What Constitutes Usable Knowledge in Macromarketing?

David D. Monieson

Marketing science studies are usable to the practitioner only by chance. That field has become too narrowly focused a discipline. To be usable, macromarketing studies must remain open to the poetics, the "art" of the field. A transcending mental construct is required, one that enhances, not destroys, our scientific heritage.

The business practitioner is not especially interested in developing a body of scientific knowledge about his field. However, his academic counterpart is concerned primarily with doing just that. The academic's approach implies one basic overriding assumption: that science provides a truer account of reality than does any other approach. This assumption is explored in greater detail later, but it can be said now that reality is not explicitly definable and that many contemporary students of the philosophy of science have given up the notion of reality because of this definitional difficulty (Gelwick 1977, p. 85). And for the practitioner certainly that which works is reality, be it scientifically derived or not.

THE PROFESSIONAL HERITAGE OF MARKETING

E. D. Jones of the University of Michigan is credited by Bartels as having given the first marketing course during the academic year 1902-1903. In 1914, Jones published a book titled *The Business Administrator*. Professor Jones's work represented the thrust of what the early professors of business were attempting to do—transferring the lessons of scientific management from machines and processes to administration. The rationale for Jones's book is based on the following argument:

1. Basic propositions and laws can be discovered by studying the work of successful administrators.

2. If the methods and rules of successful administrators are hard to uncover because of secrecy, then study the successful methods of administration in statecraft, war, and science.

The obvious implication of course is that principles of administrative ability are transferable. The professor's task is to uncover such principles by studying those administrators who have been successful.

Jones's book deserves recognition because he made explicit the nature and use of principles as propounded by the early business teachers. He viewed the pioneer of a field, say marketing, as being succeeded by the systematizers who invoke an ordering of details in conformity to a general plan. That plan, in turn, rests upon concepts and principles derived from the study of the facts. Further systematization brings out theories; more fact collection forces an economizing of the ordering by the use of an even more universal employment of principles, and hopefully an ultimate system of laws (Jones 1914, pp. 103-105). Jones cites William James for justification of the above approach:

The best possible sort of system into which to weave an object mentally is a rational system, or what is called a 'science.' Place the thing in its pigeon-hole in a classificatory series; explain it logically by its causes, and deduce from it its necessary effects; find out of what natural laws it is an instance—and then you know it in the best of all possible ways. A 'science' is thus the greatest of labor-saving contrivances. It relieves the memory of an immense number of details, replacing, as it does, of identity, similarity, or analogy. If you know a 'law', you may discharge your memory of masses of particular instances, for the law will reproduce them for you whenever you require them. (p. 105)

Needless to say, the above quotation proposes an idea the Jamesian prototype being the hard sciences. But be in mind that the facts are arranged, classified, and relabeled in a manner that reflects but one version, albeit a powerful version, of reality.

As so many of that day, Jones believed in the power and the promise of inductive research. In his book,
pays special homage to Herbert Spencer as "the first to attempt a strictly inductive or scientific system of philosophy" (1914, p. 110). More telling is the fact that Jones was a student of R. T. Ely of Wisconsin, who in turn studied under Karl Knies, the German historical economist at Heidelberg. The German historical school disdained speculation and preferred the less flamboyant and more orderly process of empirical investigation, verification and induction. Ely also worked at the Royal Statistical Bureau in Berlin under its director, Dr. Ernst Engle, famous for his laws of consumption. Inductive research was at its zenith in Germany, and Ely, like so many other Americans studying in Germany, returned to the New World with a passion for the "look and see" method. Jones and other early marketing teachers were taught to think and to research in the fact-gathering inductive manner, always with an eye to structuring such research within a scientifically rationalized model of reality.

THE PRACTITIONER-THEORETICIAN DICHOTOMY

Within the academic cloister, principles relating to action are logically derived; in the world of action and change, the decision maker cannot ever allow himself to be bound by ex ante principles. Two variations of thinking are involved here. The decision maker is heuristically attempting to solve the problem at hand, tinkering if you will, with the variables at his command until a satisfactory resolution is struck, given the time constraints available to work out that solution. Unlike the research laboratory where experimental conditions can be identically reproduced, the world laboratory never operates within two identical environmental situations. So although what worked in the past may be used as a guide, the uniqueness of the total situation at hand calls for a unique resolution. The decision maker intuitively "knows" that his level of thinking must be such that it transcends (but does not exclude) the rigors and limits of scientific thinking.

