

ADVERTISING: THE CENTRAL INSTITUTION OF MASS SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

At the termination of the First World War a new social order arose which has been labelled mass society. Mass society gained impetus during and as a result of the Civil War and increased momentum during the First World War.

It was especially in the United States, but also in Great Britain, France, Northern Italy, the Low Countries, Northern European countries and Japan that mass society and its culture made its first appearance. Some of its features have begun to appear in Eastern and Central Europe, and, in an incipient way, in the Asian and African countries.¹

Mass society is an industrial society which requires the creation of an elaborate network of transportation and communication,

¹ Edward Shils, "Mass Society and Its Culture," *Daedalus*, Spring 1960, p. 288.

the production, transmission, and distribution of culture in large quantities, the consumption of cultural products and the standardization and specialization of large quantities of mass-produced goods.² At the center of mass society is a new institution called advertising whose existence is indispensable to the maintenance and survival of this society and for the attainment of its goals.

When we refer to a central institution, we mean an institution which makes a crucial difference in men's relationships to one another. It has the connotation of omnipotence and omnipresence in a sense comparable to the church during the Middle Ages or industry during the 19th century. It is central in containing greater social power over the institutional arrangement than any of the other basic institutions of a society.

I. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND PARADOX

Advertising reflects an affinity of contradictions and redundant irony which is seen most vividly in its institutional structure. Advertising has structure in the sense that there is a division of labor, there are roles, status, symbols, organizations, advancement of professional ranking and standards. There are professional international organizations where assemblies are held, communal *esprit de corps* stimulated, problems discussed, friendships renewed, recruitment accomplished, opportunities discovered or new contacts with significant members developed so that career mobility can take place. It has structure in the sense that it tries to control its membership in terms of a code of conduct which will create a favorable institutional image. In other words, advertising has structural attributes comparable with any powerful contemporary institution. In another sense, however, advertising is amorphous. There is an inability to find the locus of power though among its own institutional members it may be well known, as are the names of specific leaders. To the public at large, however, the leaders of this central institution are

² Joseph Bensman and Israel Gerver, "Kitsch: Genuine and Spurious," paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the *American Sociological Society*, 1957, note 1, p. 2.

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unknown. They are anonymous despite the unprecedented effective technique of modern mass communication at their disposal. Historically, this is unique, for what person was not aware of the omnipotence and omnipresence of the church during the Middle Ages, its centrality and the specific holders of power? Or what person did not know, during the 19th century, the holders of industrial and economic power and their specific names?

In this sense, it is also historically unique to note the internal institutional denigration by its successful power holders. These men continually issue disclaimers of power, voluntarily issue public purgatory statements, and dissociate themselves from the profession after attaining the various symbols of success and power.

II. CONSUMER ECONOMICS, SOCIAL CHANGE, AND SOCIAL VALUES

"My consumers, are they not my producers?"
JAMES JOYCE, *Finnegan's Wake*

There have been various attempts to assess the social and economic importance of advertising.³ These, however, were written by journalists, and while provocative, still are suspect by the professional critic. Recently, there have appeared books and articles by competent authorities⁴ who have reached their critical conclusions through the use of the best canons of science. These findings are based, for the most part, on data from the United States where mass society and advertising have initially emerged with so much force. By extrapolation we may say that the trend shown there will, with variations, be found in other societies which have become and are becoming mass societies.⁵

Economically, about 2.6% of the national income of the United States in 1966 was spent for advertising. (In terms of money,

³ See for example Martin Mayer, *Madison Avenue, U.S.A.* (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1958), or Vance Packard, *The Hidden Persuaders.*

⁴ See for example Otis Pease, *The Responsibilities of American Advertising* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1958), or Neil H. Broden, *The Economic Effects of Advertising* (Chicago, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1944).

