

MARKETING IS . . .

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For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error so long as reason is left free to combat it.

—Thomas Jefferson on the founding of the University of Virginia

What is marketing? The question uses “is” nondefinitively, inviting the reader to consider marketing’s essence, i.e., its fundamental nature, characteristics, properties, or features. When, often in the heat of debate and with much foot-stomping, a marketing academic exclaims in exasperation: “But, marketing is an applied discipline!” he or she is not defining our subject matter, but opining as to its essence. At least since the work of Alderson (1957), marketing theorists have explored various aspects of the “what is marketing” question. In like manner, questions of essences relating to “is” have occupied, some say preoccupied, philosophy and philosophers for over 2000 years. My objective is to develop a philosophy of/for the marketing discipline. Therefore, I address “marketing is.” In doing so, I shall draw not only on philosophy of science, but on deontological moral philosophy, a philosophy that has historically stressed responsibilities, obligations, and duties related to behaviors, rather than the consequences of those behaviors.¹

Those marketers claiming that marketing is an applied *discipline* must, at the minimum, believe it is a discipline. Therefore, another way of phrasing “*what is marketing?*”, drawing on Levitt’s (1960) classic work, is: “What kind of business is our discipline in?” One answer, and an answer that serves as a good starting point for analysis, would be: “Marketing is a discipline that is housed within colleges or schools of business, which are themselves housed within universities.” Such an answer suggests that we should first explore the “business” of universities, since the business of this societal institution will strongly influence the business of our discipline.

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. . . A UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE

Universities, I suggest, are in the knowledge “business.”² Specifically, universities warehouse, retail, and manufacture knowledge. Universities store or “warehouse” knowledge by means of libraries. They disseminate or “retail” knowledge through their teaching function. They produce or “manufacture” knowledge through research.

Other institutions are also in the knowledge business, e.g., public libraries, elementary and secondary schools, trade schools, corporate training programs, and corporate research and development departments. However, these institutions all differ significantly from universities. Whereas public libraries focus on the needs of the general public, university libraries focus on the needs of scholars. Whereas trade schools provide skills-oriented training, highly context-specific knowledge, and certificate programs leading to a craft occupation, universities provide “higher” education, generally context-free knowledge, and degree programs that either (a) constitute a general, liberal education with no specific occupational emphasis or (b) lead to employment in a professional occupation. Similarly, whereas corporate research is primarily oriented toward developing new products and services for the corporation (knowledge for profit’s sake and the benefit—at least the proximate benefit—of the corporation), university research is primarily oriented toward basic research that contributes to our inventory of knowledge (knowledge for knowledge’s sake and the benefit of society-at-large).

Surprisingly, many academicians are unaware that only recently have university faculty assumed the role of producers of knowledge. Although Western universities trace to the founding of such institutions as Oxford and the University of Paris in the thirteenth century, for their first six hundred years university professors were limited to professing. That is, they taught the knowledge that was produced by the ancient Greeks, was lost to Europe after the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the sixth century, and was rediscovered (compliments of the Arabs—thank you very much) in the thirteenth century. The professorial scholarship of the university “scholastics” in the Middle Ages did not build on, improve, or extend the ideas found in ancient manuscripts, but emphasized hermeneutics. Scholarship

was restricted to interpreting the works of the ancient Greeks, particularly those of the canonical triumvirate: Aristotle, Ptolemy, and Galen.

The Scientific Revolution (roughly 1550 to 1700 A.D.) was a necessary precursor for the rise of the modern university ("modern" here being identified with the university's role in producing knowledge). Scientists (then called "natural philosophers") in the 17th century formed a new method of producing knowledge by conjoining the emphasis on critique, speculation, and reason they found in Plato's method of "critical discussion" with (a) the strong emphasis on careful observation and syllogistic logic that they saw in Aristotle, (b) the powerful tool of mathematics, as had been emphasized in the ancient works of Pythagoras, and (c) the use, where possible, of experimentation to arbitrate disputes, as was being forcefully argued by their contemporary, Galileo. Science and its method developed, it should be stressed, not because of the influence and support of universities, but despite their hostility and vigorous opposition. Universities in the 17th century were uniformly sectarian and science threatened religion's authority.³

By demonstrating that new knowledge could be produced by method, rather than revealed by authority, revelation, or mystical experience, science made possible the "grand compact" underlying the 1810 founding of the University of Berlin. The mission of this first "modern" university was to focus on graduate education (the Ph.D.) and research. It was to be "the workshop of free scientific research," according to its founders. To Berlin's faculty, the German state granted academic freedom (*akademische Freiheit*), i.e., the privilege of conducting research free from the dictates of both church and state, and from Berlin's faculty, the state demanded a commitment to the ideal of objective knowledge. That is, in exchange for faculty being independent from the pressures of political and religious groups, academic research at Berlin was to be unbiased as to religious and political points of view:

The German professor . . . made it a rule to refrain from participation in politics for fear it would make an opportunist of him, which in the end would be bound to distort his disinterested pursuit of truth. If he kept his academic skirts clear of political bias, the state was more likely to respect the objectivity of his research (Brubacher and Rudy 1976, p. 315).

For society, the objectivity of university research would guarantee its trustworthiness; university research could be relied on. Within the short span of a few decades, the University of Berlin became extraordinarily prominent. Gradually, the "grand compact" spread to other German universities, making them world leaders in education, particularly science education. It then spread to other European universities and, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, it crossed the Atlantic.