It can be said that the practitioner creates a reality as a consequence of his practice, and that the theoretician, academic or otherwise, rationalizes that reality within a logical context. Both constructs are the result of creative energy and thought, each of a different sort. It is highly problematic that either is really in a position to resolve the problems of the other, given their different world views and missions. It seems clear, too, that reality must first be created before it can be rationalized, and, to be sure, there can be more than one rationale to explain that reality.

To illustrate, two recent Pulitzer prize-winning books—Alfred Chandler's The Visible Hand, and Daniel J. Boorstin's The Americans: The Democratic Experience—both document exhaustively how contemporary marketing structure and practice emerged in the United States between 1850 and 1880; both maintain that this emergence was technologically determined. However, each presents a different rationale as to why the new marketing structure and practice took hold and flourished. Both explanations are brilliantly expressed, and surely both are equally plausible.

Alfred Chandler (1977) explains that technology fashioned the railroad locomotive to house steam power, and technology transformed the energy of electricity to the instant and distant magic of telegraph communication. The railroad and the telegraph, the two leviathans of material and message—of raw materials, farm products, and finished goods; of market intelligence, market quotations, and contracts—accelerated the buy-sell transaction. Railroad and telegraph shortened the dimensions of time and space even though the ground area of the nation was exploding as the western boundary moved rapidly toward the Pacific. There was at the same time a commensurate metamorphosis in factory production, also predicated on the railroad and telegraph. Chandler's thesis is that this revolution in manufacturing and marketing could not have been fully realized without an accompanying managerial and organizational revolution to accommodate the accelerated buy-sell transaction.

Boorstin's objective is to demonstrate that "a new democratic world was being invented and was being discovered by Americans wherever they lived" (1974, p. ix). Ingenious items invented by an amazing assemblage of Americans from every walk of life fill Boorstin's book. Acceptance of these inventions by the masses is represented as the key to the radical transformation of America between 1850 and 1880. The right kind of infrastructure had to be developed if mass acceptance were to function. This included not only accommodation for the mechanics of production and distribution but also the development of a hospitable cultural milieu. The milieu becomes even more hospitable with every successfully received invention. The process is self-fulfilling: the more positive the consumption experience of the people, the greater their democratic experience. In turn, the greater the base of the democratic experience, the more open people become to the next consumption experience.

Experience in this context is more than phenomenological: it is also the necessary democratizing accommodation that the nation's institutions, from corporations to banks to schools to legislatures, have to make in order to accept even more from the cornucopia generated by the nation's new industrial system. We have become a democratic nation because of what we do in common: what we buy in common, what we read in common, what we own in common, how we entertain in common, how we quest in common. We have a similar identification that transcends our religious, racial, ethnic or socioeconomic differences, an identification derived from
the common manner in which we consume. So goes Boorstin's thesis, fashioned with a majestic sweep and stylized by an eminent historian's sense of the exquisite moments when the real history of the country was being created. And it was created and well set in place before the turn of the twentieth century, long before there were university professors or university courses in marketing.

THE CASE FOR "PRACTITIONER KNOWLEDGE"

The academic study of marketing became an intellectual hostage at the very moment it considered itself as worthy of the label of "science." The scientific acquisition of knowledge is accompanied by the heavy weight of rigor, discipline, empirical verification, and "intersubjective validation." It also carries with it a rule by orthodoxy and the limitation of dissent. This last point on the conservative nature of science is clearly brought out by Thomas Kuhn (1970) and also by Michael Polanyi (1969). Polanyi, in particular, demonstrates that the acquisition of scientific knowledge is very slow, that it is acquired with great skepticism, and that the knowledge generators must conform to the politics and the sociology of knowledge in their given field.