⁵ Harry Johnson quotes impressive statistics concerning advertising in Canada and Great Britain. See his *The Canadian Quandary* (Toronto, McGraw-Hill, 1963), pp. 281-293, *passim.*

this ran as high as 16.6 billion dollars.)⁶ For some years it has been increasing at a rate of a billion dollars a year.⁷

The social power of advertising is of even greater significance. One economist has noted the connection between values and advertising by saying "...that wants are, in fact, the fruit of production will not be denied by few serious scholars."⁸ And a considerable number of economists have conceded the point. Keynes noted that needs of the second class, i.e. those that are the result of efforts to keep abreast or ahead of one's fellow beings,

may indeed be insatiable; for the higher the general level the higher still are they. And emulation has always played a considerable role in the views of economists of want creation. One man's consumption becomes his neighbor's wish. This already means that the process by which wants are satisfied is also the process by which wants are created. The more wants satisfied, the more new ones are born.⁹

This contention has been carried further. A leading modern theorist of consumer behavior has stated specifically that

ours is a society in which one of the principal social goals is a higher standard of living . . . (This) has great significance for the theory of consumption... the desire to get superior goods takes on a life of its own. It provides a drive to higher expenditure which may even be stronger than that arising out of the needs which are supposed to be satisfied by that expenditure . . .¹⁰

⁶ "Advertising Investments around the World," *International Advertising Association Inc.*, New York, Dec. 1967, 8th Biennial Report, p. 22.

⁷ The latest available figures for the free world (52 countries) were in 1964 and showed that 23 billion dollars, out of a total income of 1.134 billion, were spent on all forms of advertising. International Advertising Association, *Advertising Investments around the World*. October, 1965, "Research Report," New York City.

⁸ John K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958), p. 124.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125-26. Galbraith is quoting from James S. Duesenberry, *Income, Saving, and the Theory of Consumer Behavior* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 28.

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The implication of this view is impressive. The standard economic theory of independently established need now recedes into the background. A new notion in society moves forward which sets great store by ability to produce a high living standard,

it evaluates people by the products they possess. The urge to consume is fathered by the value system which emphasizes the ability of the society to produce. The more that is produced the more that must be owned in order to maintain the appropriate prestige... This argument fully implies that the production of goods creates the wants that the goods are presumed to satisfy.¹¹

There is also a more specific relationship between the producing of goods and the stimulation of desires by the various facets of the advertising industry. It is most cogently seen in the amount of money spent on creating the desires for these goods. A new product must be introduced by a sizable advertising campaign in order to stimulate the interest in the product. The amount of money spent on these campaigns takes priority over the amount of money spent on the manufacturing or processing of the product. Not only is this important for the comparative *amounts* of money thus allotted, but even more important is the change this implies in the traditional roles played by producers and consumers. The producer or manufacturer now assumes both the role of producing the goods and the role of manufacturing the desires for them. As one economist has said, it recognizes that production, not only passively through emulation, but actively through advertising and related activities creates the wants it seeks to satisfy.¹²

Considered in terms of social values rather than in economic terms, the change becomes apparent. The most critical points in society change from production to consumption and as they do so must cultural values. These must shift from concentration on a producer's culture and all the values associated with them to a consumer's culture. The productive capacity of the society over-produces because the consumers cannot learn fast enough to

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 126.

want them or to think of them as necessities. However, in a consumer society the surplus must be used if the economy is to function properly and therefore the imperatives of the value system increasingly stress the need to consume and acquire goods. This necessitates a readjustment in society to a new value scheme and a new set of drives in which consumption is paramount.¹³

As a consequence of these changes members of society must be educated to a new set of values and a new set of roles which emphasize consciously and unconsciously their role as consumers, particularly as consumer of goods for which they feel no impulse, desire or need. The institution which has emerged in mass society which performs the function of inculcating society to consume goods whether they feel an intrinsic need or not and thereby accelerating their adjustment to this new value system is advertising.¹⁴

III. ADVERTISING AS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

David Potter in his book, *People of Plenty*, previously cited, has noted that advertising compares with the school and the church in the magnitude of its social influence.

