academic reputation is built through publication, involving an anonymous process of peer review. Peters and Ceci (1982) have provided strong supporting evidence that despite such "anonymous" procedures, who you are is likely to be more important than what you have to say? Mahoney (1977) has found that an article which has positive results is more likely to be accepted.

Yet the reader in the 1990s should not find the above too surprising. In Homo Academicus (1984), Bourdieu describes the various battles for academic distinction (reputation) which were carried on in the French academy at around the time of 1968. As those who work in it know, the academic world was already highly political, already a marketplace for the accumulation of symbolic capital before any of the most recent UK government "reforms" were set in motion. Today we should hardly be scandalized by the establishment of battle lines between groups, the cynical deployment of individual strategies for power, of the various exercises of bad faith in everyday academic life (Desmond 1993).

While the above claims reflect criticism of scientific claims to objectivity and neutrality, more specific criticism of the conventional wisdom (Galbraith 1967) of marketing scholarship suggests that it is generally partisan, reductionist and technist, obsessed with method. For example, Dholakia et al. (1980) say that marketing knowledge is not neutral but is overwhelmingly associated with the values of a particular culture (the USA). Tucker (1974) makes the pithy observation that marketers tend to take an interest in consumer behaviour much in the same way that fishermen might study the behaviour of fish; a view shared by others (Mauser 1980).

Given that one object of the development of marketing thought was to act as a moderating response to the more extreme effects of neoclassical economics, it is ironic to note that criticisms of the production of marketing knowledge bear a striking similarity to those made by Ahonen (1985) regarding economics. Dholakia et al. (op. cit.) contend that marketing scholars have adopted a narrow rational instrumental approach to the subject in drawing a boundary around the study of consumer behaviour, while ignoring wider aspects of consumption. Wensley's (1994) review of research for three marketing domains notes how despite attempts to reduce complexity, the complexity returns; "every time we focus in on small part of the complex picture we merely see the whole pattern of complexity repeat itself." (1994, p.7). Engel (Bartels 1988, p.264) feels that marketing has elevated quantification for quantification's sake into a series of meaningless "number crunchings". This latter point captures the methodological instrumentalist drift of much of marketing study, which has sacrificed commensurability for practical explanatory effect. With method elevated to an end in its own right, many studies stand out not so much for the reality which they reveal, so much as for the almost magical statistical amulets which are hung around the data to cleanse it of any lingering attachment to the reality from which it has been stripped.

One may also argue that the creation of marketing knowledge renders its subject adiaphoric, or morally neutral. Perhaps unsurprisingly this accords to the

7The authors took 12 published articles from prestigious institutions and resubmitted them with new names for authors and institutions. Of the 12, three were recognized and turned back by editors. Of the other nine, eight were rejected on the grounds of serious methodological flaws. The authors experienced considerable difficulty in having their findings published.

8Via the development of German Historical School ideas by the Wisconsin School. See Jones and Monleson (1990).
mainstream view of social marketers (Laczniaik et al. 1979, p.33). However this is a feature of marketing discourse even when marketing academics seek to legislate, which is extremely rare. For example Krohn (1989) accuses condom manufacturers of negligent homicide in failing to aggressively market condoms to gays. However in Krohn’s piece, “gays” emerge as an isolated objective category, fragmented in terms of key variables such as political orientation, religion, lifestyle, rendered passive and adiaphoric as a function of the application of the marketing method. The morality of Krohn’s argument is injected into the discourse from outside where Krohn places himself at the centre of a panopticon, setting himself up as the arbiter of what is “rationally” good. The danger of such moralizing becomes quickly apparent. How easy it would be for someone who was less altruistic to appropriate such a method.

**Does Marketing Distort a Basic Reality?**

There may, therefore, be grounds to suppose that marketing knowledge does not describe a basic reality; but surely one can never say that it masks or perverts a basic reality? Yet this was precisely the contention of “critical theorists” such as the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Marcuse) and many others whose life work has been devoted to what Dholakia et al. (op. cit.) claim marketing has left out, that is the study of consumer culture and consumption. The issue is complicated by the existence of a plurality of critical schools and positions. For example, for Marcuse (1964), the commodification of the consciousness of society and knowledge into a bland one-dimensional uniformity was the most important factor, as in the film The Stepford Wives. For followers of Althusser (1971), the ideological function of commodities was the principal factor in explaining commodification. Within these views, marketing knowledge has acted as the political wing of neoclassical economics, its role to point the way for further colonization, to go where no marketer has gone before, to marketize the parts that other ideologies could not reach. This extension of instrumental marketing thought into the social and societal realms has been championed by a number of influential marketers (e.g. Kotler 1976), despite warnings to the contrary (Laczniaik et al. 1979). Critics have argued that even if marketing claimed to have a “welfare” function, this was no more than a ruse to foreclose discussion of what was really happening, the colonization of all cultural discourse by the commodity form through the technologies which marketing had itself created (Wernick 1991).