At the beginning of the 19th century, American universities, being patterned after Oxford and Cambridge, were loose collections of colleges that (a) were sectarian, (b) offered only undergraduate and masters degrees, (c) focused on classical instruction in the humanities, and (d) lacked both academic freedom and a research mission. In the

1800s, scores of American educators traveled to Germany to earn the new, research-oriented, Ph.D. degree.⁴ They returned to become presidents of many American universities and to serve as spokesmen for graduate education, research, and the values underlying the grand compact: academic freedom and objective knowledge. At the same time, the various state legislatures, many strongly encouraged by the Morrill Act of 1862, were chartering state universities. These distinctly American institutions were products of both European influences and the emerging American culture's emphasis on religious freedom, free speech, pragmatism, and egalitarianism. These universities were nonsectarian, were free or charged only a modest tuition, had a research mission, and had a broad range of undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs—including engineering and agriculture. (In contrast engineering and agriculture were thought to be improper subjects for university education in Europe. Therefore, they were relegated to the so-called "technical institutes"—where they primarily reside today.) Because of the powerful strain of pragmatism inherent in American culture, the state universities were to offer instruction and conduct research (as well as to provide service through "extension") in the "practical" subjects of engineering and agriculture. This paved the way for another practical subject, business, to be taught at the university level.

By 1900, the system of higher education in the U.S. was largely in place, and a pluralistic system it was. With over a thousand colleges and universities, public and private, sectarian and nonsectarian, competition was intense. Also by 1900, industrialization and mergers had led to the rise of large corporations and, with them, a need for professional corporate managers. The old apprenticeship system for business education and training was woefully inadequate for these large, complex institutions. If engineering is appropriate for university education, why not business?

The world's first university-housed business school was established at the University of Pennsylvania in 1881 as the result of a gift of \$100,000 from a Mr. Joseph Wharton. It was followed by schools at the Universities of Chicago and California in 1898, at Dartmouth, Wisconsin, and New York University in 1900, and at Northwestern, Pittsburgh, and Harvard (the first exclusively graduate business school) in 1908. Growth in business education was slow, but steady, in the first six decades of this century. By 1965, business schools' 63,000 undergraduate degrees and 6,600 masters degrees represented 12.8 percent and 5.9 percent, respectively, of all such degrees. Since the mid-sixties, business education's "market share" has exploded. Now, approximately one in every four degrees, both at the undergraduate and masters' level, is awarded to business students.

Why the rapid growth in business education's market share since 1965? The precipitating event was the publication of the "Foundation Reports," authored by Gordon and Howell (1959) and Pierson (1959). These reports found business education, particularly at the undergraduate level, to be a veritable wasteland. Rather than being intellectually demanding, analytically rigorous, science-based, and professional/managerial, these reports found business courses, programs, and faculty to be intellectually shallow, "seat-of-the-pants," anecdotally based, and craft/vocational. (In-

deed, in the late 1950s the business school at Ohio University, my alma mater, was derisively called "Disneyland.") Business schools' response to the Foundation Reports is well-documented (Hugstad 1983). In the 1960s and 1970s, business schools, especially at the undergraduate level, raised admissions standards and started requiring (and integrating into business courses) more mathematics, statistics, computer science, economics, and behavioral science. These changes dramatically improved business education, making it more attractive to students and employers.

In short, the steep rise in business education's market share in the seventies and eighties resulted, first and foremost, from its producing a superior academic "product." In fairness, however, it must be admitted that the dramatic decline in the standards and quality of education provided by business's "competition" in the late sixties and seventies also contributed to the market share gain. The attack on reason, civility, and tolerance in universities in the sixties is chronicled by Brubacher and Rudy (1976, p. 328):

The most shortsighted limits to academic freedom in this period were posed by university students themselves. Some tried not only to "shut it down" by strikes, arson, and "trashing," but to shout it down as well. By stirring up noisy commotions they disrupted unpopular speakers on university platforms and unpopular professors in their classrooms. Worse yet they forced physical confrontations with the police when summoned to restore order to the campus, thus supplanting reason with force in the very citadel of reason. Sometimes motivated by theories of anarchism and nihilism they showed an anti-intellectualism that was anything but conducive to the open mind.

Although all areas in universities suffered when riotous students in the sixties replaced reasoned discussion with violence and intimidation as the preferred method for effecting changes, the liberal arts suffered most. For them, the sixties were an "unmitigated disaster" (Bloom 1987, p. 320, 357). In the name of "openness," "students' rights," "equality," and "relevance," liberal arts standards deteriorated, grade inflation spiraled out of control, the core curriculum was abolished, studies in pop culture replaced classical instruction, political activism replaced scholarship, and a form of dogmatic skepticism/nihilism replaced truth: "On the portal of the humanities is written in many ways and many tongues, 'there is no truth—at least here'" (Bloom 1987, p. 372).

Thus, at the very same time that business schools were becoming more professional, analytical, scholarly, and ideas-oriented, i.e., more "liberal" in the classic sense of the word, the liberal arts were embracing a dogmatic illiberalism. As business education was improving, liberal arts education was self-destructing. Even today, large portions of the "liberal" arts seem more concerned about making sure that students never think politically incorrect thoughts or utter politically incorrect words, than in ensuring that students master the knowledge requisite for thinking coherent, well-reasoned thoughts or clearly communicating their thoughts through words. At least for the foreseeable

future (unlike the pre-sixties situation), the liberal arts are unlikely to provide the kind of education that would attract students interested in careers in business.

