Session I

Self-interest and the Invisible Hand
ADAM SMITH

The Theory of Moral Sentiments

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PART I
OF the PROPRIETY of ACTION
Consisting of Three Sections

SECTION I
OF the Sense of PROPRIETY

CHAP. I
OF SYMPATHY

1 How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.

2 As we have no immediate experience of what other men feel, we can form no idea of the manner in which they are affected, but by conceiving what we ourselves should feel in the like situation. Though our brother is upon the rack, as long as we ourselves are at our ease, our senses will never inform us of what he suffers. They never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are his sensations. Neither can that faculty help us to this any other way, than by representing to us what would be our own, if we were in his case. It is the impressions of our own senses only, not those of his, which our imaginations copy. By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him, and thence form some idea of his sensations, and even feel something which, though weaker in degree, is not altogether unlike them. His agonies, when they are thus brought home to ourselves, when we have thus adopted and made them our own, begin at last to affect us, and we then tremble and shudder at the thought of what he feels. For as to be in pain or distress of any kind excites the most excessive sorrow, so to conceive or to imagine that we are in it, excites some degree of the same emotion, in proportion to the vivacity or dulness of the conception.
CHAP. III

Of the manner in which we judge of the propriety or impropriety of the affections of other men, by their concord or dissonance with our own

I When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when, upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them. To approve of the passions of another, therefore, as suitable to their objects, is the same thing as to observe that we entirely sympathize with them; and not to approve of them as such, is the same thing as to observe that we do not entirely sympathize with them. The man who resents the injuries that have been done to me, and observes that I resent them precisely as he does, necessarily approves of my resentment. The man whose sympathy keeps time to my grief, cannot but admit the reasonableness of my sorrow. He who admires the same poem, or the same picture, and admires them exactly as I do, must surely allow the justness of my admiration. He who laughs at the same joke, and laughs along with me, cannot well deny the propriety of my laughter. On the contrary, the person who, upon these different occasions, either feels no such emotion as that which I feel, or feels none that bears any proportion to mine, cannot avoid disapproving my sentiments on account of their dissonance with his own. If my animosity goes...
beyond what the indignation of my friend can correspond to; if my grief
exceeds what his most tender compassion can go along with; if my admira-
tion is either too high or too low to tally with his own; if I laugh loud and
heartily when he only smiles, or, on the contrary, only smile when he
laughs loud and heartily; in all these cases, as soon as he comes from
considering the object, to observe how I am affected by it, according as
there is more or less disproportion between his sentiments and mine, I
must incur a greater or less degree of his disapprobation: and upon all
occasions his own sentiments are the standards and measures by which he
djudges of mine.

2. To approve of another man's opinions is to adopt those opinions, and to
adopt them is to approve of them. If the same arguments which convince
you convince me likewise, I necessarily approve of your conviction; and if
they do not, I necessarily disapprove of it: neither can I possibly conceive
that I should do the one without the other. To approve or disapprove,
therefore, of the opinions of others is acknowledged, by every body, to
mean no more than to observe their agreement or disagreement with our
own. But this is equally the case with regard to our approbation or dis-
approbation of the sentiments or passions of others.

3. There are, indeed, some cases in which we seem to approve without any
sympathy or correspondence of sentiments, and in which, consequently,
the sentiment of approbation would seem to be different from the
perception of this coincidence. A little attention, however, will convince
us that even in these cases our approbation is ultimately founded upon a
sympathy or correspondence of this kind. I shall give an instance in things
of a very frivolous nature, because in them the judgments of mankind are
less apt to be perverted by wrong systems. We may often approve of a jest,
and think the laughter of the company quite just and proper, though we
ourselves do not laugh, because, perhaps, we are in a grave humour, or
happen to have our attention engaged with other objects. We have learned,
however, from experience, what sort of pleasantry is upon most occasions
capable of making us laugh, and we observe that this is one of that kind.
We approve, therefore, of the laughter of the company, and feel that it is
natural and suitable to its object; because, though in our present mood we
cannot easily enter into it, we are sensible that upon most occasions we
should very heartily join in it.

4. The same thing often happens with regard to all the other passions. A
stranger passes by us in the street with all the marks of the deepest afflic-
tion; and we are immediately told that he has just received the news of the
death of his father. It is impossible that, in this case, we should not approve
of his grief. Yet it may often happen, without any defect of humanity on
our part, that, so far from entering into the violence of his sorrow, we
should scarce conceive the first movements of concern upon his account.
Both he and his father, perhaps, are entirely unknown to us, or we happen to be employed about other things, and do not take time to picture out in our imagination the different circumstances of distress which must occur to him. We have learned, however, from experience, that such a misfortune naturally excites such a degree of sorrow, and we know that if we took time to consider his situation, fully and in all its parts, we should, without doubt, most sincerely sympathize with him. It is upon the consciousness of this conditional sympathy, that our approbation of his sorrow is founded, even in those cases in which that sympathy does not actually take place; and the general rules derived from our preceding experience of what our sentiments would commonly correspond with, correct upon this, as upon many other occasions, the impropriety of our present emotions.

5 The sentiment or affection of the heart from which any action proceeds, and upon which its whole virtue or vice must ultimately depend, may be considered under two different aspects, or in two different relations; first, in relation to the cause which excites it, or the motive which gives occasion to it; and secondly, in relation to the end which it proposes, or the effect which it tends to produce.

6 In the suitableness or unsuitableness, in the proportion or disproportion which the affection seems to bear to the cause or object which excites it, consists the propriety or impropriety, the decency or ungracefulness of the consequent action.

7 In the beneficial or hurtful nature of the effects which the affection aims at, or tends to produce, consists the merit or demerit of the action, the qualities by which it is entitled to reward, or is deserving of punishment.

8 Philosophers have, of late years, considered chiefly the tendency of affections, and have given little attention to the relation which they stand in to the cause which excites them. In common life, however, when we judge of any person's conduct, and of the sentiments which directed it, we constantly consider them under both these aspects. When we blame in another man the excesses of love, of grief, of resentment, we not only consider the ruinous effects which they tend to produce, but the little occasion which was given for them. The merit of his favourite, we say, is not so great; his misfortune is not so dreadful, his provocation is not so extraordinary, as to justify so violent a passion. We should have indulged, we say; perhaps, have approved of the violence of his emotion, had the cause been in any respect proportioned to it.

9 When we judge in this manner of any affection, as proportioned or disproportioned to the cause which excites it, it is scarce possible that we should make use of any other rule or canon but the correspondent affection in ourselves. If, upon bringing the case home to our own breast, we find that the sentiments which it gives occasion to, coincide and tally with
our own, we necessarily approve of them as proportioned and suitable to their objects; if otherwise, we necessarily disapprove of them, as extravagant and out of proportion.