**Does Marketing Mark a Basic Reality?**

This third level is also based on the notion that marketing is ideological, based on the pursuit of an ideal self-image by marketers (the establishment of a true marketing science) while suppressing that which threatens this enterprise; the expression of difference in critique. According to the critical view, marketing academics generally load the dice, they ask loaded questions, where possible they squeeze critique out onto the margins of the discourse. “Critical” scholars would argue that critique is allowed within marketing, but a sanitized critique, a critique with its teeth removed,
made palatable, McDonaldized for those for whom the outer limits of philosophy are those of the marketing concept. Up until recently this assertion may have been fairly accurate. For example, one of the big "set piece" debates in the *Journal of Marketing* (Vol. 50/51) concerned the impact of advertising on society, featuring two marketing "insiders", Richard Pollay and Maurice Holbrook. Although Pollay deployed some detailed arguments, he deliberately excluded the European Marxist tradition; equivalent to fighting with one hand tied behind his back! Generally speaking marketers have been keener to appropriate the methods used by critics and discard the critical baggage. For example Hirschman's (1988) otherwise excellent study of the analytical structures of the T.V. soaps *Dallas* and *Dynasty*, (which parallels Jen Ang's study as a Lacanian/Althusserian analysis), air-brushes almost all reference to the critical nature of the theories which she employs, focusing instead on their explanatory usefulness. However, talk of a unified scientific discourse of marketing is misleading as marketing is itself split into several different academic and social groupings, some of which have made attempts to incorporate ethical and critical perspectives (Sheth et al. 1988).

By saying that marketing knowledge masks the absence of a basic reality, critics from outside marketing (and a growing number within it) are saying that marketing knowledge masks engagement with any real critique. Thus the motivations behind recent attempts to "Rethink Marketing" (Brownlie et al. 1994)—apart from the attempt to breathe new life into an intellectual dead horse—were, for some at least, an attempt to effect an engagement between the discourse of marketing and its "shadow", the set of parallel critical discourses which have traditionally related to marketing as matter might relate to anti-matter. There has been a growing passionate call for marketers to ask the right questions on the basis of a practical dialogue with critical views. This comes very close to the (what some would say utopian) view of the great "modernist" philosopher Jurgen Habermas, whose early work (1971) was concerned with the reconciliation of technical (empirical analytic), historical (hermeneutic) and emancipatory (critical) cognitive interests. On this basis, it is hoped that marketers might engage in some critical self-reflection and that some balance might be struck within the discipline, which will lead to the right questions being asked. While this may sound admirable in theory, in practice it is difficult to see how the engagement of dialogue and agreement based on trust, reciprocity and shared knowledge can be created.

**Establishing a Dialogue?**

What are the chances of creating an "ideal speech situation", a form of engagement between marketing and its "shadow"? There are some exemplars to be found. For example in the related discipline of Organizational Behaviour, the journals *Organization Studies* and *Organization* have allowed "regulatory" and "critical" views to mix. However there are major difficulties involved in relating marketing to its "shadow". What I call Regulatory Marketing follows in the Anglo-American empiricist tradition, its conventional wisdom is to emulate natural science, often employing an instrumental methodology; it generally renders its subject adiaphoric;

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6 Shadow refers to a more isolated position than an Other; it is a repressed Other.

10 See Burrell and Morgan (1979) for a further description.
consequently marketers rarely see to moralize or legislate; it is primarily functionalist in orientation; it is generally regarded as the political wing of production sharing a liberal pluralist/reformist view of politics; its spirit is utopian in that there is a fundamental belief in human progress and the ultimate perfectibility of science. By contrast its shadow, “Critical Consumption”, follows more closely on the heels of the continental European philosophical tradition, although some Marxist variants lay claim to a rational scientific basis; it is radical humanist/structuralist in orientation; employs a range of methods from pure theorising to structuralist analysis and semiotic analysis. Critical Consumption is apocalyptic to the extent that authors are despondent regarding possibilities for slowing the onward march of the consumption machine; however authors often seek to legislate as to what is “appropriate” moral behaviour.