In a field of action such as marketing, "knowledge" accumulates much faster and is used more readily by the marketing practitioner than can possibly be processed and reflected on in the explicit manner demanded by the marketing scientist. It is axiomatic that such an imbalance between the two will exist, an imbalance that is further aggravated when the level of the science is low, as is the case in marketing. Inasmuch as marketing science is young, we should not be too defensive if it is suggested that there is something called "practitioner knowledge" that is more usable than the knowledge produced by marketing science. Compelling pragmatism forces the practitioner to define knowledge as that which is useful.

There is, in addition, what Polanyi calls "the tacit dimension" to knowledge, which permits us to "know more than we can tell."

Here then is the fundamental structure of all knowing. It really is a 'trid' for three centers of knowing are involved. First, we have a focal target. Sometimes we might call it a problem. Our efforts are directed to this point. Second, we have clues of which we are subsidiarily aware. Sometimes we can stop to pinpoint some of them, but at other times we cannot. Finally, we have the person who links our focal target with our subsidiary clues. The operations in which we move from our clues to their joint meaning are an achievement of the person. It is a process of inference. It is a process done within our body. And it is one that cannot be focally observed by us. We cannot simultaneously rely upon clues for attending to a problem or task and observe them in ourselves. In this sense, there will always be a tacit dimension in our knowledge that is held together by the person. (Gelwick 1977, pp. 63-64)

In the ultimate, "all knowing is personal knowing—participation through indwelling" (Polanyi and Prost 1975, p. 44). This indwelling makes it impossible for one to use his spectacles; you examine things by it, and your knowledge of it lies in this very use of it. You dwell in it as you dwell in your own body and in the tools by which you amplify the powers of your body" (p. 37). Both the marketing practitioner and the marketing scientist must use this personal knowledge, this "essential structure of knowing as an art" (p. 33), if skills and connoisseurship are to be sharpened (p. 43). Both practitioner and scientist each striving to be expert in his own field, are shaped by their respective personal knowledge. The process by which such personal knowledge is developed is the same in both cases; but the content in question is assuredly different and, by definition, must always remain so.

A CASE IN POINT—THE AMA COMMISSION

This chasm between marketing practice and marketing science has been substantiated by the research result of the Myers-Massy-Greyser Commission (1980), established by the American Marketing Association. The Commission found that, over the past 25 years, there has been an extremely low practitioner utilization of the "knowledge" created by the marketing academic. The Commission termed this a "major and disturbing finding." In their words,

a significant amount of marketing research effort, new-knowledge development, model-building and theorizing has had relatively little impact on improving marketing management practice over the period. (Myers, Greyser, and Massy 1980, pp. 279-280)

Given the perspective of the Commission, the finding surely major and disturbing; but it should not be surprising. Those who are on the Commission are either well established as business practitioners, or have extensive business consulting practices, or are the very least, perceptive observers of the market place.

What is especially disturbing about the Commission is its heroic assumption that the consequences of academic theorizing should logically cause an improvement in marketing management practice. Would the causal relationship be any less tenuous if it were proposed the other way around—that is, if new and successful marketing management practice were presented as causing an improvement in marketing theorizing— as was proposed by E. D. Jones? Of course, either statement of cause and effect is too simplistic; it would be fortuitous if cause and effect ran either way.
The Commission believes that at least part of this wide gulf stems from the attitude of some of the academic researchers.

Researchers, particularly those who are scientifically inclined, are prone to write off practical problems as irrelevant to what they do or as an interference with their scholarly progress. Patterns of "let them learn what I am doing" develop, and there is little or no commitment to translating ideas into the practical world of the marketing decision maker. (Myers, Greyser, and Massy 1980, p. 273)

Sensibly, the Commission recognizes that "it does not follow that ways of doing research, or the ideas and problems on which researchers work, should be radically changed." But the Commission does suggest that more academic research be directed toward solving the problems of business firms (pp. 277-279). But would such a directional change, if successfully executed, really alter the complexion of things? At best, the scientifically inclined professor would develop a better academic understanding of the marketing problems of the business firm.