The preceding discussion of the "business" of the university enables us to address: "What kind of business is the marketing discipline in?" We begin with "marketing is an applied discipline."

... AN APPLIED DISCIPLINE

When marketers claim that marketing is an applied discipline and, therefore, academics should restrict themselves to applied research (instead of, as they mockingly put it, "pushing back the frontiers of knowledge"), what kind of research do they have in mind? Table 1 displays six prototypical research questions, categorizes them according to the Three Dichotomies Model (Hunt 1976), identifies who typically conducts research on each type of question, indicates whether such research would be potentially publishable, states the proximate purpose of the research, and shows the research's ultimate potential value or consequences (intended or unintended). By "applied research," writers often are referring to research designed to explore questions like the first in the table. Called "problem solving" research by Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980), "market research" (as contrasted with "marketing research") by me (1991a), and simply "consulting" by countless others, this kind of research applies existing knowledge to the solution of a specific corporate problem. If "applied" means consulting research, should marketing academics restrict themselves to these kinds of projects?

There are two reasons, closely related, why marketing academics should not restrict themselves to doing just consulting research. First, because consulting research does not, except by accident, add to new knowledge (since it just applies existing knowledge), the knowledge base of the discipline would stagnate at its current level. This would, most assuredly, not be in the best interests of marketing students and practitioners (present or future). Second, because marketing is housed within university schools of business, our discipline has an obligation, a duty, to adhere to all three elements of the university's core mission, i.e., retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge. Our responsibility to conduct original research that contributes to the corpus of marketing knowledge stems not—as our discipline's critics derisively contend—from the ego need of "seeking the respect of our liberal arts colleagues." Our responsibility stems from our duty to respect, abide by, and support the university's core mission, a mission that is of utmost importance to our society. Perhaps a comparison of American and European business schools will help clarify the second point.

No one familiar with business education in Europe can fail to notice that European business schools are more "applied" than their American counterparts. Indeed, many advocate that our discipline and our business schools should adopt the "applied" European model (Peters 1980). However, almost all the development of European business schools in the aftermath of World War II took place outside each country's university system. Not viewing business as

an occupation worthy of requiring a university education (i.e., not viewing business as a profession), the norm became the establishment of free-standing business schools, unaffiliated in any way with any university. After all, if engineering is to be confined to "technical institutes," so should business. Thus, for example, undergraduate students at such European business schools as the Copenhagen School of Economics and Business may take only business and economics courses. Not being enrolled in a bona fide university, such students *cannot* take courses in the liberal arts, social sciences, or natural sciences. Importantly for our present discussion, since most European business schools are not housed within universities, they need not (and, though some are changing, most do not) adopt the knowledge production mission of the university.

But, as we know, American business schools (with very rare exceptions, e.g., "Thunderbird") *are* housed in universities. To absolve marketing faculty from a responsibility for knowledge production would be to abrogate our implied contract with the university to support its core mission. Therefore, the question isn't whether our discipline will engage in knowledge production; it is "what kind of knowledge will be produced?" Many writers contend that, since marketing is a profession, the marketing discipline is a professional discipline and our responsibility, our only responsibility, is to produce knowledge that can be applied by marketing practitioners. To this next "marketing is. . ." I now turn.

. . . A PROFESSIONAL DISCIPLINE

Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980) strongly encourage the marketing discipline to focus, not on consulting research, but on "problem-oriented" research, for "if marketing knowledge over the long run is to be considered 'effective,' it should contribute something to improved decision making or other aspects of marketing management practice in the industrial sector" (p. 145). Such research would attempt to find general solutions to general classes of practitioner problems, like the second question in Table 1. In Myers' (1979, p. 62) words:

Marketing is a "professional discipline" and not an "academic discipline." Marketing academicians should recognize that the overall importance of research and knowledge development in this field, over the short-run or long-run, is to improve marketing practice and decision-making, and, in general, to advance the state of knowledge useful to the profession.

Peters (1980, p. 5) agrees: "Marketing scholars are beginning to view marketing as a professional discipline as contrasted to an academic discipline." Viewing the discipline this way, he argues, will encourage marketing faculty to do more applied research, consulting, textbook writing, continuing education teaching, and business community service. Giving these activities major credit in tenure and promotion would then help close the "marketing professor—practitioner gap" (p. 4). Similarly, Enis (1986,

p. 2-3) contends: "We are in the business of providing rigorous, relevant managerial education. . . . We should see ourselves as professional educators, in league with medical, legal, and engineering educators, preparing and renewing professional managers. . . ." Westing (1977; 1979) puts it this way:

Our goal should be to try to make business more proficient and efficient—and this is not an unworthy goal. It is similar to the goals of engineering, law, medicine, pharmacy, agriculture, and education. We are all professional disciplines, rather than academic disciplines. . . . We should content ourselves with borrowing from basic disciplines and concentrate on applications which will enable business to do its job better and cheaper (1977, p.16).

[Marketing is] not a discipline. Economics is the discipline of study in business. . . . So I would predict that if we continue down the road we are going, we would end up having lost the allegiance of our clients—the business people—without gaining the acceptance of our colleagues in the universities. . . . [We should] try to be good professional schools rather than try to be something we aren't and can't be, and that is academic scholars trying to push back the frontiers of knowledge (1979, p. 53).