Every faculty in one man is the measure by which he judges of the like faculty in another. I judge of your sight by my sight, of your ear by my ear, of your reason by my reason, of your resentment by my resentment, of your love by my love. I neither have, nor can have, any other way of judging about them.
CHAP. IV
Of the social Passions

1 As it is a divided sympathy which renders the whole set of passions just now mentioned, upon most occasions; so ungraceful and disagreeable; so there is another set opposite to these, which a redoubled sympathy renders almost always peculiarly agreeable and becoming. Generosity, humanity, kindness, compassion, mutual friendship and esteem, all the social and benevolent affections, when expressed in the countenance or behaviour, even towards those who are "not" peculiarly connected with ourselves,

6-8 om. 1-5 Presumably emended by the author; but since the earlier reading too makes good sense, it may originally have been intentional.
please the indifferent spectator upon almost every occasion. His sympathy
with the person who feels those passions, exactly coincides with his concern
for the person who is the object of them. The interest, which, as a man, he
is obliged to take in the happiness of this last, enlivens his fellow-feeling
with the sentiments of the other, whose emotions are employed about the
same object. We have always, therefore, the strongest disposition to sympa-
thize with the benevolent affections. They appear in every respect agree-
able to us. We enter into the satisfaction both of the person who feels them,
and of the person who is the object of them. For as to be the object of
hatred and indignation gives more pain than all the evil which a brave
man can fear from his enemies; so there is a satisfaction in the conscious-
ness of being beloved, which, to a person of delicacy and sensibility, is of
more importance to happiness, than all the advantage which he can expect
to derive from it. What character is so detestable as that of one who takes
pleasure to sow dissension among friends, and to turn their most tender
love into mortal hatred? Yet wherein does the atrocity of this so much
abhorred injury consist? Is it in depriving them of the frivolous good
offices, which, had their friendship continued, they might have expected
from one another? It is in depriving them of that friendship itself, in rob-
ing them of each other’s affections, from which both derived so much
satisfaction; it is in disturbing the harmony of their hearts, and putting
an end to that happy commerce which had before subsisted between them.
These affections, that harmony, this commerce, are felt, not only by the
tender and the delicate, but by the rudest vulgar of mankind, to be of more
importance to happiness than all the little services which could be expected
to flow from them.

2 The sentiment of love is, in itself, agreeable to the person who feels it.
It soothes and composes the breast, seems to favour the vital motions, and
to promote the healthful state of the human constitution; and it is rendered
still more delightful by the consciousness of the gratitude and satisfaction
which it must excite in him who is the object of it. Their mutual regard
renders them happy in one another, and sympathy, with this mutual reg-
ard, makes them agreeable to every other person. With what pleasure do
we look upon a family, through the whole of which reign mutual love and
esteem, where the parents and children are companions for one another,
without any other difference than what is made by respectful affection on
the one side, and kind indulgence on the other; where freedom and
fondness, mutual raillery and mutual kindness, show that no opposition
of interest divides the brothers, nor any rivalry of favour sets the sisters
at variance, and where every thing presents us with the idea of peace,
cheerfulness, harmony, and contentment? On the contrary, how uneasy
are we made when we go into a house in which jarring contention sets one
half of those who dwell in it against the other; where amidst affected
smoothness and complaisance, suspicious looks and sudden starts of passion betray the mutual jealousies which burn within them, and which are every moment ready to burst out through all the restraints which the presence of the company imposes?

3. Those amiable passions, even when they are acknowledged to be excessive, are never regarded with aversion. There is something agreeable even in the weakness of friendship and humanity. The too tender mother, the too indulgent father, the too generous and affectionate friend, may sometimes, perhaps, on account of the softness of their natures, be looked upon with a species of pity, in which, however, there is a mixture of love, but can never be regarded with hatred and aversion, nor even with contempt, unless by the most brutal and worthless of mankind. It is always with concern, with sympathy and kindness, that we blame them for the extravagance of their attachment. There is a helplessness in the character of extreme humanity which more than any thing interests our pity. There is nothing in itself which renders it either ungraceful or disagreeable. We only regret that it is unfit for the world, because the world is unworthy of it, and because it must expose the person who is endowed with it as a prey to the perfidy and ingratitude of insinuating falsehood, and to a thousand pains and uneasinesses, which, of all men, he the least deserves to feel, and which generally too he is, of all men, the least capable of supporting. It is quite otherwise with hatred and resentment. Too violent a propensity to those detestable passions, renders a person the object of universal dread and abhorrence, who, like a wild beast, ought, we think, to be hunted out of all civil society.
Of the sense of Justice, of Remorse, and of the consciousness of Merit

There can be no proper motive for hurting our neighbour, there can be no incitement to do evil to another, which mankind will go along with, except just indignation for evil which that other has done to us. To disturb his happiness merely because it stands in the way of our own, to take from him what is of real use to him merely because it may be of equal or of more use to us, or to indulge, in this manner, at the expense of other people, the natural preference which every man has for his own happiness above that of other people, is what no impartial spectator can go along with. Every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; and as he is fitter to take care of himself than of any other person, it is fit and right that it should be so. Every man, therefore, is
much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man: and to hear, perhaps, of the death of another person, with whom we have no particular connexion, will give us less concern, will spoil our stomach, or break our rest, much less than a very insignificant disaster which has befallen ourselves. But though the ruin of our neighbour may affect us much less than a very small misfortune of our own, we must not ruin him to prevent that small misfortune, nor even to prevent our own ruin. We must, here, as in all other cases, view ourselves not so much according to that light in which we may naturally appear to ourselves, as according to that in which we naturally appear to others. Though every man may, according to the proverb, be the whole world to himself, to the rest of mankind he is a most insignificant part of it. Though his own happiness may be of more importance to him than that of all the world besides, to every other person it is of no more consequence than that of any other man. Though it may be true, therefore, that every individual, in his own breast, naturally prefers himself to all mankind, yet he dares not look mankind in the face, and avow that he acts according to this principle. He feels that in this preference they can never go along with him, and that how natural soever it may be to him, it must always appear excessive and extravagant to them. When he views himself in the light in which he is conscious that others will view him, he sees that to them he is but one of the multitude in no respect better than any other in it. If he would act so as that the impartial spectator may enter into the principles of his conduct, which is what of all things he has the greatest desire to do, he must, upon this, as upon all other occasions, humble the arrogance of his self-love, and bring it down to something which other men can go along with. They will indulge it so far as to allow him to be more anxious about, and to pursue with more earnest assiduity, his own happiness than that of any other person. Thus far, whenever they place themselves in his situation, they will readily go along with him. In the race for wealth, and honours, and preferments, he may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and every muscle, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should justle, or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end. It is a violation of fair play, which they cannot admit of. This man is to them, in every respect, as good as he: they do not enter into that self-love by which he prefers himself so much to this other, and cannot go along with the motive from which he hurt him. They readily, therefore, sympathize with the natural resentment of the injured, and the offender becomes the object of their hatred and indignation. He is sensible that he becomes so, and feels that those sentiments are ready to burst out from all sides against him.

2 As the greater and more irreparable the evil that is done, the resentment of the sufferer runs naturally the higher; so does likewise the sympathetic
indignation of the spectator, as well as the sense of guilt in the agent. Death is the greatest evil which one man can inflict upon another, and excites the highest degree of resentment in those who are immediately connected with the slain. Murder, therefore, is the most atrocious of all crimes which affect individuals only, in the sight both of mankind, and of the person who has committed it. To be deprived of that which we are possessed of, is a greater evil than to be disappointed of what we have only the expectation. Breach of property, therefore, theft and robbery, which take from us what we are possessed of, are greater crimes than breach of contract, which only disappoints us of what we expected. The most sacred laws of justice, therefore, those whose violation seems to call loudest for vengeance and punishment, are the laws which guard the life and person of our neighbour; the next are those which guard his property and possessions; and last of all come those which guard what are called his personal rights, or what is due to him from the promises of others.