The Commission should be questioned closely on their conclusions with respect to basic research in marketing. My own reading of the report does not uncover too positive an assessment of the fruitfulness of basic research in marketing. In fact, there is a labored awkwardness in coming to grips with an objective measure of its usefulness past 25 years. This is understandably so, because, by definition, basic research must be consistent with the prevailing logic of its field while consisting of what the relevant peer group considers as high "quality" and intrinsically important (Myers, Greyser, and Massy 1980, pp. 275-276). Further, the Commission appreciates the legitimacy of the debate over whether basic research be left to the "underlying disciplines" in marketing (viz: psychology, economics, statistics, management science), or be undertaken by those ostensibly in marketing.

What is difficult to comprehend is why the Commission should have concluded that basic research is very important in marketing, that it is in better health than ever before, and that it should be continued by those who are presently pursuing such research. These conclusions do not appear to follow from the assembled facts. And, as the Commission puts it, what was concluded about basic research in marketing "is rooted in deep personal convictions that the base of knowledge in marketing now is far more substantial than it was a decade or two ago," and they admit that their "justification for basic research is largely a matter of faith" (pp. 275-276).

The Commission concludes its report by expressing a collective belief that the future of marketing science is such that the creation of academic marketing knowledge should be encouraged to continue. They are optimistic that, as the science matures, the gaps between marketing theory and marketing practice will narrow to something which will permit a manageable, working relationship between the two. This conclusion, it seems to me, flies in the face of the Commission's own evidence; because this is so, their conclusion is really a statement of ideology.

The Commission's most impressive effort, the first comprehensive reflective research of its kind in marketing, will be studied closely for many years. But the Commission's own evidence should have forced a conclusion: that after 25 years of determined effort, the gap between marketing science and marketing practice remains very wide, with no real evidence to suggest a significant chance of that gap narrowing. Could this mean then that the distance between marketing science and marketing practice is due to factors of immutable structural durability, that there is something basic in the nature of the two beasts that could forever prevent them from matting?

Could it be that the physics of marketing science—its structures and properties—is such that it must remain self-contained, and, at best, provide knowledge only of formalized marketing systems? The following quotation from Joseph Weizenbaum (1976) is of interest here:

But then science itself must be an illusory system. For the only certain knowledge science can give us is knowledge of the behavior of formal systems, that is, systems that are games invented by man himself and in which to assert truth is nothing more or less than to assert that, as in a chess game, a particular board position was arrived at by sequence of legal moves. When science purports to make statements about man's experiences, it bases them on identifications between the primitive (that is, undefined) objects of one of its formalisms, the pieces of one of its games, and some set of human observations. No such sets can ever be proved correct. At best they can be falsified, in the sense that formal manipulations of a system's symbols may lead to symbolic configurations which when read in the light of the set of correspondences in question, yield interpretations contrary to empirically observed phenomena. Hence, all empirical science is an elaborate structure built on piles that are anchored, not on bedrock as is commonly supposed, but on the shifting sand of fallible human judgment, conjecture and intuition. (Weizenbaum 1976, pp. 14-15)

If we want to know and to understand the marketing practitioner then it appears that we will have to employ a mode of thinking that transcends but somehow does not exclude scientism.

MICROFAILURES IN MACRO PROBLEM-SOLVING

So far, our focus of attention has been on scientific marketing knowledge and its apparent lack of usefulness to the marketing practices of the businessman. Does a
similar relationship hold with macromarketing? The scope of this paper does not allow for a detailed discussion of the taxonomy of macromarketing. Suffice to say that, by its designated prefix, macromarketing is concerned about marketing activities which are more global and/or have a greater societal impact than the marketing activities of any single business firm. Clearly, the knowledge base of macromarketing is more diffuse, pervasive and ethereal than is the knowledge base in micromarketing. It follows, then, that any science of macromarketing will prove to be even less useful to its proposed constituency than has been the case with micromarketing science for its constituency.

