

## ABSTRACT

### PEDAGOGY, CRITIQUE, AND ETHICS IN MARKETING: A PROPOSED PARADIGM SHIFT

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The purpose of the present paper is to propose an alternative perspective from which to examine ethics and marketing phenomena. The use of Arndt's (1985) conflict paradigms, which consist of the "liberating" and "sociopolitical" versions, provides us with such a conceptual option. This (re)orientation is entirely substantive in nature, and therefore readily amenable to being subsumed under the previous work in marketing ethics (e.g., Ferrell and Gresham 1985; Hunt and Vitell 1986). The content of ethical problems or dilemmas, however, will be substantially altered given this theoretical deviation. From both a pedagogical and research standpoint, the discipline of marketing is constrained in its efforts to confront the challenge of social responsibility and ethical behavior. The metatheoretical assumptions of the logical empiricist orientation (from which most traditional academic marketing activities are situated) are inappropriate for a study of ethics because of the emphasis on consensus, and the tendency to reproduce the current social arrangement. A "movement," therefore, is proposed from the logical empiricist perspective to either the liberating or sociopolitical paradigm in an attempt to capture the overall essence of the philosophical project, and its notion of critique. Operating from Arndt's conflict paradigms permits us to utilize the basic approach of Critical Theory, and the work of its many advocates (e.g., Horkheimer 1972; Adorno 1973; Marcuse 1964; Fromm 1955).

A major contention of this paper is that fundamental ethical concerns that involve marketing have been overlooked because of the strong adherence to functionalist thought. A much broader and basic position must be assumed when establishing the criteria for an "ethical dilemma" (Ferrell and Gresham 1985), or a "perceived ethical problem" (Hunt and Vitell 1986). Arndt's 'victimized consumer' and 'alienated man' metaphors, which are generated from the liberating paradigm, are not represented within traditional conceptualizations of marketing ethics. In addition, the 'political economy' metaphor emanating from the sociopolitical paradigm provides insight into the Marxian categories of commodity fetishism and alienation. These are concepts that are not captured

within the logical empiricist paradigm. A truly critical perspective should allow for these differing interpretations, and consequently a reformulation of ethical issues. For example, one goal of a critical marketing theory is to formulate the notion of an ethical product in terms of how it was produced (e.g., worker exploitation) in addition to its effects, adverse or otherwise, on consumers.

With the advent of the "postmodern scene" (Kroker and Cook 1988), the dilemmas of the human condition will become greatly magnified. Unfortunately, the study of marketing ethics as it now stands is incapable of analyzing postmodernism as either a style or a periodizing concept. Arndt's conflict dimension is basically derived from Kantian, Hegelian, and Marxian roots. Postmodernism from a social theoretical perspective is attempting to break from these very notions. Hence, operating from either the liberating or the sociopolitical paradigm not only offers us with an alternative perspective from which to situate marketing ethics, but also allows us to make theoretical modifications to reflect changes in the characteristics of social reality.

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