It dominates the media, it has vast power in the shaping of popular standards, and it is one of the very limited group of institutions which can properly be called "instruments of social control."¹⁵

Institutions of social control guide the life of the individual by conceiving of him in a unique way and encouraging him to conform as far as possible to that concept. Advertising appeals primarily to the desires, the wants—cultivated or natural—of the individual, and offers as its goal a power to command the envy of others by outstripping them in the consumption of goods and services.

Traditional institutions have integrated man into society by infusing in him qualities of social value, though these values are

¹³ David Potter, *People of Plenty* (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1954), p. 173.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 176-177.

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frequently broadly conceived. Religious institutions have sought to instill virtue, and educational institutions intelligence and aptitudes. Both institutions have been sensitive of their functions and have consciously sought to maintain the social values and social responsibilities which have been entrusted to them.

In contrast with these, advertising has nothing within its institutional structure which seeks to improve the individual or impart values of social importance, unless one characterizes compliance with material values as of essential importance. Though it is capable of immense social influence,

it has no social goals and no social responsibility for what it does with its influence so long as it refrains from palpable violations of truth and decency. Occasional deceptions, breaches of taste, and deviations from sound ethical conduct are in a sense superficial and are not necessarily intrinsic. Equally, the high-minded types of advertising are also extraneous to an analysis of the basic nature of advertising. What is basic is that advertising, as such, with its vast power to influence values and conduct, cannot lose sight of the fact that it ultimately regards man as a consumer and defines its own function as one of stimulating him to consume or to desire to consume.¹⁶

Advertising can now be counted among the significant institutions, such as the church, the family, and the school, which creates and maintains the values and standards of society. At the same time it must be recognized that it has no inherent connection with social goals which institutions with this immense power normally have.¹⁷

We may discern already a mode of economic and social organization which has been taking on a purity of form rarely seen. The difference lies in the fact that growing large and powerful institutions have been free to develop in a society where no prior traditional institutions, with competing claims of their own, might interpose at any of a dozen points *with sufficient power* to retard or modify its progress.¹⁸

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁸ Stanley M. Elkins in his book *Slavery* (New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1959), refers to the institution of slavery as an example of an institution

When such energy meets no restrictions or any social pressures from society of sufficient force to protect the individual from unlimited desires, the emergent institution has in effect taken over an important aspect of the socializing functions normally reserved for the basic institutions of society.¹⁹

Under normal conditions such institutions and the force they represent are controlled in some way—if not by other counterforces, then at least by political institutions in the form of restrictive legislation. In the case of advertising, at those very points where it could place limits and restrictions on the institution of advertising, the direction of the law, unencumbered by the perplexities of competing interests, has been to rationalize, and to make more logical and symmetrical the status of advertising. So little impeded has been this direction that all the major categories in law which bear upon such status have early seceded almost completely from attempting to limit the drive of this institution. It is this unthinking aggression upon the personality that the institution of advertising has made possible which may well be at the base of many of our social problems. One further point should be noted, and that is the very high proportion of the creative energy which is expended upon advertising that is wasted, in the strictest sense of the word.²⁰

Millions of dollars and the efforts of some of the ablest minds in the world are devoted to devising silly jingles, inculcating anxieties, and concocting monstrous lies. And it has been carried on, on behalf of the manufacturers of beer, soap, automobiles, patent medicines, cigarettes, cosmetics, soft-drinks, and breakfast foods.²¹

IV. TECHNIQUES, MORAL ORDER, AND SELF

Robert E. Park spoke of the moral community. The moral community was characterized by a common means of communi-

which also had no institutions which would counterbalance the unrestricted growth of slavery.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁰ For a detailed account of this process see Otis Pease, *op. cit.*

²¹ Neil Compton, "The Mass Media," in Michael Oliver, ed., *Social Purposes for Canada* (Toronto, The University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 86. For

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cation which was composed of a set of values which were shared by the members of the community. By sharing these values in common the community is able to organize itself socially. Advertising has altered the meanings of many of these values even though the need for the values and the organization it implies still remains. This would be serious for the maintenance of any social organization under most conditions. It is most serious, however, when it involves the most fundamental values which unify society: loyalty, reasoning the testimonial and the basic unifying bond of all truth. The following paragraphs document these statements and suggest their far-reaching consequences.