The "marketing is a professional discipline" argument appears to be: (1) There are two kinds of university disciplines, those that are professional and those that are academic; (2) academic disciplines, e.g., physics, economics, psychology, and history, conduct basic research that contributes to knowledge; (3) professional disciplines, e.g., law, medicine, and engineering, restrict themselves to borrowing knowledge from academic disciplines and applying it for the benefit of their practitioner clients; (4) marketing is a professional discipline and, therefore, (5) marketing academics should restrict themselves to applying knowledge from such academic disciplines as economics, psychology, anthropology, sociology, mathematics, and statistics for the benefit of their clients, marketing practitioners.

The standard reply to the preceding argument goes something like this: "Marketing academics should continue to conduct 'basic research' and not restrict themselves to 'problem-solving' research because the history of science tells us that, even though much research at the time it is conducted appears to be nonrelevant to solving practical problems, it ultimately becomes highly relevant."⁵ Although there is merit to the "standard reply," I suggest it suffers because it tacitly accepts most of the premises of the "professional discipline" argument. Some of these premises are highly suspect and others are demonstrably false.

First, it is simply false that academics in professional disciplines restrict themselves to "applying" knowledge from "academic disciplines." Legal scholars draw somewhat on such areas as philosophy, history, and the social sciences. Yet, it would be ludicrous to maintain that legal scholarship, as reflected in their journals, is accurately described as "applied" philosophy, history, and social science. Rather, legal scholars explore (primarily) the positive ques-

TABLE 1
Prototypical Research Questions in Marketing

Research Question	Category ^a	Primary Researchers ^b	Publication of Knowledge ^c	Proximate Purpose ^d	Ultimate Potential Value
1. How should the Jones Toy Co. allocate its advertising budget among various media to reach its primary target market, children under 12 years of age?	Profit/micro/ positive <i>normative</i>	Practitioners	No	Better decision for a firm	Firm efficiency Societal efficiency
2. How should firms in general allocate their advertising budgets among various media in an optimal fashion?	Profit/micro/normative	Academics	Yes	Better decisions for firms in general	Firm efficiency Societal efficiency
3. To what extent does television advertising in general shape children's beliefs about products and consumption?	Profit/micro/positive or Profit/macro/positive	Academics	Yes	K.f.K.S. ^e	Firm efficiency Societal efficiency Better public policy Better informed citizenry
4. To what extent is television's shaping of children's beliefs about products and consumption injurious to society?	Profit/macro/normative	Academics	Yes	K.f.K.S. ^e	Socially responsible firms Better public policy Better informed citizenry
5. To what extent should the federal government restrict or regulate the amount or content of advertising directed at children?	Profit/macro/normative	Academics	Yes	Better public policy	Better public policy
6. What are the best research methods to explore questions one through five?	Not applicable	Academics	Yes	Better research	Firm efficiency Societal efficiency Socially responsible firms Better public policy Better informed citizenry

Source: Shelby D. Hunt (1987)

^aUsing the "Three Dichotomies Model" (Hunt:1976)

^bEmphasis on "primary." That is, it is recognized that on occasion both practitioners and academics conduct all kinds of research.

^cIn scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and the *Journal of Marketing Research*.

^dThe immediate objective of inquiry.

^e"Knowledge for Knowledge's Sake."

tion of what kind of legal system *do* we have and the normative question of what kind of legal system *should* we have. Similarly, the engineering disciplines draw heavily on physics, chemistry, mathematics, and statistics. Yet, the engineering scholarship in their journals contains original contributions to engineering knowledge, not just "applied" physics, etc. The situation in medicine is more complex, for schools of medicine—like business schools—are heterogeneous institutions. Indeed, departments of biochemistry, microbiology, cell biology, pharmacology, and physiology—on whose research medicine relies—are often housed within medical schools themselves. Nevertheless, medical research, as published in journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, goes significantly beyond just being "applied" biochemistry, etc.—it independently contributes to our knowledge of diseases, their cures, and so forth.

Second, just as marketing practitioners are clients of marketing scholars and their research, lawyers, physicians, and engineers are certainly clients of legal, medical, and engineering scholars. Yet, it is simply false that legal, medical

and engineering research efforts are exclusively (or even primarily) guided by, focused on, or for the benefit of, the interests—especially the pecuniary interests—of lawyers, physicians, and engineers. To understand why this is the case requires an understanding of what constitutes a professional occupation.

The literature on the nature of professional occupations is enormous.⁶ Having the same etymological root, just as professors profess, so do members of professions. What do members of professions claim when they *profess*? Foremost, they profess to have mastered an esoteric body of knowledge based on systematic theory that requires formal, advanced education and that is useful in solving certain problems of their clients. By virtue of their professed superior knowledge, professionals can, if they choose to do so, take advantage of their clients. Consequently, the underlying values embodied in the organizational cultures of all professional associations—such values customarily formalized in codes of ethics—emphasize the responsibility of professionals to avoid conflicts of interest in servicing the

genuine needs of their clients. Lacking professionals' knowledge, clients must be able to trust them. In exchange for status, authority, and autonomy (enforced by self-regulation), the social contract between society and the professions requires that professionals act in a fiduciary manner toward their clients.

The preceding discussion enables us to better understand the nature of research in schools of law, medicine, and engineering. These schools are truly *professional* schools. Just as consumer goods manufacturers view wholesalers and retailers as intermediate customers for their goods, schools of law, medicine, and engineering view practicing lawyers, physicians, and engineers as "intermediaries." They are intermediate clients for legal, medical, and engineering scholarship. The ultimate client for a truly professional discipline is always society and its needs. For law, it is society's need for a just legal system. For medicine, it is society's need for health care. For engineering, it is society's need for buildings, bridges, highways and machines that are safe, functional, efficient, and economical. And for marketing? I suggest it is society's need for high quality products and services that are reasonably priced, responsibly promoted, and conveniently available.