The violator of the more sacred laws of justice can never reflect on the sentiments which mankind must entertain with regard to him, without feeling all the agonies of shame, and horror, and consternation. When his passion is gratified, and he begins coolly to reflect on his past conduct, he can enter into none of the motives which influenced it. They appear now as detestable to him as they did always to other people. By sympathizing with the hatred and abhorrence which other men must entertain for him, he becomes in some measure the object of his own hatred and abhorrence. The situation of the person, who suffered by his injustice, now calls upon his pity. He is grieved at the thought of it; regrets the unhappy effects of his own conduct, and feels at the same time that they have rendered him the proper object of the resentment and indignation of mankind, and of what is the natural consequence of resentment, vengeance and punishment. The thought of this perpetually haunts him, and fills him with terror and amazement. He dares no longer look society in the face, but imagines himself as it were rejected, and thrown out from the affections of all mankind. He cannot hope for the consolation of sympathy in this his greatest and most dreadful distress. The remembrance of his crimes has shut out all fellow-feeling with him from the hearts of his fellow-creatures. The sentiments which they entertain with regard to him, are the very thing which he is most afraid of. Every thing seems hostile, and he would be glad to fly to some inhospitable desert, where he might never more behold the face of a human creature, nor read in the countenance of mankind the condemnation of his crimes. But solitude is still more dreadful than society. His own thoughts can present him with nothing but what is black, unfortunate, and disastrous, the melancholy forebodings of incomprehensible misery and ruin. The horror of solitude drives him back into society, and he comes again into the presence of mankind, astonished to appear before
them, loaded with shame and distracted with fear, in order to supplicate some little protection from the countenance of those very judges, who he knows have already all unanimously condemned him. Such is the nature of that sentiment, which is properly called remorse; of all the sentiments which can enter the human breast the most dreadful. It is made up of shame from the sense of the impropriety of past conduct; of grief for the effects of it; of pity for those who suffer by it; and of the dread and terror of punishment from the consciousness of the justly provoked resentment of all rational creatures.

4. The opposite behaviour naturally inspires the opposite sentiment. The man who, not from frivolous fancy, but from proper motives, has performed a generous action, when he looks forward to those whom he has served, feels himself to be the natural object of their love and gratitude, and, by sympathy with them, of the esteem and approbation of all mankind. And when he looks backward to the motive from which he acted, and surveys it in the light in which the indifferent spectator will survey it, he still continues to enter into it, and applauds himself by sympathy with the approbation of this supposed impartial judge. In both these points of view his own conduct appears to him every way agreeable. His mind, at the thought of it, is filled with cheerfulness, serenity, and composure. He is in friendship and harmony with all mankind, and looks upon his fellow-creatures with confidence and benevolent satisfaction, secure that he has rendered himself worthy of their most favourable regards. In the combination of all these sentiments consists the consciousness of merit, or of deserved reward.
"CHAP. IV
Of the Nature of Self-deceit, and of the Origin and Use of general Rules

In order to pervert the rectitude of our own judgments concerning the propriety of our own conduct, it is not always necessary that the real and impartial spectator should be at a great distance. When he is at hand, when

This chapter is a revised version of what was the latter part of Sect. ii in ed. 1 and Chap. 2 in eds. 2-5. See note * at III.1.5 and note * at III.3.17. § 1 is not in ed. 2, but the latter part of it, from the violence and injustice of our own selfish passions..., is a revision of a passage added in the draft revision of 1759 and in ed. 2.

21 De Providentia (Dialogues, Book I), vi.6.
he is present, the violence and injustice of our own selfish passions are
sometimes sufficient to induce the man within the breast to make a report
very different from what the real circumstances of the case are capable of
authorising.

2 There are two different occasions upon which we examine our own
conduct, and endeavour to view it in the light in which the impartial
spectator would view it: first, when we are about to act; and secondly,
after we have acted. Our views are "apt to be" very partial in both cases;
but they are "apt to be most partial" when it is of most importance that
they should be otherwise.

3 When we are about to act, the eagerness of passion will seldom allow us
to consider what we are doing, with the candour of an indifferent person.
The violent emotions which at that time agitate us, discolour our views of
"things," even when we are endeavouring to place ourselves in the situation
of another, and to regard the objects that interest us in the light in which
they will naturally appear to "him," the "fury of our own passions constantly
calls us back to our own place, where every thing appears magnified and
misrepresented by self-love. Of the manner in which those objects would
appear to another, of the view which he would take of them, we can obtain,
if I may say so, but instantaneous glimpses, which vanish in a moment,
and which, even while they last, are not altogether just. We cannot even
for that moment divest ourselves entirely of the heat and keenness with
which our peculiar situation inspires us, nor consider what we are about
to do with the complete impartiality of an equitable judge. The passions,
upon this account, as father Malebranche says, all justify themselves, and
seem reasonable and proportioned to their objects, as long as we continue to
feel them.¹

4 When the action is over, indeed, and the passions which prompted it have
subsided, we can enter more coolly into the sentiments of the indifferent
spectator. What before interested us is now become almost as indifferent to
us as it always was to him, and we can now examine our own conduct with
his candour and impartiality. The man of to-day is no longer agitated by

¹ ¹ Recherche de la vérité, V.11. Hutcheson also cites with approval this dictum of Male-

branche; Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil, II.4; Raphael, British Moralists 1550-
1800, § 322.
the same passions which distracted the man of yesterday: and when the paroxysm of emotion, in the same manner as when the paroxysm of distress, is fairly over, we can identify ourselves, as it were, with the ideal man within the breast, and, in our own character, view, as in the one case, our own situation, so in the other, our own conduct, with the severe eyes of the most impartial spectator. But our judgments now are often of little importance in comparison of what they were before; and can frequently produce nothing but vain regret and unavailing repentance; without always securing us from the like errors in time to come. It is seldom, however, that they are quite candid even in this case. The opinion which we entertain of our own character depends entirely on our judgments concerning our past conduct. It is so disagreeable to think ill of ourselves, that we often purposely turn away our view from those circumstances which might render that judgment unfavourable. He is a bold surgeon, they say, whose hand does not tremble when he performs an operation upon his own person; and he is often equally bold who does not hesitate to pull off the mysterious veil of self-delusion, which covers from his view the deformities of his own conduct. Rather than see our own behaviour under an aspect, we too often, foolishly and weakly, endeavour to exasperate anew those unjust passions which had formerly misled us; we endeavour by artifice to awaken our old hatreds, and irritate afresh our almost forgotten resentments: we even exert ourselves for this miserable purpose, and thus persevere in injustice, merely because we once were unjust, and because we are ashamed and afraid to see that we were so.

So partial are the views of mankind with regard to the propriety of their own conduct, both at the time of action and after it; and so difficult is it for them to view it in the light in which any indifferent spectator would consider it. But if it was by a peculiar faculty, such as the moral sense is supposed to be, that they judged of their own conduct, if they were endowed with a particular power of perception, which distinguished the beauty or deformity of passions and affections; as their own passions would be more immediately exposed to the view of this faculty, it would judge with more accuracy concerning them, than concerning those of other men, of which it had only a more distant prospect.

This self-deceit, this fatal weakness of mankind, is the source of half the disorders of human life. If we saw ourselves in the light in which others

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2 A criticism of Hutcheson. Cf. VII.iii.3-5-10.
see us, or in which they would see us if they knew all, a reformation would generally be unavoidable. We could not otherwise endure the sight.