The foregoing descriptions are, to an extent, caricatures. The forces which have held them for so long in stable opposition to each other have been weakened and they have begun to flow into one another at the margin; although whether this means that marketing will become more true to its object or whether Critical Consumption will no longer be “critical” remains to be seen. Regulatory Marketing has begun to incorporate aspects of the Critical Consumption approach and critique. For example this is exemplified in the work of Russell Belk, Barbara Stern, Elizabeth Hirschman (1987) who writes of the implications of treating people as products and Bob Grafton- Small (1992), who discusses the symbolic importance of objects which might have previously been ridiculed as trivial to the interests of marketers. Such concessions have not been won easily. On the other hand those marketers who still tend to be schooled in a narrow form of “pragmatic” empiricism (Hirschman 1985) speak a totally different language from critical theorists. Perhaps the possibilities for creating a dialogue between “technist” and “emancipatory” marketing discourses is currently defeated by the very act of discourse itself as a classic example of paradigm incommensurability.

On the other hand, over the past decade the field of “Critical Consumption” has tended to fragment into “Critical” and “Populist” sectors which have turned upon each other with a great deal of ferocity. For example, Laing has attacked the ideology of those “marxist sociologists” who sought to explain the apparently aimless activities of skinheads and others in terms of class struggle, “when in fact they seemed to be mere consumers or delinquents, these kinds were acting out a proletarian destiny, reacting against capitalism” (1985, p.123). The development of “New Times” revisionism has seen a move towards celebration and play in the field of consumption, with the expression of previously heretical view that marketing might be alright after all (Myers 1986). “New Times” critics have accused the others with elitism, voyeurism, with effecting a detached moral superiority against what they saw as the rise of “vulgar” popular culture. These critics have in turn been criticized as conniving in the commodification of culture by effecting a form of disengenuous solidarity with ordinary people and their preferences (McGuigan 1992). A final but important point is that from the point of view of commodification, one could argue that by focusing purely upon culture, such critical theorists were ignoring the fact that commodification is ultimately a relation between production and consumption.

At times the symbolic violence against different factions has descended into polemical name-calling. For example, McGuigan notes a skirmish between Judith
Williamson, Cora Kaplan and Duncan Webster, whereby the latter pair accused Williamson of pure anti-American bias when Williamson had not even mentioned the USA in her articles (1992, pp.78–79). Referring to a similar series of incidents in the field of Organization Studies, Burrell (1994) notes that the debate between different theoretical perspectives had become linked to national differences, between French, (post-structuralist), German (modernist) and UK (anti-Continental) views. While noting that this is "very worrying", he also notes the parallel rise in neofascism around Europe and makes a plea for transcendence of these "narrow nationalisms" (1994, p.15). It seems clear that the need for some form of rational approach to these difficulties has never been more pressing and that the tolerance and respect called for by Habermas are solely needed now. The future, however, looks bleak.

Does Marketing Knowledge Bear any Relation to Anything?

This final realm is that which Baudrillard (1981) refers to as the realm of simulation. He argues that simulation has been brought about by the aggressive commodifying tendencies of capital which as it has reduced everything to equivalence, has cut its way through all processes of meaning. Without resorting to Baudrillard’s apocalyptic rhetoric, is there any evidence of a drift towards simulation in marketing knowledge? In earlier discussion it was noted that Ziman, Fairclough and Hales had all noted a change in academic discourse whereby, as the result of the spread of an increasingly promotional logic, it was becoming difficult to know whether or not one could trust another academic any more.

Harley and Lees (1995) provide evidence to support the view that the grading of academic journals as the result of the UK research evaluation exercise is tending to reinforce a normative pull away towards a recognition of mainstream journals and a downgrading of critical journals. A study by Brown and Wright (1995) offers tentative support to the view that the (limited) sample of marketing academics consulted had a preference for the more technical journals (for example the Journal of Macromarketing which represents an entire school of thought ranks 16th in the list).

On a grander scale, there is some evidence that both Regulatory Marketing and Critical Consumption discourses are to an extent self-referential. Within Regulatory Marketing, the pre-occupation with methodological instrumentalism has removed it from its subject, while within Critical Consumption this removal has been more the result of ideological wishful thinking. One also wonders whether that person on the top deck of the Clapham omnibus so beloved of lawyers, would recognize either themselves or their concerns in the concerns of the Regulatory Marketers or the Critical Consumption theorists? One also wonders to what extent "ordinary people" would see their concerns mirrored in either discourse? On this point Critical Consumption probably has the edge, for if nothing else, such theories provide some explanation for the day to day cultural reality that we live and breathe; more importantly they may also help us understand the Observer "Life" section which nowadays is written by graduates schooled in the guise of media studies. Of course Regulatory Marketing academics have the edge over Critical Consumption when it comes to telling companies what to do. But the accepted wisdom of rational
marketing practice is itself backfiring, undermined by the "return of the repressed", as the "victims" of segmentation techniques have turned the techniques of rational calculation, back onto the rational calculators, "cutting and pasting", "mixing 'n' matching", "ducking and weaving", "zipping & zapping" from one "segment" to another so the suddenly "Chaos Theory" becomes fashionable parlance in marketing salons. One might also ask the question; who is listening? Are academics the only audience for such works? If so then what is the use of marketing academics providing limits for marketing practice. Did anyone listen to Lacznia et al. (1979), Hirschman (1983) or Houston (1986) when they attempted to set limits on the extent to which the marketing concept should be applied?