Macromarketing issues have always been an integral part of the marketing literature. Indeed, a strong impetus to investigate marketing can be attributed to some of the burning social and economic questions of any given period. Be they questions of a fair share of the consumer’s dollar, the causes of inflation or recession, competitive restraints, the efficiency and cost of distribution systems, whether the poor pay more, price rigidities, the economic and social effects of advertising and promotion, government’s regulating role, pollution, and so on, marketing academics would invariably conduct their research around a singular major hypothesis to be disproved: that micromarketing policies and practices had caused the given macromarketing problem. With fair predictability, the hypothesis generally, but not entirely, would be disproven; an apologia for micromarketing in our free enterprise economy would be canted, sometimes with proposals for certain legislative reforms. The macromarketing question that gave rise to the research exercise would also be rationalized as not really having been as onerous as was originally made out.

Unfortunately, however, the same range of macromarketing issues keep emerging. Tightening the laws, forcing business enterprise to become more socially responsive, and introducing more sensible marketing practices possibly tone down the issues somewhat, but never truly resolve them. And, certainly, any scientific attempt lastingly to put to rest problems of such scope and complexity has not succeeded.

BREADTH OF VISION—NOT DISCIPLINARY SCIENCE

We should, while we still have the chance, develop an eclectic tradition in macromarketing. We should prevent macromarketing from turning into another narrow, self-contained, scientific discipline. If we wish to maintain any hope in developing an understanding of the field, we must not promise too much in return. Above all, we must avoid conceit-laden terms such as “manage,” “predict,” and “control.”

If a field is multi-disciplinary in nature, there is a tendency for those in it to transform it into one that is narrow, isolated, and unidimensional. This is done by shaking off the field’s multi-disciplinary cloak so as to enhance it with the rigor of a science unique to itself. This narrowing tendency has been cited by Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968) and C. West Churchman (1979), both eminent pioneers in the systems approach. Von Bertalanffy notes that the systems approach has not been fulfilled because “the student in systems science receives a technical training which makes systems theory—originally intended to overcome current over-specialization—into another of hundreds of academic specialties” (von Bertalanffy 1968, pp. vii-viii).

Churchman claims that a discipline science becomes concerned about its own methodology and isolates itself through its disciplinary politics. Even though the rigor and the output of a discipline science may be admired, its very process forces one to dwell in the discipline rather than the more broad-based systems approach (Churchman 1979, p. 13). Churchman abandoned a philosophy for this reason, because one cannot design a system that relates to reality if one is constricted by an a priori set of standards associated with a given discipline science.

Macromarketing is certain to experience a similar fate if we hammer it into a scientific discipline. We may construct elegant theories that may provide output useful for macromarketing academics, but it is problematic whether that output will be usable to those who must strive to resolve macromarketing issues. To produce usable knowledge, academic macromarketing must be “open” in its investigatory approach; that is, it must acknowledge that the field operates in a social world which does not accept a scientifically-imposed rationality. Churchman (1979) expresses this admirably in his most recent book. He found that the system analyst has a distorted conception of environmental reality. The analyst sets up models to represent reality, but the thought process he employs is a form of tight logic derived from rationalistic thinking. The consequence is a rationalized form of reality rather than as a reflection or an approximation of that reality (p. 53).

Churchman notes that there are realities which defy rational explanation and in a philosophical vein, he labels these non-rational realities as "enemies" of the systems approach. An enemy may be defined as "someone who is distrusted and admired; loved and hated; respected and feared," but who possesses powers, resources, and capabilities that are desperately needed (Churchman 1979, p. 13). Outside enemies of the systems approach do not accept the reality of the analytical system: "we do not exist in such a system" (Churchman 1979, p. 24). The system builder is in a quandary because these outside enemies themselves either a part or all of the system’s environment have to be linked into his system-building in a rationally predictable way. But such enemies, namely political
morality, religion, and aesthetics, cannot be connected in a rational manner with the analyst's rationally constructed system.

We must not fall into the kind of rationalistic trap detailed by Churchman. Somehow, macromarketing has to develop into an open study able to incorporate these so-called enemies. As Churchman (1979) states:

To me these enemies provide a powerful way of learning about the systems approach, precisely because they enable the rational mind to step outside itself and to observe itself (from the vantage point of the enemies). (p. 24)

Somehow, the rational mind of the macromarketer will have to “step outside itself” and be raised to a higher level of consciousness.