7 Nature, however, has not left this weakness, which is of so much importance, altogether without a remedy; nor has she abandoned us entirely to the delusions of self-love. Our continual observations upon the conduct of others, insensibly lead us to form to ourselves certain general rules concerning what is fit and proper either to be done or to be avoided. Some of their actions shock all our natural sentiments. We hear every body about us express the like detestation against them. This still further confirms, and even exasperates our natural sense of their deformity. It satisfies us that we view them in the proper light, when we see other people view them in the same light. We resolve never to be guilty of the like, nor ever, upon any account, to render ourselves in this manner the objects of universal disapprobation. We thus naturally lay down to ourselves a general rule, that all such actions are to be avoided, as tending to render us odious, contemptible, or punishable, the objects of all those sentiments for which we have the greatest dread and aversion. Other actions, on the contrary, call forth our approbation, and we hear every body around us express the same favourable opinion concerning them. Every body is eager to honour and reward them. They excite all those sentiments for which we have by nature the strongest desire; the love, the gratitude, the admiration of mankind. We become ambitious of performing the like; and thus naturally lay down to ourselves a rule of another kind, that every opportunity of acting in this manner is carefully to be sought after.
The poor man's son, whom heaven in its anger has visited with ambition, when he begins to look around him, admires the condition of the rich. He finds the cottage of his father too small for his accommodation, and fancies he should be lodged more at his ease in a palace. He is displeased with being obliged to walk a-foot, or to endure the fatigue of riding on horseback. He sees his superiors carried about in machines, and imagines that in one of these he could travel with less inconveniency. He feels himself naturally indolent, and willing to serve himself with his own hands as little as possible; and judges, that a numerous retinue of servants would save him from a great deal of trouble. He thinks if he had attained all these, he "would" sit still contentedly, and be quiet, enjoying himself in the thought of the happiness and tranquillity of his situation. He is enchanted with the distant idea of this felicity. It appears in his fancy like the life of some superior rank of beings, and, in order to arrive at it, he devotes himself for ever to the pursuit of wealth and greatness. To obtain the conveniences which these afford, he submits in the first year, nay in the first month of his application, to more fatigue of body and more uneasiness of mind than he could have suffered through the whole of his life from the want of them. He studies to distinguish himself in some laborious profession. With the most unrelenting industry he labours night and day to acquire talents superior to all his competitors. He endeavours next to bring those talents into public view, and with equal assiduity solicits every opportunity of employment. For this purpose he makes his court to all mankind; he serves those whom he hates, and is obsequious to those whom he despises. Through the whole of his life he pursues the idea of a certain artificial and elegant repose which he may never arrive at, for which he sacrifices a real tranquillity that is at all times in his power, and which, if in the extremity of old age he should at last attain to it, he will find to be in no respect preferable to that humble security and contentment which he had abandoned for it. It is then, in the last dregs of life, his body wasted with toil and diseases, his mind galled and ruffled by the memory of a thousand injuries and disappointments which he imagines he has met with from the injustice of his enemies, or from the perfidy and ingratitude of his friends, that he begins at last to find that wealth and greatness are mere trinkets of frivolous utility, no more adapted for procuring ease of body or tranquillity of mind than the tweezer-cases of the lover of toys; and like them too, more troublesome to the person who carries them about with him than all the advantages they can afford him are commodious. There is no other real difference between them, except that the conveniences of the one are somewhat more observable than those.
of the other. The palaces, the gardens, the equipage, the retinue of the great, are objects of which the obvious conveniency strikes every body. They do not require that their masters should point out to us wherein consists their utility. Of our own accord we readily enter into it, and by sympathy enjoy and thereby applaud the satisfaction which they are fitted to afford him. But the curiosity of a tooth-pick, of an ear-picker, of a machine for cutting the nails, or of any other trinket of the same kind, is not so obvious. Their conveniency may perhaps be equally great, but it is not so striking, and we do not so readily enter into the satisfaction of the man who possesses them. They are therefore less reasonable subjects of vanity than the magnificence of wealth and greatness; and in this consists the sole advantage of these last. They more effectually gratify that love of distinction so natural to man. To one who was to live alone in a desolate island it might be a matter of doubt, perhaps, whether a palace, or a collection of such small conveniencies as are commonly contained in a tweezers-case, would contribute most to his happiness and enjoyment. If he is to live in society, indeed, there can be no comparison, because in this, as in all other cases, we constantly pay more regard to the sentiments of the spectator, than to those of the person principally concerned, and consider rather how his situation will appear to other people, than how it will appear to himself. If we examine, however, why the spectator distinguishes with such admiration the condition of the rich and the great, we shall find that it is not so much upon account of the superior ease or pleasure which they are supposed to enjoy, as of the numberless artificial and elegant contrivances for promoting this ease or pleasure. He does not even imagine that they are really happier than other people: but he imagines that they possess more means of happiness. And it is the ingenious and artful adjustment of those means to the end for which they were intended, that is the principal source of his admiration. But in the languor of disease and the weariness of old age, the pleasures of the vain and empty distinctions of greatness disappear. To one, in this situation, they are no longer capable of recommending those toilsome pursuits in which they had formerly engaged him. In his heart he curses ambition, and vainly regrets the ease and the indolence of youth, pleasures which are fled for ever, and which he has foolishly sacrificed for what, when he has got it, can afford him no real satisfaction. In this miserable aspect does greatness appear to every man when reduced either by spleen or disease to observe with attention his own situation, and to consider what it is that is really wanting to his happiness. Power and riches appear then to be, what they are, enormous and operose machines contrived to produce a few trifling conveniencies to

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* Probably recalls 'operose Contrivances' in Mandeville, *Fable of the Bees*, Remark (L) on luxury; ed. F. B. Kaye, 1119.
the body, consisting of springs the most nice and delicate, which must be kept in order with the most anxious attention, and which in spite of all our care are ready every moment to burst into pieces, and to crush in their ruins their unfortunate possessor. They are immense fabrics, which it requires the labour of a life to raise, which threaten every moment to overwhelm the person that dwells in them, and which while they stand, though they may save him from some smaller inconveniences, can protect him from none of the severer inclemencies of the season. They keep off the summer shower, not the winter storm, but leave him always as much, and sometimes more exposed than before, to anxiety, to fear, and to sorrow; to diseases, to danger, and to death.

9 But though this sphenetic philosophy, which in time of sickness or low spirits is familiar to every man, thus entirely depreciates those great objects of human desire, when in better health and in better humour, we never fail to regard them under a more agreeable aspect. Our imagination, which in pain and sorrow seems to be confined and cooped up within our own persons, in times of ease and prosperity expands itself to every thing around us. We are then charmed with the beauty of that accommodation which reigns in the palaces and oeconomy of the great; and admire how every thing is adapted to promote their ease, to prevent their wants, to gratify their wishes, and to amuse and entertain their most frivolous desires. If we consider the real satisfaction which all these things are capable of affording, by itself and separated from the beauty of that arrangement which is fitted to promote it, it will always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling. But we rarely view it in this abstract and philosophical light. We naturally confound it in our imagination with the order, the regular and harmonious movement of the system, the machine or oeconomy by means of which it is produced. The pleasures of wealth and greatness, when considered in this complex view, strike the imagination as something grand and beautiful and noble, of which the attainment is well worth all the toil and anxiety which we are so apt to bestow upon it.

10 And it is well that nature imposes upon us in this manner. It is this deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind. It is this which first prompted them to cultivate the ground, to build houses, to found cities and commonwealths, and to invent and improve all the sciences and arts, which ennoble and embellish human life; which have entirely changed the whole face of the globe, have turned the rude forests of nature into agreeable and fertile plains, and made the track-

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1 Recalls Smith's translation, in his 'Letter to the Editors of the Edinburgh Review' (now published in EPS), 13, of a passage from Rousseau, *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité*: 'and the vast forests of nature were changed into agreeable plains'. Rousseau's own words were: 'les vastes forêts se changèrent en des campagnes riantes'. Smith's repetition of the phrase here may be mere coincidence, but it is also possible (as was suggested to us by
The Effect

less and barren ocean a new fund of subsistence, and the great high road of communication to the different nations of the earth. The earth by these labours of mankind has been obliged to redouble her natural fertility, and to maintain a greater multitude of inhabitants. It is to no purpose, that the proud and unfeeling landlord views his extensive fields, and without a thought for the wants of his brethren, in imagination consumes himself the whole harvest that grows upon them. The homely and vulgar proverb, that the eye is larger than the belly, never was more fully verified than with regard to him. The capacity of his stomach bears no proportion to the immensity of his desires, and will receive no more than that of the meanest peasant. The rest he is obliged to distribute among those, who prepare, in the nicest manner, that little which he himself makes use of, among those who fit up the palace in which this little is to be consumed, among those who provide and keep in order all the different baubles and trinkets, which are employed in the oeconomy of greatness; all of whom thus derive from his luxury and caprice, that share of the necessaries of life, which they would in vain have expected from his humanity or his justice. The produce of the soil maintains at all times nearly that number of inhabitants which it is capable of maintaining. The rich only select from the heap what is most precious and agreeable. They consume little more than the poor, and in spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand⁶ to make nearly

H. B. Acton) that Smith is implicitly contesting Rousseau's view that the acquisition of property causes inequality. The phrase about the forests is preceded, in the translation from Rousseau, by '... equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary, ...' In the present paragraph of TMS Smith proceeds to argue that the rich are led by an invisible hand to make a distribution of necessities that is nearly the same as would exist in a state of natural equality. In the 'Letter' Smith introduced Rousseau as a critic of Mandeville, and he may well have both writers in mind here also (cf. preceding note).