One can classify the more metaphysical advertisements as strained metaphors. They seem to be qualified in this manner by the very fact that so many of them belong to the province of allegory. Advertising men in their "metaphysical" moods are nothing if not allegorical, and allegory is one of the lighter exercises of the imagination. It frequently spoils two important things: a moral and a meaning. The only case where it has intrinsic value is when it is extremely spontaneous, when the analogy presents itself with strain and eager promptitude. There is a quality about the nature of allegory which allows for the facile to dominate in overcoming a difficult situation. If allegory ever establishes a fact it is by overturning a fiction.²²

In addition to the use of allegory, advertising is a world of fantasy where events are controlled and predicted and where the advertiser acquires an omniscience similar to a *Diety*. The antecedents of the advertisers, in this respect, were the folk artists whose role in the community was to mirror its immediate needs, aspirations, and wishes. They did so by transforming these phenomena into fantasies, myths and visual symbols. These in turn served as substitutes for their unfilled wishes and in many cases provided for communal catharsis. This role has

novelistic treatment of this reaction see James Joyce's *Ulysses*, especially his characterization of Bloom; George Orwell's *Keep the Aspidistra Flying*, and his characterization of Gordon Comstock; A. C. Spector's *The Exurbanite* is also pertinent in this respect.

²² Henry James, *Hawthorne* (Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press, 1956) pp. 49-51.

devolved on the advertiser. It is he who gives much meaning to life in the modern age. For example, he persuades the girl to use a particular cosmetic. Through his illustrations and copy they relate a story controlled by their telling how the cosmetic alters the complexion and, thereby, her external world. It is the advertisement that predicts what will follow: in this iconography and story he creates the ensuing romances, love, affection, and happiness.

Omniscient attributes such as these are functional for the same reason that they were functional to folk and tribal cultures, for they substitute for unfilled wishes and serve as communal catharsis. Yet they have potentially dangerous consequences for those who are influenced by advertisements and who accept them uncritically. The point of concern suggested in this respect is related to the vicarious nature of advertisements and the speculations generated by them. The same dangers inherent in any speculation are found with regard to those in advertisements.

Speculation is useful when it suggests that life is not confined to inextricable forces with known conclusions. However, when speculations are accepted uncritically, as they are by many who are influenced by advertisements, they are potentially dangerous; because they may be used to refute reality or to substitute for it, when more definite possibilities and alternatives are available. Under these conditions they are harmful, because their number is indeterminate and they lack the tangible uncertainty of events. As a result they compensate for reality and plausibility, while they remain phantoms regardless of how pedestrian the manner of presentation.²³

Advertising, Reciprocity, and Self. The basic form of social interaction is reciprocity. The analysis of this process has been the concern of sociologists and anthropologists since the founding of these disciplines. It is of fundamental importance then to study the reciprocity involved in advertising for its functional and dysfunctional implications for mass society.

As an integrative institution, advertising communicates to people where they may buy goods and what goods are available.

²³ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Garden City, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1959), p. 229.

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The consumers, on the other hand, receive gratification by knowing where these things may be bought and what expectations they may receive. In theory, both advertising and the consumer are guided in their reciprocal behavior by a set of common values called ethics. At the same time, advertising is part of the economic or instrumental system and is guided by and gives priority to a different system of values which is based in the principle of *caveat emptor*.

The consumers expect that the advertised product is as it is represented and will give the qualities and substance which the advertisement proffers or implies by promises, either tangible or intangible form. However, the techniques used and the values guiding advertising do not necessarily coincide with these expectations and this is admitted by its strongest proponents.²⁴

It is not possible to examine all of the elements of advertising for their implications. However, there are two more features of this institution which have far-reaching implications and, perhaps, are the most significant of them all, that remain to be considered. They are: *a*) the use of the testimonial in advertising, and *b*) the appeal to the irrational.