The "marketing is a professional discipline" argument got off to the wrong start with its initial premise that there are two kinds of university disciplines, professional and academic. It is true that (1) some disciplines in the academy are closely related to recognized professions, e.g., law and medicine; (2) many disciplines are closely related to vocations aspiring to be professions; e.g., marketing, management, finance, social work, and journalism; (3) other disciplines are less closely related to any specific occupation, e.g., psychology and chemistry; and (4) still others are almost totally unrelated to any specific occupation, e.g., English, history, sociology, and philosophy. Nevertheless, it is equally true that *all* university disciplines are "academic": we are *all* "members of the academy." As such, we are all responsible for all three elements of the university's core mission: retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge. With regard to knowledge production, we are all responsible for upholding the "grand compact" of academic freedom for objective knowledge.

None of the various and remarkably heterogeneous occupations associated with marketing, i.e., sales, advertising, brand/product management, marketing research, retail management, wholesale management, distribution management, and marketing management, has yet reached (or been accorded by society) the status of "profession."⁷ Marketing research has probably progressed further than the others. Yet, except for those who associate "professional" with licensing and the creation of unnecessary "barriers to entry," most marketers desire for all of marketing practice to become more *professional* (just as those who believe that no part of marketing is a science nonetheless often see benefits in marketing becoming more *scientific*). On similar grounds, we can conclude that marketing is, or should aspire to be, a professional discipline that is closely related to the occupations constituting marketing practice. However, the *implications of marketing being a professional discipline are almost exactly the opposite of what marketing's critics contend.*

First, as members of the academy, we have a responsibility to respect, uphold, and abide by the university's core mission, i.e., retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge. Second, we must uphold its "grand compact" with society, i.e., in exchange for academic freedom we must strive for objective knowledge. Third, as a professional discipline we have a responsibility to keep in mind that society is the ultimate client of the knowledge we produce and marketing practitioners are intermediate clients. Therefore, research on topics such as questions three through six in Table 1 must be prominent in marketing research. More generally, marketing research on "what kind of marketing system do we have?" and "what kind of system should we have?" must be emphasized for us to discharge our responsibilities as members of a professional discipline in the university.

No one should infer from our discussion to this point that the philosophy adumbrated here implies that the interests of marketing practice and those of society are always, or even commonly, antithetical. Nothing could be further from the truth. Strongly influenced by philosophies such as relativism, subjectivism, constructionism, and neo-Marxism, the writings of a number of marketing academics appear to be either overtly hostile or at least unsympathetic toward a market-oriented economy and the role of marketing practice within such an economy. For example, Hirschman (1987, p. 205) writes: "A favorite speculation of mine is that academic marketing researchers whose personal value system impels them toward the adoption of the humanistic metaphysics often possess a corresponding antipathy toward commercialization, materialism, and profit-oriented enterprise in general." As to relativism, subjectivism, and constructionism, these philosophies not only degenerate into incoherence, dogmatic skepticism, solipsism, or nihilism (Hunt 1990; 1991b; 1992b), but are ethically repugnant as well (Hunt 1991a, p. 306-309, 313-320). As to Marxism and neo-Marxism, the central lesson of the 20th century is that a free economy is not only requisite for material abundance; it is also particularly conducive, if not essential, for both a free polity and the maintenance and development of humanistic values in the truest sense of "humanism," i.e., in the sense of those values associated with each individual's right "to be" and actualizing his or her potential "to become."

... A SET OF RESPONSIBILITIES

With "marketing is a professional discipline" as a foundation, marketing can be viewed from the perspective of deontological philosophy. In this view, marketing is a set of responsibilities, duties, or obligations. I start with our ultimate client, society.

To Society

To society, marketing academics owe the pursuit of original contributions to objective knowledge, i.e., truth. Society, in exchange for the extraordinary privilege of academic freedom, has the right to insist on objective, trustworthy knowledge. Is such knowledge possible? (Al-

though "is" does not imply "ought," "ought" does imply "can.") In the sixties and seventies, the works of such writers as Hanson (1958), Kuhn (1962), and Feyerabend (1970) implied that, because of the "theory ladenness" of language and perception, objective knowledge was impossible. However, philosophy of science scholarship in the eighties revealed that, as long as objectivity is not confused with OBJECTIVITY, i.e., the objectivity of an infallible "god's-eye-view," nor truth confused with TRUTH, i.e., infallible truth, objective knowledge is both possible and desirable. Hanson, Kuhn, and Feyerabend (among scores of others) were simply wrong. In brief, because "percepts," as distinguished from "data," are in a very important sense both theory-free and veridical, observations can be used to objectively test theories.⁸ Indeed, rather than preventing objectivity, the "theory-informity" of observation enables science to be objective. When scientists and their communities are not objective, they lack the will, not the means.

Also to society, we have a duty to turn out graduates that are technically competent to take their places in their chosen profession, marketing. Technical competence produces productive citizens, and it is the productivity of a society's citizens that determines its standard of living. But technical competence is not enough. We owe society graduates that are ethically responsible. Our graduates must realize that they have responsibilities not only to themselves and their companies ("ethical egoism") but to other important societal stakeholders.