⁶ Cf. WN I.xi.c.7: 'The rich man consumes no more food than his poor neighbour. ... The desire of food is limited in every man by the narrow capacity of the human stomach; but the desire of the conveniences and ornaments ... seems to have no limit or certain boundary.' See A. L. Macfie, Individual in Society, 111–71, for relation of TMS to WN.

⁷ The phrase recurs in WN IV.ii.6: 'every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it: ... he intends only his own gain, and he is ... led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention.' In both places Smith says that the end unintentionally promoted is the interest of society, but there is a difference: the TMS passage refers to the distribution of means to happiness, the WN passage to maximization.

Smith first used the expression 'invisible hand' in Astronomy, III.2, when writing of early religious thought, in which only irregular events were attributed to supernatural agency. Fire burns, and water refreshes; heavy bodies descend, and lighter substances fly upwards, by the necessity of their own nature; nor was the invisible hand of Jupiter ever
the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species. When Providence divided the earth among a few lordly masters, it neither forgot nor abandoned those who seemed to have been left out in the partition. These last too enjoy their share of all that it produces. In what constitutes the real happiness of human life, they are in no respect inferior to those who would seem so much above them. In ease of body and peace of mind, all the different ranks of life are nearly upon a level, and the beggar, who suns himself by the side of the highway, possesses that security which kings are fighting for.
CONSUMED

How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole

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Capitalism Triumphant and the Infantilist Ethos

Last of all, that ends [man's] eventful history,
Is second childishness...
—Shakespeare, As You Like It, II, vii

When I was a child I spake as a child,
I understood as a child, I thought as a child,
but when I became a man I put away childish things.
—St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11, the New Testament

In these paltry times of capitalism's triumph, as we slide into consumer narcissism, Shakespeare's seven ages of man are in danger of being washed away by lifelong puerility. Pop-cultural journalists have used many terms to depict a new species of perennial adolescent: kidults, rejuveniles, tweeters, and adultscents; 1 around the world Germans speak of "Nestockey," Italians of "Mammone," Japanese of "Freeen," Indians of "Zippies," and the French of a "Tanguy" syndrome and "puériculture." What they are discerning with their pop neologisms is the consequence of a powerful new cultural ethos, felt more than recognized. It is an ethos of induced childishness: an infantilization that is closely tied to the demands of consumer capitalism in a global market economy.

This infantilist ethos is as potent in shaping the ideology and behaviors of our radical consumerist society today as what Max Weber called the "Protestant ethic" was in shaping the entrepreneurial culture of what was then a productivist early capitalist society. Affiliated with an ideology of privatization, the marketing of brands, and a homogenization of taste, 3.
this ethos of infantilization has worked to sustain consumer capitalism, but at the expense of both civility and civilization and at a growing risk to capitalism itself. Although we use the term democratic capitalism in a manner that suggests a certain redundancy, the reality is that the two words describe different systems often in tension with one another. Consumerism has set the two entirely asunder.

How much should we care? In an epoch when terrorism stalks the planet, when fear of Jihad is as prevalent as the infringement of liberties to which fear gives rise, when AIDS and tsunamis and war and genocide put democracy at risk in both the developing and the developed world, it may seem self-indulgent to fret about the dangers of hyperconsumerism. When poor children in the developing world are being exploited, starved, prostituted, and impressed into military service, anxiety about the prosperous young in the developed world who may be growing up into consumers too fast, or about adult consumers being dumbedin down too easily, can seem parochial, even solipsistic.

Yet as James Madison said long ago, the pathologies of liberty can be as perilous as the pathologies of tyranny; and far more difficult to discern or remedy. Although forces of Jihad continue to struggle violently against the successes of McWorld, and the abuse of children living under poverty remains a far greater problem than the infantilization of adults living under prosperity, modernization appears to be irreversible over the long term. But the fate of citizens under capitalism triumphant is another matter. The victory of consumers is not synonymous with the victory of citizens. McWorld can prevail and liberty can still lose. The diseases of prosperity which are the afflictions of capitalism do not kill outright. They violate no explicit laws of justice. Yet capitalism’s success breeds new and dangerous challenges.

Capitalism per se is not the issue. The question is not whether there is an alternative to markets but whether markets can be made to meet the real needs capitalism is designed to serve, whether capitalism can adapt to the sovereignty of democratic authority that alone will allow it to survive.

Once upon a time, capitalism was allied with virtues that also contributed at least marginally to democracy, responsibility, and citizenship.
Today it is allied with vices which—although they serve consumerism—undermine democracy, responsibility, and citizenship. The question then is whether not just democracy but capitalism itself can survive the infantilist ethos upon which it has come to depend. This book, after it diagnoses liberty’s market pathologies, offers a qualified yes. What is clear is that either capitalism will replace the infantilist ethos with a democratic ethos, and regain its capacity to promote equality as well as profit, diversity as well as consumption, or infantilization will undo not only democracy but capitalism itself. Much will depend on our capacity to make sense out of infantilization and relate it to the not-so-creative destruction of consumerism’s survival logic.

The idea of an “infantilist ethos” is as provocative and controversial as the idea of what Weber called the “Protestant ethic.” Infantilization is at once both an elusive and a confrontational term, a potent metaphor that points on the one hand to the dumbing down of goods and shoppers in a postmodern global economy that seems to produce more goods than people need; and on the other hand, to the targeting of children as consumers in a market where there are never enough shoppers. Once a staple of Freudian psychology focused on the psychopathology of regression, the term infantilization has in the last several years become a favorite of worrywart journalists: David Ansen fretting about the “widespread infantilization of pop culture”; Leon Wieseltier charging that “Hollywood is significantly responsible for the infantilization of America”; Philip Hensher of Britain’s The Independent sure that the “signs that adult culture is being infantilized are everywhere.”

On the potency of adolescent culture, liberals and conservatives agree. Writes Robert J. Samuelson, a moderate liberal: “We live in an age when people increasingly refuse to act their age. The young (or many of them) yearn to be older, while the older (or many of them) yearn to be younger. We have progressively demolished the life cycle’s traditional stages, shortening childhood and following it with a few murky passages. Adolescence . . . begins before puberty and, for some, lasts forever . . . . age denial is everywhere.” Samuelson is echoed by Joseph Epstein, a moderate conservative: “The whole sweep of advertising, which is to say of market, culture since soon after World War II has been continuously to lower the criteria
of youthfulness while extending the possibility for seeming youthful to older and older people.” Even conservatives who reject the charge of consumer infantilization recognize its potency. George F. Will thus charges progressive thinkers with advancing the thesis of the “infantilism of the American public” as one more “we are all victims of manipulation” explanation for Bush’s victory in the 2004 presidential campaign. Little surprise then that popular magazines such as Time (“They Just Won’t Grow Up”) and New York Magazine (“Forever Youngish: Why Nobody Wants to Be an Adult Anymore”) worry in major cover articles about America’s Peter Pan tendencies.