Testimonials by appreciative consumers has been a common technique of advertising for generations. The more objectionable nature of the testimonials are those which are hypocritical and misleading because they pretend to be a genuine unsolicited endorsement of a product by those actually using the product or are unusually qualified to make a judgment of the worth of the product. However, the importance of the testimonial has to do with its innate character.²⁵

The etymological origin of this word implies that the testimony is used for the proof of the validity of a thing. It suggests that there is no higher proof and confirmation of proof concerning an event than the testimony of accredited persons. This proof is given added warrant when the accredited persons possess some unusual quality such as having reached some valued goal or performed some unusual event significant to their fellow members

²⁴ See H. Johnson's, *The Canadian Quandary* cit., p. 291.

²⁵ The testimonial has elements of charismatic authority rather than reasoned argument.

of society. The endorsement and earnest adjuration of a product such as a cigarette, for example, is made by an outstanding person in society—a hero, a person of noble and élite qualities. The implication in this situation is that these men have excelled their fellow citizens in some important event which the ordinary citizen cherishes, and, therefore, the citizen is willing to entrust and give added credence to the hero's extraordinary faith in a product and be guided by or be persuaded by his word. In practice, however, the hero is used for purposes of selling products in advertising no matter what their virtues and no matter what the hero's real predilections are toward the product, and it is this use of the testimony in conjunction with the hero that has far-reaching social implications.

Traditionally the most conspicuous and arresting characteristics of the hero, the élite, and or the noble is to show how the soul of man can rise superior to outward calamities.²⁶ The noble, like Hamlet, is the unreflective bearer of some collective destiny—he has a duty to redress a wrong which is both personal and related to the moral ordering of society, a conviction that he has been chosen for his part and thereby lifted above personal circumstances.

His heroic action is an occasion for heroism, not simply as it means courage or even recklessness, but as it means the possibility for stamping integrity, intelligence, and value upon a segment of history.²⁷

The hero is a man with a belief in his inner powers, a feeling of certainty that he moves in cadence with natural and historical forces. He lives as if by mystic instinct, at the juncture where the course of the world and the individual fate are still one. For the hero there still remains that rare action by which a man, rising above his limitations of moment and place, reaches the heart of excellence...

²⁶ Joseph Wood Krutch, *The Modern Temper* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1929), p. 90.

²⁷ Irving Howe, *Stanford Today*, Summer 1962, Series 1, No. 1. Howe's treatment of the hero is derived from Simmel's discussion of the "Adventurer of Genius." Also see B. H. Lettmann, *Carlyle's Theory of the Hero* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1928), p. 140 & *passim*.

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that somehow through an unimaginable exertion, the whole of life will be comprehended and consummated.²⁸

Compare the part that the hero plays in one testimonial advertisement: A captain, at the risk of his own life and ship, sails 350 miles to rescue 32 men from a floundering ship. When interviewed, he attributes his heroic qualities to a cigarette even though an impartial reporter has previously interviewed him, during which time he has admitted smoking a different brand and one of his heroic crew also involved in the same testimonial had never smoked at all.²⁹

It may be said that these and countless other palpable absurdities have been responsible for the hero being transformed in modern literature to the anti-hero, a self-alienated double of the prototype to which he is bound by ties of resemblance and reputation. To the traditional powers of confidence and certainty of the hero, he now is depicted as suffering from subjective inertia, uncertainty, hesitancy, as well as a taste for self-mockery, and a yearning for escape. Though the fate of the contemporary hero is still tied to the world, he shares the melancholy attitude that the world is moving in a direction profoundly uncongenial to him. And this, many people contend, forms a paradigm of the modern situation of the hero³⁰.