Finally, we owe society graduates whose education is such that, as citizens, they can identify, understand, reflectively evaluate, implement, and support the core cultural values of our country, as embodied most prominently in the principles underlying its founding documents. Although our country is multiethnic—like countries such as Yugoslavia (was)—it is unicultural in its core values—unlike countries such as Yugoslavia (Auster 1991). Thus, marketing graduates must be liberally educated, not just technically competent and socially responsible.

To Students

To our students, marketing academics owe the kind of education that will prepare them for entry, middle, and upper-level positions in marketing. Moreover, they should understand their society and marketing's role in that society. Therefore, as marketing professionals, they should be capable of recognizing their own responsibilities to society and responding to them. Our students' career responsibilities imply for us the duty to construct programs of instruction that emphasize both the "micro" and "macro" dimensions of marketing. Referring now to the Three Dichotomies Model (Hunt 1976), the scope of marketing programs should span all eight cells of the scope of marketing, not just the two micro-normative ones.

The kind of education just discussed and advocated places on us a continuing, derivative duty to learn. Staying abreast of the literature, both academic and trade, is obligatory. Translated to the specific courses we teach, the duty to learn implies a responsibility to revise. Sometimes "old yellow notes" contain timeless truths that bear repeating semester after semester. Regretfully often, however, such

notes contain only analyses of yesterday's hot topic, yesterday's faddish issue, or yesterday's solution to yesterday's problem.

Finally, we owe our students an obligation to listen. That is, our clients' expressed needs must serve as input for marketing programs and pedagogy. However, we also have a complementary duty: we must resist the temptation to obey. As professionals, just as physicians cannot allow patients to prescribe their own medicine, we—mindful of our fiduciary relationship with students—must also rely on our best professional judgment as to appropriate marketing programs, courses, and pedagogy.

To Practice

To marketing practice, marketing academics owe a continuing supply of technically competent, socially responsible graduates as new entrants to the marketing profession. Also, because "problem-oriented" research makes a legitimate and important kind of contribution to marketing knowledge, a significant portion of our knowledge production efforts should be of this genre. The results of such research should be communicated to marketing practitioners by appropriate means and should also find their way into our lectures, textbooks, and other instructional materials. Similar to our obligation to listen to students, we should seek the input of marketing practitioners as to the kinds of problems that our problem-oriented research should address. Indeed, research that claims to be managerially relevant should be managerially *relevant*.

Doing research that educates the public about the social value of marketing activities and marketing institutions is also a responsibility we have to marketing practice. There has never been a book entitled "Does Finance Cost Too Much?" or "Does Management Cost Too Much?" or "Does Accounting Cost Too Much?" As we all know, however, there was a famous study that was financed by the 20th Century Fund entitled "Does Distribution Cost Too Much?" (Stewart, Dewhurst, and Field 1939). This should tell us something about our discipline and our role in helping the general public understand it.

Even people who customarily evaluate issues in a thinking, logical, and rational manner seem incapable of approaching cognitively, logically, and rationally the subject of marketing, particularly the advertising component of marketing. People seem to put their minds "on hold" at the very mention of marketing. It is worth remembering that L. D. H. Weld (1882–1946), one of the founding fathers of the marketing discipline, was called before a special committee of the Minnesota legislature to explain why he taught what the legislature considered "dangerous doctrines." As we know, he was only pointing out that marketing intermediaries have a positive role to play in the marketing of agricultural products and are not there to exploit anyone, let alone, the farmer (Cowan 1960). We should also be mindful that only very recently (and by very narrow margins in the United States Supreme Court) have the courts held that professional associations cannot forbid their members from advertising. For over 100 years the American Bar Association and the American Medical Association were saying to us, their clients, "trust our members." At the same time,

they were claiming that their members could not be trusted to engage in advertising because they would engage in advertising that was misleading and deceptive. Think of the incongruity here. If the ABA and AMA did not themselves trust their members to be honest *communicators* about their services, why should society trust ABA and AMA members to be honest *providers* of said services?

The preceding notwithstanding, the marketing discipline should not play the role of professional apologist for products of shoddy quality, for genuinely misleading or deceptive advertising, for collusive pricing, or for coercive practices in distribution channels. To *good* marketing practice, we have a responsibility to research, expose, and publicize *bad* marketing practice. We should be at the forefront of researching questionable marketing practices, not standing at the sidelines.

To the Academy

To the academy as a societal institution, marketing academics have a responsibility for supporting and furthering its core mission of retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge, while upholding the university's implied contract with society, i.e., objective knowledge for academic freedom. Therefore, our responsibilities to the academy entail developing the four cells comprising the positive, science "half" of marketing (Hunt 1976). Here I use "science" in its philosophy of science sense which implies a focus on scientific explanation. (Unfortunately, many people associate "science" only with "quantitative.") As developed in Hunt (1983), marketing science is the behavioral science that seeks to explain exchange relationships, particularly those exchange relationships involving buyers and sellers. The four fundamental explananda marketing science seeks to explain are: (1) the behaviors of buyers directed at consummating exchanges, (2) the behaviors of sellers directed at consummating exchanges, (3) the institutional framework directed at consummating and/or facilitating exchanges, and (4) the consequences on society of the behaviors of buyers, the behaviors of sellers, and the institutional framework directed at consummating and/or facilitating exchanges. Explaining these phenomena constitutes a major part of our responsibility for "knowledge for knowledge's

sake." Any such knowledge generated, it must be stressed, may or may not be useful to anyone, now or ever, for solving any particular problem.