There is anecdotal evidence everywhere: airport police handing out lollipops to placate irate passengers at inspection points; television news divisions turned over to entertainment executives, Vanity Fair–style pop-cultural chatter about “enfantrepreneurs,” and the New York Times Magazine enthusing about “what kids want in fashion, right from the filly’s mouth” on the way to urging things on seven-year-olds; the professionalization of high-school sports that turns teen basketball courts into NBA recruiting turf and basketball-player bodies into advertising billboards; adult fiction readers flocking to Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings (when they are not abandoning reading altogether); fast-food franchises girdling the world to exploit (among other things) children’s restless aversion to grown-up sit-down dining; teen guy games such as World of Warcraft, Grand Theft Auto, and Narc and comic-book films such as Terminator, Spider-Man, Catwoman, and Shrek dominating the entertainment market; new “educational” television channels such as BabyFirst TV and videos such as “Baby Einstein”; cosmetic surgery and Botox injections promising a fountain of youth to female baby boomers who envy their daughters; sexual performance drugs such as Levitra, Cialis, and Viagra (2002 sales of over $1 billion) becoming staples of equally uncomfortable male-boomers trying to smuggle atavistic youth into the age of social security; and businessmen in baseball caps, jeans, and untucked shirts mimicking the studied sloppiness of their unformed kids. Beyond pop culture, the infantilist ethos also dominates: dogmatic judgments of black and white in politics and religion come to displace the nuanced complexi-
ties of adult morality, while the marks of perpetual childishness are grafted onto adults who indulge in puerility without pleasure, and indolence without innocence. Hence, the new consumer penchant for age without dignity, dress without formality, sex without reproduction, work without discipline, play without spontaneity, acquisition without purpose, certainty without doubt, life without responsibility, and narcissism into old age and unto death without a hint of wisdom or humility. In the epoch in which we now live, civilization is not an ideal or an aspiration, it is a video game.12

These myriad anecdotes tell a story, but infantilization—not second childhood but enduring childishness—is much more than just a mesmeric metaphor. A new cultural ethos is being forged that is intimately associated with global consumerism. Those responsible for manufacturing and merchandizing goods for the global marketplace, those who are actually researching, teaching, and practicing marketing and advertising today, are aiming both to sell to a younger demographic and to imbue older consumers with the tastes of the young.

Marketers and merchandisers are self-consciously chasing a youthful commercial constituency sufficiently padded in its pocketbook to be a very attractive market, yet sufficiently uninformed in its tastes as to be vulnerable to conscious corporate manipulation via advertising, marketing, and branding. At the same time, these avatars of consumer capitalism are seeking to encourage adult regression, hoping to rekindle in grown-ups the tastes and habits of children so that they can sell globally the relatively useless cornucopia of games, gadgets, and myriad consumer goods for which there is no discernible “need market” other than the one created by capitalism’s own frantic imperative to sell. As child-development scholar Susan Linn puts it in her critical study of what she calls “the hostile takeover of childhood,” corporations are vying “more and more aggressively for young consumers” while popular culture “is being smothered by commercial culture relentlessly sold to children who [are valued] for their consumption.”13

As the population in the developed world ages—the irony of infantilization—the definition of youth simply moves up, with baby boomers in the
United States smuggling it into their senior years. Meanwhile, the young are big spenders way before they are even modest earners: in 2000, there were 3.1 million American kids between twelve and nineteen already controlling 155 billion consumer dollars. Just four years later, there were 33.5 million kids controlling $169 billion, or roughly $91 per week per kid. The potential youth market is even more impressive elsewhere in the world, where a far greater proportion of the population is under twenty-five, and where new prosperity in nations such as India and China promises a youth market of hundreds of millions in the coming years.

The Economist summed it up a few years ago in its millennium special report: "Once, when you grew up you put away childish things. Today, the 35-year-old Wall Street analyst who zips to work on his push-scooter, listening to Moby on his headphones and carrying annual reports in his backpack, has far more in common with a 20-year-old than he would have done a generation ago." John Tierney notes in the New York Times that Americans are marrying older (since 1970 the median age for marriage has moved up four years, to twenty-five for women and twenty-seven for men), and that thirty is the new twenty, and forty is the new thirty. In Hollywood, where aspiring to stay young is as old as movies and everything is hyperbole, "40 is the new 30 and 50 the new 40, but only, it seems, when that new 40 and 50 have been surgically enhanced. . . . These days, when a 40-plus-year-old actress lands a starring part opposite a 60-plus-year-old actor, such age-appropriate casting seems meaningless because the actress has a face as unlined as a teenager girl's."

As many as four million not-so-young adults between twenty-five and thirty-four still live with their parents in the United States, many of them middle-class. In Britain, the Office for National Statistics revealed the same trend, noting that "57 per cent of men and 38 per cent of women aged 20–24 are now living with their parents." According to the 2005 report, "by their late 20s more than one in five men still live at their parents' homes, twice the rate of women." "Unencumbered by rent—or mortgages or children," these stay-at-homes have "lots of disposable income, which is why marketers have happily focused on adolescents since at least 1996." A physicians' organization called the Society for Adolescent Medicine reports on its website that it is concerned with people ten to twenty-six
years old, while the MacArthur Foundation’s “Transitions to Adulthood” project puts the transition’s end at thirty-four years old.

The irony of infantilization is, of course, that Americans are actually getting older, the median age having moved from twenty-five in the baby-boomer high-water year of 1960 to thirty-five in 2000, by 2050 there will be more in their seventies than in their teens. The same is true with a vengeance for Europe, and for the indigenous populations (immigrants excluded) of the developed world generally. Only in the Third World and in the Third World immigrant communities of the First World is the majority constituted by the young—although they often lack the means to express their puerility in consumption. Likewise, in the United States, more than a third of those who live below the poverty line are children, who like their cousins in the developing world are relatively insulated by their poverty from the consequences, if not the temptations, of consumer marketing.

Once upon a time, in capitalism’s more creative and successful period, a productivist capitalism prospered by meeting the real needs of real people. Creating a synergy between making money and helping others (the Puritan Protestant formula for entrepreneurial virtue), producers profited by making commodities for the workers they employed—a circle of virtue that, while it involved elements of risk-taking for producers and exploitation of workers, benefited both classes and society at large. Today, however, consumerist capitalism profits only when it can address those whose essential needs have already been satisfied but who have the means to assuage “new” and invented needs—Marx’s “imaginary needs.” The global majority still has extensive and real natural needs mirroring what psychologists T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley I. Greenspan have called “the irreducible needs of children.” But it is without the means to address them, being cut off by the global market’s inequality (the “north/south divide”) from the investment in capital and jobs that would allow them to become consumers. This is true not just for the global Third World but for the growing Third World within the First World, the poor who live among the wealthy, exposed to the seductions of the consumer marketplace but without the means to participate in it.

Denizens of the developed world from North America and Europe to
Korea and Japan grow older chronologically but younger in their behavior, style, and controlling ethos, with children dominating consumer markets and the taste cultures that support them in ways that subvert adult culture. Elsewhere in the developing world, though the demographic grows younger (recall the familiar fact that more than half of the population of the Middle East is under sixteen), children remain marginalized and in poverty, irrelevant as consumers despite their overwhelming needs and forced to grow up prematurely, becoming little soldiers, little prostitutes, and little garment-factory workers, giving some to the global market economy but gaining little from it. They are wholly disempowered even where they are used and abused. And they are always the first to pay the cost of global economic inequalities. Their needs are ignored by global capitalism since they have no disposable income to pay for them. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the institutions charged with responding to their needs, impose “conditionality” on the aid and loans with which they purport to alleviate their problems. “Corrupt” and “inefficient” Third World governments are punished; the kids starve, fall ill, and die. In war and poverty, in natural disaster and man-made genocide, they are most often the first victims and the last to benefit from capitalism’s otherwise voracious appetite for consumers.