Did such pleas stop marketing and PR practitioners from colonizing areas such as art, the academy and the political environment. Does anyone "out there" actually read any of the pronouncements of the marketing academy or of critical marketing? The stark answer is probably not! (unless you have a slot in the Observer "Life" section). So are academics the only audience for academic works? If so it would be unsurprising if it were found that articles by academics were not so much read by other academics as cannibalized by them for their contribution to the "cannibal's" own publications. One hardly needs to pose the question; "Does the marketing machine dance to the tune of the marketing academic or the academics dance to the tune of the machine?" And so is it really stretching the imagination to say that marketing academics in the "nineties" are like characters in a Pinter or a Beckett play, and that academic marketing is a largely self-referential and narcissistic discourse, governed more and more by developments in the academic marketplace? The real discourse about marketing is going on elsewhere, in t.v. ads, in "investigative" t.v. series and newspaper articles, on QVC and other tacky "home shopping" channels¹, and newspaper and magazine reviews. Marketing academics are now so busy monitoring the (better) stuff produced by the media that they have to have their videos set to run day and night. And they have bigger budgets too!

Both Regulatory Marketing and Critical Marketing are "modernist" creations. Both have sought to penetrate the veil which obscures truth; both have identified "truth effects"; neither has found the truth. The academic subject is trapped in ambivalence. On the one hand it is imperative to remain optimistic and hope for a resolution which will marry the discourses together to offer a rational response to the technological machine and the myriad ideologies which surround it. On the other there is the feeling that perhaps events have moved onwards, to a realm beyond those positions, where there are no fixed reference points. In that case we will no longer be able to rely on academics to arrest the machine. In any case academics are like moths trapped in circumlocution by the lure of the light of a knowledge which they will never be sure of until death. A second force which works against academic intervention is the normative power of the academy, academic organization and convention. Meanwhile ordinary people are maintained in stasis, literally blinded by science (experts). Experts make life so complex for themselves and for everyone else that they are caught in the glue of their own arguments. Technology of rational calculation is blind to argument. For some such is the state of

¹Perhaps the schlock that we see marketed via these media on through so-called "info-mercials" parallels what Marx first saw—an incredibly bizarre fetish with useless goods (face exercisers that you stick in your mouth), "designer" leather jackets for dogs, vacuums for pets, teeth whiteners, spray-on hair, "hand painted enamel" masks that you can "buy for 50 cents and sell for $10". This river of trivia pours day after day into Dawkins (1995) river of DNA!
human degradation is such that they welcome the coming triumph of the machine over human nature.

We cannot expect to see the reclamation of the subject by marketing academics because by definition the very action of seeking to reclaim the subject, when gauged within the tight logic of rational calculation, is itself irrational. As Bauman (1989) comments, such reclamation can be based only on the immediate unsolicited recognition of the plight of the Other. Thus Passmore (1978), an academic, suggests that a "right" question which can be asked is "Should we allow animals to suffer unduly?" For Passmore the answer is "no". He sets out his reasons for this. Another academic asks another "right" question; "How do we know that they suffer, perhaps we are anthropomorphizing them?"; a discussion then ensues on the (unknowable) aspect of whether suffering is a uniquely human capacity. Recently there have been televised reports of the crowds of middle class protestors who have blocked England's southern ports at Dover and at Brightlingsea in protest at the live transportation of animals to the continent. Three things stick in my memory of these now distant events. First was the cynicism of journalists reflecting on the "curious" English passion for "cuddly animals". Second was a statement of the Bishop of Dover who, following his "blessing" of a consignment of animals for the wrong done to them, equated such treatment with the Holocaust; finally there was the woman who had come along for the day with a friend to see what it was all about, and who said that as a lorry passed, her eye joined with that of a young calf and this joining had instantly communicated to her its terror and confusion. From then on she became an ardent protestor.

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