We also have a duty to adhere to the academy's core values. Paramount among these values are a respect for reason, for evidence, and for reason applied to evidence. The fact that all knowledge-producing methods are fallible implies an intellectual openness, a civility, toward alternative views. The fact that all, genuinely rival, alternative views can be compared and evaluated by reason, evidence, and the application of reason to evidence, implies the rejection of the relativistic thesis that, because of "incommensurability," all alternative views are equally good, equally bad, equally trustworthy, equally untrustworthy, equally true, equally false.⁹

Our responsibilities to the academy for objective knowledge can be illustrated by means of Table 2, which shows a continuum of perspectives on truth. At the extreme right we find various kinds of dogmatism. Dogmatists not only know that truth is findable, but that they have found the one and only TRUTH, unequivocally, certainly, or surely, and their TRUTH is not to be questioned. At the extreme left we find the TRUTH of dogmatic skepticism. Dogmatic skeptics claim to have incorrigibly, certainly, surely found the one and only TRUTH. Their TRUTH is that there is no truth to be found. Humean skepticism and fallibilism are two positions, among possible others, between the extremes of dogmatism and dogmatic skepticism. Both extremes are to be avoided:

There are two threats to reason, the opinion that one knows the truth about the most important things and the opinion that there is no truth about them, . . . the first asserts that the quest for truth is unnecessary, while the second asserts it is impossible (Bloom 1990, p. 18).

Historically, the values underlying the university have been threatened by the dogmatic right. For example, the first president of Harvard was fired because he was on the theologically incorrect side of the debate over infant baptism. More recently, universities were attacked in the fifties by Senator McCarthy and his kind. However, the assault on

TABLE 2
The Truth Continuum

<i>Dogmatic Skepticism (TRUTH)</i>	<i>Humean Skepticism (truth)</i>	<i>Fallibilism (truth)</i>	<i>Dogmatism (TRUTH)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Skepticism • Solipsistic Skepticism • Relativism • Idealism • Subjectivism • Constructionism • Deconstructionism • Neo-Marxism • Critical Theory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical Positivism • Logical Empiricism • Critical Rationalism • Falsificationism • Instrumentalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific Realism • Critical Realism • Critical Pluralism • Naturalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulgar Absolutism • Scientism • Fundamentalism • Theocracy • Marxism • Nazism • Facism

Source: Shelby D. Hunt (1992a).

university values now comes almost exclusively from dogmatic skeptics on the left. As in the sixties, the liberal arts' portion of the academy is suffering the most. Violence, threats of violence, political indoctrination, and political activism are again displacing civility, openness, education, evidence, and reasoned debate. Closed minds are begetting closed minds. In the sixties, as Bloom (1987) recounts, the natural sciences and professional schools at many universities stood shamefully silent as the liberal arts were being assaulted. To our colleagues in the liberal arts defending the academy's values, we owe our support; their academy is our academy; their values are our values; their cause is our cause.

... A SOCIOECONOMIC LADDER

To this point, our analysis has been overwhelmingly deontological, focusing on responsibilities, obligations, and duties. But deontological philosophy and teleological philosophy are not mutually exclusive—they are often complementary. The two most widely discussed teleological philosophies are ethical egoism and utilitarianism, where the former contends that the most ethical alternative is that which maximizes the ratio of good consequences to bad consequences for the decision-maker, and the latter contends that the most ethical alternative is that which maximizes the same ratio calculated for society as a whole, i.e., "the greatest good for the greatest number." I close this essay with a utilitarian argument for the philosophy sketched here.

The phrases "land of opportunity" and "American Dream" have long been applied to the United States. Indeed, even with our nation's problems, of which there are many, each year millions of people of all races, creeds, and nationalities—many in desperation—seek a new start here. (In contrast, our major adversary in this century had to lay barbed wire to keep its own citizens *in*. Therefore, "evil" was an appropriately descriptive adjective.) Why does the U.S. continue to be a nation of immigrants, instead of emigrants? It is well known that, compared with the rest of the world, the U.S. has an extraordinary fluid socioeconomic structure. Studies document not only the numerous anecdotes of "rags to riches," but also those of "riches to rags." For example, the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan has, since 1968, been continuously tracking the fortunes of a panel, comprised of 5,000 American families and their descendants, that is representative of the total U.S. population (Duncan 1984). Its findings on economic mobility are striking. If we use a seven year time period as a base, the findings imply that almost half of all families whose incomes put them in the bottom quintile at the beginning of the period will move up at least one quintile. Mobility, however, is not confined just to the lower quintiles. What no doubt will surprise many people is that *more* than half of those families whose incomes place them in the top quintile in the beginning will move *down* at least one quintile. "Being on top"—unlike in rigidly structured societies—is no guarantee of "staying on top." Moreover, the results concerning intergenerational economic mobility

are equally striking. More than half of all children born to families in the lowest income quintile will advance at least one quintile above their parents and more than half of all children born to families in the highest quintile will drop at least one quintile (Hill et al. 1985). Neither economic success nor failure is determined by accident of birth. Indeed:

Income mobility in the top income quintile was as great as it was at the bottom. . . . Family income mobility is pervasive at all income levels. In all, nearly one-quarter (23.1 percent) of the sample moved at least two quintile positions in either direction, about three-eighths (36.8 percent) moved at least one, and only two-fifths (40.1 percent) of the population remained in the same relative income position. . . Only about two-thirds of the individuals living in families with cash incomes below the poverty line in a given year were still poor in the following year, and only one-third of the poor in a given year were poor for at least eight of the ten prior years (Duncan 1984, p. 14, 60).