Contemporary novelists like Orwell, Hemingway, and Malraux frequently portrayed the hero as one who distrusts the moral rhetoric of his time, a rhetoric which he frequently must repeat either personally or through his novels. Like the hero in many contemporary novels he cannot yield himself to his own charisma: he is uncertain of that mysterious afflatus which to the historical hero should be a certainty. Instead, the anguish of the hero presses the most sensitive nerve of consciousness, always tortured by questions. In the end, now believing his mission an impertinence, he abjures it with a muted feeling that inaction

²⁸ *Ibid.*, no page references. Howe in this article is discussing T. H. Lawrence and uses him as the prototype of the modern anti-hero.

²⁹ Otis Pease, *op. cit.*, p. 54. Pease is quoting from Alva Johnson, who evidently interviewed the crew of rescuers.

³⁰ Howe, *op. cit.* Also see Daniel J. Boorstin's *The Image* (New York, Atheneum, 1962), especially Chapter 2, "From Hero to Celebrity: The Human Pseudo-Event," pp. 45-76.

might be the best human state, and at the same time experiences an urge to transform heroism into an expiatory self-abasement and ablation.

The second technique which is here singled out for its far-reaching implications is that called subliminal advertisement, or motivational research. It is the attempt to influence the unconscious or the irrational forces of man.

The primary task facing the creative man in advertising is how to get at people's feelings. How can he communicate convincingly with the third ear, with levels of intuition far beyond reason—where the scales of judgment are weighted by feeling and primitive perceptions. This is the "open sesame" to believability and persuasion. The intellectual elements—the facts and the arguments—are just a superstructure on the process of achieving conviction.³¹

One of man's basic goals and milestones of his progress as a civilized person has been the development of his rational thought and the overcoming of the irrational tendencies³². Rationality implies reasoning ability based on the impartial examination of evidence which is then followed by the reaching of conclusions based on this procedure as to what is valid, correct, and truthful. We assume that the basic and powerful institutions of society such as the educational, the religious, the political and the family institutions, will foster, exalt, and strengthen the sovereignty of man's rational faculties. Advertising, however, has as its goal the deliberate breaking down of the rational process both directly through persuasion, and indirectly through the use of techniques, to circumvent the conscious rational processes. Not only is this perpetrated, but it is reported by leaders of the advertising profession as the *sine qua non* of their accomplishments, as the quotation above taken from a book by a respected leader of this profession exemplifies.

Of even more significant concern in this respect has been a belief, going back as far as the stoics, in an inner tribunal of conscience: a tribunal unviolated and indeed unviolable by any

³¹ P. Martineau, *Motivation in Advertising* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1957), p. 132.

³² Barret, *Irrational Man* (Garden City, Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1958). Barret points out how the trend toward rationality can be overdeveloped).

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intrusion of external power; it implied an inner sovereignty, an absolute possession of the self by the self which has been considered essential for life.³³

The problem of concern suggested in this connection is the deliberate attempt to influence this inner sphere and to justify these attempts in the name of the values of mass society. What is really implied is that the fruits of modern research—in the social sciences—in the form of a rich awareness of the depths, subtleties and complexities of human behavior—together with the advanced techniques perfected by the physical and biological sciences—are being transformed into manipulative devices to penetrate and influence this inner forum which has been traditionally considered private and inviolable.

In this connection, one other word will be made concerning the relationship of the institutional values of advertising and privacy.

The value of privacy can be traced to our belief in the sacredness of individuality. The sacredness of individuality is derived from the Biblical assertion that man is unique among the species because he has been created in God's image and has within him a breath of divinity. Secular society retains this belief, except that it casts aside the notion of the divine.

Each distinctive response of the individual reflects the uniqueness of the system, which is self-sustaining. Individuality is a system with its own laws and tempo.

This self-regulating core of the life of a human organism is what is sacred, and it is that which constitutes its individuality. It is this that makes man into a moral entity capable of entering into relationships of love and affection, capable of becoming wise, capable of assuming responsibility for his actions and acting on behalf of a civil community.

Individuality requires immunity from intrusion into areas where the center of selfhood resides . . .³⁴

³³ Gabriel Marcel, *Man against Mass Society* (Chicago, Henry Regnery Company, 1962), p. 17.