In a manner somewhat similar in spirit, Charles Lindblom and David Cohen (1979) argue that social science as an instrument in social problem solving is hampered by the narrow selection of what social science considers to be knowledge scientifically arrived at, as if usable knowledge could only be that which is molded by the scientific apparatus of social science. Research design in the social sciences is really too inadequate a tool to address and resolve the social problems of the day. The very nature of scientific research involves breaking down the problem in hand into manageable components—manageable in terms of carrying capacity of the research design, but with an accompanying danger that the character of the social problem could lose its essence because of the very process of analysis. Or, more succinctly:

Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:
We murder to dissect. (Wordsworth “Tables Turned”)

Further, social problems of the day cannot wait for their resolution until conclusive scientific evidence is first derived and then applied, even if the research design were sufficient to handle the problem in its totality.

Usable knowledge, Lindblom and Cohen claim, is more than scientifically obtained knowledge. Usable knowledge for social problem solving must be defined, estimated, weighted, and judged on the basis of a practical judgment that transcends as well as defies so-called objective, empirical, but lifeless measures of reality. Ordinary knowledge, as distinct from scientific knowledge, has to be enlisted to assist in social policy decision.

By “ordinary knowledge” we mean knowledge that does not owe its origin, testing, degree of verification, truth status, or currency to distinctive professional techniques but rather to common sense, causal empiricism, or thoughtful speculation and analysis. It is highly fallible, but we shall call it knowledge even if it is false. As in the case of scientific knowledge, whether it is true or false, knowledge is knowledge to anyone who takes it as a basis for some commitment or action. (Lindblom and Cohen 1979, p. 12)

The social scientist simply has to make better use of this kind of knowledge, and he could begin by developing a greater respect for it. Macromarketing is certainly wedded to the social sciences. Usable knowledge in macromarketing involves a combination of the above-defined ordinary knowledge, along with our more scientific knowledge also relevant to the field. Our challenge is somehow to meld the two.

THE PRIMACY OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Distributive justice is probably the central concept in macromarketing. If this assertion is correct—that all roads in macromarketing ultimately lead to questions of distributive justice—then macromarketing never can truly become a science. The subject of distributive justice embraces not only the economic analyses of rights, but also ethics, morality, religion, and even aesthetics—all of Churchman’s enemies of rational systems. Any macromarketing issue worthy of attention will ultimately have to confront these philosophically laden subjects. They simply cannot be avoided.

A theory of distributive justice is usually developed by systemically elaborating one or more of the material principles of distributive justice, typically in conjunction with other moral principles. Many different and conflicting theories of distributive justice exist. There are egalitarian theories which stress equal access to the goods in life; libertarian theories that champion contribution and merit; Marxist theories that call for distribution on the basis of need; and utilitarian theories that specify a mixed use of the above criteria so that there is a maximizing of public as well as private utility (Beauchamp and Childress 1979, p. 193).

Political philosophy embraces the subject of distributive justice. Recently, John Rawls (1971) of Harvard developed a theory of justice which appears to be a variant of the utilitarian principle. Robert Nozick (1974), his colleague, has written a clever libertarian challenge. Friedrich von Hayek (1976) and Milton Friedman (1980) are also in the libertarian camp. They share a fear of the state; they are committed to the sanctity of private property, and they believe in the distributive efficiency and justice of a free market economy.

Many marketing academics can identify with the libertarian position, perhaps with shaded qualifications. Others in marketing would subscribe to John Rawls’ utilitarian logic. However, the point never to be forgotten is the fact that the practicing politicians of the moment serve as the ultimate arbiter on questions and issues in
In macromarketing, political fact takes precedence over scientific fact; political practice, good or bad, takes precedence over both economic policy, good or bad, or business practice, good or bad.

MARKETING IN A POLYARCHY

We practice politics in a pluralistic society, a polyarchy. Popularized by Dahl and Lindblom (1953, 1971, 1977), polyarchy means rule by many. A polyarchy is not a political system but a “set of authoritative rules, together with certain patterns of behavior that follow directly and indirectly from the existence of the rules” (Lindblom 1973, p. 133). Polyarchic rules limit the struggle for authority and constitutionally insist on a peaceful election process for any change in authority. These rules could fit into the workings of a liberal democracy or a communist regime. Ours is a liberal democracy with all the attendant rights and prerogatives of its citizens (Lindblom 1977, p. 133).