In this new epoch in which the needy are without income and the well-heeled are without needs, radical inequality is simply assumed. The United States and Canada, for example, with just over 5 percent of the world’s population, control almost one-third (31.5 percent) of the world’s private consumption expenditures. Western Europe, with 6.4 percent of the population, controls almost 29 percent of expenditures—that means 11.5 percent of the world’s population controls 60 percent of the world’s consumer spending. On the other hand, sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly 11 percent of the population, controls only 1.2 percent of consumer expenditures. 23

Inequality leaves capitalism with a dilemma: the overproducing capitalist market must either grow or expire. If the poor cannot be enriched enough to become consumers, then grown-ups in the First World who are currently responsible for 60 percent of the world’s consumption, and with
vast disposable income but few needs, will have to be enticed into shopping. Inducing them to remain childish and impenitent in their taste helps ensure that they will buy the global market goods designed for indolent and prosperous youth. When translated into figures for comparative spending on advertising versus spending on foreign aid, these grim inequalities yield a remarkable contrast: while the United States spent about $16 billion in foreign aid in 2003, the projected American expenditure for advertising for 2005 was $276 billion (about one-half of the world's projected advertising expenditure for 2035). If manufacturing needs rather than goods is a primary task of consumer capitalism, however, the massive advertising and marketing budgets are understandable.

Marx himself had remarked in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 on the dislodging of old-fashioned industries by new industries in which "in place of old wants, we find new wants." Calvin Coolidge had presciently depicted advertising as "the method by which the desire is created for better things," anticipating by nearly forty years Guy Debord's more radical claim in the 1960s that "the satisfaction of primary human needs, [is] now met in the most summary manner, by a ceaseless manufacture of pseudo-needs." Many of the needs of children that can be regarded as "irreducible," on the other hand, cannot be met by the market at all, but depend on kinship relations, parenting, self-image, learning, and setting. Because so many needs are beyond what capitalism produces and sells, capitalism demands what Keynes called a certain "pumping up" of purchasing power. The founder of Filene's department store, on a visit to Paris back in 1935, grasped even then that (in Victoria de Grazia's description) "the chief economic problem facing the industrial world was to distribute goods in accordance with the now patently inexhaustible capacity to produce them. Not the overproduction of merchandise, but its nondistribution was the problem." From the point of view of businesspeople, they were not producing too much, consumers were buying too little.

This was a theme that coursed through consumerist capitalism from the start. By our own times, it was a theme picked up by marketers for whom the fabricating of needs seemed the better part of wisdom. We no
longer have to reference Vance Packard’s warning about hidden persuaders: the persuaders have come out of the closet and are teaching corporate managers the arts of marketing to teens at national conferences and are articulating toddler marketing techniques in textbooks and business-school marketing courses. Nor do we need Herbert Marcuse’s subtle argument about the one-dimensionality of modern men: clever marketing consultants are openly subverting pluralistic human identity in pursuit not simply of brand loyalty but of lifelong brand identity.

In other words, I am not reading the notion of infantilization into what the market is doing in order to illuminate its practices in an era of mandatory selling; I am extrapolating out of the actual practices of the consumer marketplace the idea of pumping up purchasing power, manufacturing needs, and encouraging infantilization. I am not suggesting in the passive voice that there “is a process of infantilization under way.” I am arguing that many of our primary business, educational, and governmental institutions are consciously and purposefully engaged in infantilization and as a consequence that we are vulnerable to such associated practices as privatization and branding. For this is how we maintain a system of consumerist capitalism no longer supported by the traditional market forces of supply and demand.
Again, these are not philosophical abstractions drawn from the old left cultural critique of capitalism that must be read into the marketplace. It is what marketplace vendors acknowledge, even boast, they are doing. A favorite phrase of the kid marketers is “kid empowerment.”78 Youth marketing conferences favor the term.79 Although actually enabling only irresponsibility and impulse, marketers offer kiddies a flag of a faux “autonomy” that uses the language of liberation and empowerment to justify making the young more vulnerable to the seductions of commercial predators. In a similar rhetorical gesture, a recently defunct teen catalog company, Blu Sphere, wove a rhetoric of “betterment” around its hustling of teen commodities that included clothes, electronics, sports items, and magazine style bibles.

This focus on personal betterment, private liberty, and individual empowerment fosters a potent affiliation between teen marketing and privatization that has been brilliantly exploited by the wildly successful television show American Idol, which draws as many as thirty million mostly young viewers to the program by allowing them to vote for winners and losers competing for their support. In a news report that reads like a promotion, New York Times reporter Alessandra Stanley writes: “Idol,” which is watched by parents and children together, gives people a heady but safe sense of empowerment—choice without consequences.80 Choice without consequences is of course a synonym for disempowerment, but in the new marketing this conflation of consumer games and democratic empowerment is nonetheless everywhere embraced (see chapter 4).

In business lingo, this individuation of choice is “market segmentation” which is portrayed as “consistent with a shift in general consumer patterns from family needs and wants to individual consumption.”81 The child embedded in a family community makes a poor shopper—a disempowered consumer forced to bow to “gatekeepers” like Mom and Dad. But the child liberated through marketing to become a four-year-old “individual” becomes an apt consumer capable even of being an “influencer” over income dispensed by subordinate parents. The child here is autonomous
in a technical sense inasmuch as—with respect to the zone of kids’ shopping—it is on its own and free from parental guidance. But in truth its autonomy leaves it vulnerable, unprotected, and susceptible to outside manipulation.

As one might imagine, like the producers of BabyFirstTV and “Baby Einstein,” those who prey on the very young and write books with titles like What Kids Buy and Why parade their academic and expert credentials. Dan Acuff’s Ph.D. degree is on the cover of his book to help legitimize his anything but academic mission. Most marketing firms boast sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists on their staffs to give their marketing research the appearance of pure science. Like Dan Acuff, they prattle on about how they are “not just interested in what sells . . . in the bottom line,” but are “four-square against” anything that “can be shown in any significant way to be bad for kids.”

How can empowering and liberating children be bad? BabyFirstTV issued a guidebook “full of approving pediatricians, psychologists and educators” aimed at immunizing its programming against critics; the guidebook itself says television can “enlighten your baby’s experience by opening up a world of imagination and images.”

Since kid empowerment is a legitimate aim, why not toddler empowerment? In fact, were it not that younger children are more embedded in families and less autonomous in their spending than older children, their impulsiveness and kid qualities would make them even better targets for consumerism than teens, who are already on the way to becoming discontents and rebels if not yet adults and may have already begun to put away childish things. The young minds of toddlers are less formed, their tastes more vulnerable to manipulation, their wants more easily played with. “Empowering” them (and thereby disempowering their parents and teachers and pastors) is easier to achieve (if harder to justify). A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that half of all four- to six-year-olds have played video games, while the New York Times reported 14 percent of toddlers under three had done so. Meanwhile, old-fashioned toys that engage the active imaginations of children are being displaced by computers, electronic games, cell-phones, and iPods. Unsurprisingly, the trend is ration-
alized by free-market video-game enthusiasts such as Steven Johnson, who proposes that “everything bad is actually good for” us, but his empirical evidence is paltry (limited mostly to video games).85

The World Wide Web in fact targets the very young worldwide, offering four-year-olds easy access and designing many of its game and chat sites for preschoolers. There are to be sure some responsible sites for children. Or sites that offer parents reassuring signs of pedagogical relevance. Road Runner’s early 2000’s “Kid Stuff” homepage included such features as “Build Your Vocabulary,” a “Brain Pop” facts column, and links to videos but also to books and audio tapes of classics such as Charlotte’s Web and A Great and Terrible Beauty. But younger children cannot distinguish advertising from storytelling, or fantasy from fact. And until the federal government finally drew a line in the sandbox (in the spring of 2000) on polling and surveying little children, websites often queried tykes as young as three or four about their family’s spending habits and their own buying preferences (that’s empowerment!) as a condition of logging on. Unlike in Europe, where government protection of children on the web and elsewhere is commonplace, American market ideology prefers self-policing and other market mechanisms to deal with what only some people think are abuses in the first place.