What does income mobility have to do with business education and marketing? Plenty. It is axiomatic that one cannot ascend any ladder until one is on it. For a society to maximize the opportunity for every person to ascend the socioeconomic ladder—a major dimension of the "to become" mentioned earlier—it must first enable people to "get on the ladder." Business education, particularly undergraduate business education, I suggest, is an important and effective mechanism for many young people to "get on the ladder."

For those young people born to upper income families, "getting on the ladder"—if they choose to do so—is relatively easy. As they grow up, they naturally acquire the social skills (among them, how to dress, sit, stand, gesture, talk, and groom themselves). Commensurate with corporate America and through family and friends they have all the contacts in corporate America necessary for at least starting a prosperous career. Indeed, such fortunate youths often view universities as places where they can "find themselves."

Though undergraduate business programs service the entire spectrum of society, when compared with the liberal arts, a greater share of our students comes from the lower socioeconomic strata. In particular, undergraduate youths from "blueblood" families in the social register seldom major in business. Indeed, undergraduate education in business is not even permitted (needed?) at most prominent, elite, private universities (and a few public universities emulating their private cousins). In short, students from the less-affluent portions of our society turn by the hundreds of thousands each year toward undergraduate business education as a vehicle for "getting on the socioeconomic ladder."¹⁰ Thus, since "marketing is a socioeconomic ladder," the consequences of business education contribute significantly toward the ideal of equal opportunity for all and the "American Dream." Utilitarianism, therefore, provides a powerful rationale for high quality marketing and business education along the lines here advocated.¹¹

MARKETING IS . . .

So, what is marketing? Marketing is a university discipline that aspires to be a professional discipline and that, accordingly, has responsibilities (a) to society, for providing objective knowledge and technically competent, socially responsible, liberally educated graduates, (b) to students, for providing an education that will enable them to get on the socioeconomic ladder and prepare them for their roles as competent, responsible marketers and citizens, (c) to marketing practice, for providing a continuing supply of competent, responsible entrants to the marketing profession and for providing new knowledge about both the micro and macro dimensions of marketing, and (d) to the academy, for upholding its mission of retailing, warehousing, and producing knowledge, its contract with society of objective knowledge for academic freedom, and its core values of reason, evidence, openness, and civility. Such is marketing. But, what will marketing be? What will marketing become? Ah, that is up to us, isn't it?

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NOTES

1. All moral philosophies can be categorized as either deontological, which focus on the inherent rightness/wrongness of behaviors, or teleological, which focus on the amount of good or bad embodied in the consequences of behaviors. See Hunt and Vitell (1986) for a theory of ethics embracing both deontological and teleological philosophies.
2. The material in this section draws heavily from Brubacher and

- Rudy (1976), Hugstad (1983), Houston and Hunt (1983), Hunt (1991a), and Hunt and Speck (1986).
3. For example, as late as 1874, the Catholic University in Ireland refused to allow science to be taught (Gieryn 1983).
 4. Oxford and Cambridge at the time still admitted only Anglicans and were not yet research oriented. Oxford granted its first Ph.D. in 1917, fifty-six years after Yale granted the first Ph.D. in the United States. Between 1815 and the outbreak of the First World War, over ten thousand American students earned degrees at German universities, half of them at the University of Berlin (Brubacher and Rudy 1976, p. 175).
 5. This seems to be the argument of Myers, Massy, and Greyser (1980), when, among other things, they discuss scholarly research as "basic fuel," p. x.
 6. For an introduction, see Lynn (1965), Vollmer and Mills (1966), and Moore (1970). For an excellent summary related to management as a profession, see Osigweh (1986).
 7. It is worth noting that medicine and law have a single, dominant occupation associated with them—even accounting has only two: the CPA and the corporate accountant. The radical heterogeneity of marketing occupations poses a unique difficulty for those wanting "marketing" *per se* to be a profession. Indeed, the "marketing manager," as customarily described in marketing textbooks, constitutes a distinct minority as to numbers of people engaged in marketing occupations.
 8. See Hunt (1992a) for a brief review of science and objectivity. See Hunt (1992b, 1992c) for more extensive analyses.
 9. If two, genuinely rival, alternative views, e.g., two theories or paradigms, are "incommensurable," then, by definition, their relative merits cannot be evaluated. Consequently, each view *must* be considered equally good, equally bad, equally trustworthy, equally untrustworthy, equally true, or equally false, because, if a judgment can be made that one alternative view is superior to its rival, then the two views are commensurable, not incommensurable.
 10. Engineering is, of course, the other popular major for getting on the socioeconomic ladder. MBA programs also have this role, but it is less clear that MBA programs *disproportionately* serve those from lower socioeconomic strata.
 11. There is much discussion in our society about the importance of education in building self-esteem in students. Although self-esteem is important, it can come from many different sources. Providing students with the kind of education that will further their ability to "make it" economically in society and then encouraging them to be productive citizens is precisely one such source and, perhaps, the best one. It would seem preferable to being prideful about the accomplishments of one's ancestors, racial, ethnic, or otherwise, and infinitely preferable to being falsely prideful about one's "socially constructed," i.e., fictitious forebears (Hughes 1992, p. 47-49).

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