By definition, a polyarchy has countervailing constituencies. There is no correct doctrinaire stand on an issue insofar as the polity is concerned. There is, however, a “correct” stand on an issue insofar as a given interest group is concerned. Different interest groups have conflicting, selfish, irreconcilable positions. “Hence government cannot be anything more than a process of interaction, bargaining, and mutual adjustment” (“Must Democracy Be Capitalist?” 1978, p. 40). Government may present itself as being a problem solver, but it has no heavy-handed authority; and what it has is diluted by conflicting bureaucratic missions (Pub. Ad. Rev. 19 Sp. 59:80). At best, it “muddles through” by some form of “disjointed incrementalism” (Braybrooke and Lindblom 1970, p. 85). Simply put, we distrust top authority and we guard ourselves against the fallibility of such power by all sorts of checks and balances and procedural restraints (“Must Democracy Be Capitalist?” p. 40).

Important to the above process is the notion of citizens’ volitions. There is a difference between volitions and preferences. Preferences are facts to be discovered; they are not chosen.

Choices are volitions. For understanding political choices we need a concept that will identify not a datum but an emergent act of will. Only after political choices are made can they be referred to as data . . .

I do not discover the fact that I approve of euthanasia; I decide that I do. I do not discover that I approve of one candidate over another; I decide that I do. The process of voting is therefore not simply a voyage of discovery, although one may make some discoveries about one’s preferences. It is instead a mixing of preference, analysis, and moral judgment to arrive at a state of mind and will that did not before exist. It could not have been observed as datum because it only now has come into existence. (Lindblom 1977, pp. 135-136)

According to Lindblom, polyarchy forms and also responds to volitions. Citizens form volitions and these guide leadership’s response to them. It is an endless process of reconsideration, reconstructing, and response, in light of what is considered to be politically feasible.

In a polyarchy such as the United States or Canada, politics is firmly bonded to a private enterprise market system. This is because our political and legal systems are both manifestations of constitutional liberalism, each requiring a defense of personal liberty against state power in order to function properly. The polyarchic process was instituted in liberal democracies to serve liberty; and in a similar manner, the process preserves the market system. Personal liberty and freedom to engage in trade are one and the same. The polyarchic process and the market system both diffuse authoritative power and encourage extremes of liberalism.

According to Lindblom, our polyarchal system accords business a privileged position because of that system’s business market orientation: if the system is to work, government and business must collaborate. Business is more than special interest; it performs functions that government officials regard as indispensable. “Businessmen cannot be left knocking at the doors of the political system, they must be invited in” (1977, p. 175). This deference to business leadership is essential and it is at the heart of politics in polyarchal system.

Business does not win all of its political wars, it does not always get what it asks for; but given conflicting volitions, it will win disproportionately. This is because government is committed to improving productivity but with little power over the owners of production. Government can induce but cannot coerce risk-taking. If judged to be too deeply against its interest, business withdraw from the risk, or makes its point by threatening withdrawal. Further, business does not force government to accept its position on the grand political issues; it seeks instead that government be silent on them. With such acquiescence in hand, the task of molding volitions sympathetic to business becomes infinitely easier (Lindblom 1977).

USABLE KNOWLEDGE FOR MACROMARKETING

Macromarketing is meshed into the politics and the markets of our polyarchical system. An understanding of the conduct of politics in such markets is essential if we are ever to come to grips with current macromarketing issues. Such an understanding must be predicated on body of knowledge described as “usable.” Enough has been said for us to realize that permanent resolution of macromarketing issues can never be achieved: temporary workable consensus is all that can be expected.