³⁴ Edward Shils, "Social Inquiry and Autonomy of the Individual," in Daniel Lerner, ed., *The Human Meaning of the Social Sciences* (New York, Meridian Books, 1959), pp. 118-19.

This area of privacy is built up from memories and intentions, by tastes and preferences, thoughts and feelings which may be sublime or loathsome and which in some instances are contemplated involuntarily and with upsetting persistency. But, nonetheless, they are the elements which make up selfhood and self-consciousness. It is these elements which are considered sacred and it is these elements which an individual might share only with a close friend if shared at all.

Manipulation of a mature person whether that individual is conscious of many of his feelings or not has always had a tinge of the unethical, and has formed the basis of numerous philosophical discourses. But under whatever circumstances manipulation occurs, the disclosure must be completely voluntary and deliberate, otherwise the autonomy of the individual is infringed. (An example of this would be the confessional. In this situation penitent and confessor are governed by tradition and personal circumstances are transcended). Disclosure of the content of the inner realm of individuality should be based on some knowledge of why the disclosure is obtained and a concurrence with the reason for divulging its content. Otherwise two things follow: 1) the individual is deceived and thereby deprived of his right of reasonable decision, and 2) his actions may be directed toward goals contrary or foreign to his consciousness. Either case is ethically reprehensible.³⁵

There are some obvious objections to be dealt with here. Advertising (one could substitute propaganda for each use of the term) it will be said does not aim at degrading those on whom it has effect. This is true only up to a point. In spite of everything that can be said to the contrary, the real and deep purpose of advertising is to reduce men to a condition in which they lose all capacity for individual reaction. In other words, whether the men in control of advertising intend this or not, it is of the very nature of advertising to degrade those whose very attitudes it seeks to shape.

Unfortunately for our fuller comprehension of the significance of advertising, it has now developed neurotic phenomena of its own; or, rather, our over-attachment to advertising has brought

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

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about a neurotic condition in ourselves. The drill and regularity that advertising has introduced into every area of existence has given to our daily routine a compulsion neurosis; that form of neurosis in which the victim is condemned by his mental state into constantly repeating one set of restricted notions. Under these conditions it would take a very strong personality to resist transforming his cognitive world into a reified world where human relationships between people become abstracted and take on the character of things, commodities, career advancement or retardation. "Objects not subjects, appear," the core of whose relationships is covered by a shell which becomes inspissated and eventually develops into a state of eburnation. The product of man becomes a *thing* independent of himself and a society emerges in which the relatedness of objects rules. In other words, reification of consciousness is omnipresent. Mass culture is but one of its products; millions of people live by the stereotypes of mass art as communicated in advertising. A plethora of symbolic "inner" meanings lies over every natural event and every simple act: nothing is itself or exists in its own right. The simplest operations of the mind are cluttered by imagery from advertising.

Qualitative differences disappear and the realm of quantity prevails. Creativity is replaced by efficiency and meaning by order . . . Under the impact of reification "free time" becomes an extension of the working hours. Now the most subtle form of repression lies in the stultifying effect of a great mass of correct information which is misappropriated by reified consciousness. The former isolated individual is transcended by the false community of "togetherness" in which not only the isolation but also the individual is surpassed.³⁶

Societies subjected and trained from childhood in these techniques can easily be subjected to all types of indignities and enslavement. (Toynbee calls advertising psychological slavery.) Modern man allows a large segment of his personal life to be displaced and buried. In the very act of giving authority to the new standard of living reflected by advertising he has re-

³⁶ L. Stern, "Lukács: An Intellectual Portrait," *Dissent*, Spring 1958, p. 169.

leased and recognized the forces of life only in their most raw and brutal manifestation.³⁷

It is these tendencies that now prevent advertising from playing the useful part it could play in disciplining human fantasy and overcoming the tendency of symbolism to magical perversions.

³⁷ I am paraphrasing Lewis Mumford in *Art and Techniques* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 57, where he speaks of the machine.