How does one proceed to develop usable macromarketing knowledge? Is it possible to meld “ordinary
and "scientific" macromarketing knowledge so that the resulting amalgam is truly of a usable nature? Perhaps this is being done in isolated cases. If so, the successes are more probably to be in the practitioner camp. For reasons already mentioned, practitioners are not bound by the same intellectual straightjackets that imprison academics. As Churchman said, we have to somehow step out of our rational minds. We have to transcend our present level of thinking. But how? The following quotation from Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland may provide surprising insight:

'I see nobody on the road,' said Alice.
'I only wish I had such eyes,' the King remarked in a fretful tone. 'To be able to see Nobody! And at that distance too! Why, it's as much as I can do to see real people, by this light.'

The King's wish should be accepted literally. Oh, but to command the power to see that which is invisible! To be able to do so does not deny empirical observations. Rather, empirical thinking is enhanced by this stepping beyond. Intellectual thought is heightened when one can see Nobody on the road. Research design in contrast, could darken such vision. This is because the linchpin of research design is the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis provides the rigor, discipline, and skepticism necessary for the conduct of scientific inquiry; but it demands in return, an empirical level of thinking.

Original, creative thought is the manifest ability to see Nobody on the road. The paradox is evident: one does not create by creating; Nobody is already there.

The most daring feats of originality ... must be performed on the assumption that they originate nothing but merely reveal what is there. And their triumph confirms this assumption, for what has been found bears the mark of reality in being pregnant with yet unforeseeable implications ... the whole process of discovery and confirmation ultimately relies on our own accrediting of our own vision of reality. (Polanyi 1958, p. 130)

We raise our vision of reality by seeking out and recognizing the self-contradictions inherent in our thinking. We have to create, to make visible, the paradoxes that dwell in macromarketing. All fields possess paradoxes, but they rest on the fringe of consciousness. The paradoxes inherent to macromarketing have to be brought to the center of our attention for careful study. Hopefully, revolutionary reconceptualization will then ensue. Thinking along similar lines, Thomas S. Kuhn (1977) advocates that physicists conduct "thought experiments," which are much in the same spirit:

An important class of thought experiments functions by confronting the scientist with a contradiction or conflict in his mode of thought. Recognizing the contradiction then appeared an essential prophylactic to its elimination. As a result of the thought experiment, clear concepts were developed to replace the confused ones that had been in use before. (pp. 260-261)

By transforming felt anomaly to concrete contradiction, the 'thought experiment informed our subjects what was wrong. That first clear view of the rift between experience and implicit expectation provided the clues necessary to set the situation right. (p. 264)

Kuhn contends that thought experiments have played a "critically important role in the development of physical science" (p. 240). He does not negate the absolutely vital necessity of laboratory experimentation. Rather, thought experimentation is presented as another way of thinking, an approach that ultimately enriches the laboratory work of the physicist. What Kuhn has recommended for physics applies with at least equal relevance to macromarketing. We must conduct our own thought experiments if we are ever to develop usable knowledge in macromarketing.

Indirect self-reference, recursive structuring, counterfactual contingency, are various ways to apply self-contradicting and paradox thought constructs. Gödel, Escher, Bach, the Pulitzer prize-winning book by Douglas R. Hofstadter (1979), demonstrates such application in mathematics (Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem with respect to metamathematics); music (J. S. Bach's canons and fugues); and graphic art (M. S. Escher's drawings of paradox, double-meaning and illusion). Human intelligence possesses this consciousness of self-speculation. Hofstadter investigates whether artificial intelligence could ever possess such power. He thinks so, because this very power of human intelligence perceives its own limitations. Hofstadter has faith that his profession, computer science, will someday uncover and master the mysteries of these "Strange Loops" in human intelligence, which gives it its human powers. "The 'Strange Loop' phenomenon occurs whenever, by moving upwards (or downwards) through the levels of some hierarchical system, we unexpectedly find ourselves right back where we started" (Hofstadter 1979, p. 10). Within the concept of Strange Loops is the concept of infinity because a loop represents an endless process in a finite way. Strange Loops bring out the conflict between the finite and infinite, and consequently expose a strong sense of paradox.

We have to embark on our own forms of "thought experiments," conditioned by Hofstadter's concept of Strange Loops, if we are ever to develop our own special flavor of usable knowledge in macromarketing. My vision is admittedly Kantian, in the belief that a thinking faculty exists that is higher than, yet "looping" with understanding and intuition.
REFERENCES