The misuse of normative terms like autonomy and empowerment to rationalize selling to children far too young to possess either liberty or judgment (the two key components of real choice or self-determining power) is typical of an infantilist ethos that reinforces consumer market ideology by providing corporate predators with an altruistic ethic to rationalize selfish and patently immoral ends. Even Dan Acuff, the happy Ph.D. warrior of marketing cited above, feels constrained to problematize empowerment. He acknowledges that it is not so easy to tell “just what is empowering and what is disempowering” for kids. Having raised the crucial question, however, he quickly eludes it by means of a mindless truism: empowerment is whatever nurtures “positive development,” and “disempowerment,” whatever furthers “negative development”—keeping in mind that “it’s not black and white.”86 Genuine empowerment always treats the person as an end in herself, and is defined by the domain of edu-
cation, not advertising. It is measured by increased capacity to resist manipulation, not increased vulnerability to it. Hence, infantilization is empowerment’s antonym.

In speaking about infantilization, I have in mind a relationship between infantilism understood in classical developmental psychology as a pathologically arrested stage of emotional development and infantilism understood in cultural psychology as a pathologically regressive stage of consumer market development—the two together comprising what Freud spoke of as "a pathology of cultural communities" on the study of which he hoped one day to embark.87

The cultural pathology of late consumer capitalism effectively prioritizes consumerism at the expense of capitalism’s traditional balance between production and consumption, work and leisure, and investment and spending. As described in the classical Freudian and neo-Freudian literature, infantile behavior is a consequence of a regressive process that offers itself as a defense against intimidating adult dilemmas with which a disordered ego is unable to contend. Peter Pan’s charming narcissism represents the seductive side of regression, while Wendy turns out to be one of those healthy youngsters who is good at growing up, who “grew up of her own free will a day quicker than other girls.”88

The infantilism toward which an unhealthy psyche regresses is marked by an inability to distinguish self and world. As Freud concretizes it, “an infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him.”89 This confusion of “ego and object” initially leads to a bold but ultimately futile attempt either wholly to master the world (ego triumphant), or to merge wholly with that world (object triumphant). Either way, the self tries to erase the as yet unrecognized boundaries between the emerging ego and the object world and remain in that womb-tomb of preindividuated collective identity that offers blanket security immediately before and after birth. What is a passing stage in early child development becomes a pathology when it persists into the period when normal children acknowledge boundaries and direct their psychological and behavioral efforts
toward accommodating themselves to them and coming to terms with what it means to grow up—subordinating id to superego in Freud’s language; that is to say, becoming civilized.90

In the pathological culture of consumer economics, consumer behavior turns out to be remarkably unaccommodating to civilizing tendencies. It mimics infantile aggressiveness in striking ways. The consumer at once both imbibes the world of products, goods, and things being impressed upon her and so conquers it, and yet is defined via brands, trademarks, and consumer identity by that world. She essays to make the market her own even as it makes her its prisoner. She trumpets her freedom even as she is locked up in the cage of private desire and unrestrained libido. She announces a faux consumer power even as she renounces her real citizen power. The dollars or euros or yen with which she imagines she is mastering the world of material things turn her into a thing defined by the material—from self-defined person into market-defined brand; from autonomous public citizen to heteronomous private shopper (this is the subject of chapter 6). The boundary separating her from what she buys vanishes: she ceases to buy goods as instruments of other ends and instead becomes the goods she buys—a Calvin Klein torrid teen or an Anita Roddick Body Shop urbanite or a politically conscious Benetton rebel or a Crate & Barrel urban homesteader or a plasma television Nike spectator “athlete.”91

The branding game targets consumers, but it also helps erase the boundaries between consumer and what is consumed. In thinking he has conquered the world of things, the consumer is in fact consumed by them. In trying to enlarge himself, he vanishes. His so-called freedom evaporates even as it is named. For it is private rather than public and so seals off the real public consequences of private choices. The gloating Hummer owner may preen with macho pride, unaware or simply uncaring of the fact that he drives an ecological behemoth that squanders fossil fuel resources, pollutes the environment, and makes the United States more dependent than ever on foreign oil resources—contributing quite inadvertently to the justification for Middle East military interventions he otherwise vehemently opposes. American Idol “voters” mistake a popularity contest for empower-
ment. The public consequences of private choices are masked by brand-identity consumerism in which only the private preference and its subjective entailments are visible.

The hidden social costs of consumer preferences are in fact notated neither in the consciousness of consumers nor the statistical indices of the U.S. Treasury Department, or for that matter in the records of the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund. The consumer here is radically individuated rather than socially embedded, and less rather than more free as a consequence. She is permitted to choose from a menu of options offered by the world but not to alter or improve the menu or the world. In this, the dynamics of consumption actually render the individual more rather than less vulnerable to control, much in the way that the infant, for all its sense of power, is actually powerless in a world from which it cannot distinguish itself. In short, in almost every way, the full-time consumer as imagined by the aggressive marketing executive ideally acts regressively, more like an impulsive child than an adult.

The citizen, on the other hand, is an adult, a public chooser empowered by social freedom to effect the environment of choice and the agendas by which choices are determined and portrayed; the infantilized consumer is the private chooser, whose power to participate in communities or effect changes is diminished and whose public judgment is attenuated. The infantilist ethos, then, does the necessary work of consumer capitalism, but at the expense of the civilization that productivist capitalism helped create.

Capitalism itself has come full circle. Originating in an extraordinary synergy between selfishness and altruism, between profit and productivity, it once upon a time allowed energetic and entrepreneurial risk takers to prosper by serving the growth and welfare of emerging nations. It did so with the succor of a Protestant ethos that lent moral weight to hard work, far-sighted investment, and ascetic self-denial—the very qualities productivist capitalism needed to thrive. Today, its productive capacity has outrun the needs it once served even as its distributive capacity has been stymied by the growing global inequalities it has catalyzed. Depending for
its success on consumerism rather than productivity, it has generated an ethos of infantilization that prizes the very attributes the Protestant ethos condemned. It seems quite literally to be consuming itself, leaving democracy in peril and the fate of citizens uncertain. Although it affects to prize and enhance liberty, it leaves liberty’s meaning ambiguous in an epoch where shopping seems to have become a more persuasive marker of freedom than voting, and where what we do alone in the mall counts more importantly in shaping our destiny than what we do together in the public square.
1 Capitalism Triumphant and the Infantilist Ethos

7. George R. Will, "Validation by Defeat," *Newsweek*, December 15, 2004. Setting the scene for what will surely be criticism of this book, Will argues that "belief in the infantilism of the American public has been an expanding facet of some progressive thinking for 50 years—since the explosive growth of advertising."
8. Lev Grossman, "They Just Won't Grow Up," *Time*, January 14, 2005; Adam Sternbergh, "Forever Youngish: Why Nobody Wants to Be an Adult Anymore," *New York Magazine*, April 3, 2006. Sternbergh's essay opens this way: "He owns eleven pairs of sneakers, hasn't worn anything but jeans in a year, and won't shut up about the latest Death Cab for Cutie CD. But he is no kid. He is among the ascendant breed of grown-up who has redefined adulthood as we once knew it and killed off the generation gap" (p. 24).
9. "Police at Harrisburg International Airport in Pennsylvania have been sweetening the inspections by passing out lollipops to targeted drivers. 'It's so we can't intimidate,' said Alfred Tosta Jr., the airport's aviation director. The policemen are very polite. They will have a smile on their face.'" "The Infantilization of America," posted on February 19, 2004, on the website AFFBRAINWASH.com, citing Eugene Volokh.
p. 41. This remarkable essay, in America's newspaper of record, was designed as a fashion layout under the subtitle "Babes in Coutureland."

11. In 2002 Americans spent $7.7 billion on 6.9 million cosmetic procedures according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. This included 1.7 million Botox injections, 495,000 chemical peels, 125,000 face lifts, and 83,000 tummy tucks—88 percent of these on women (Samuelson, "Adventures in Agelessness").

12. Among the most popular video games in the world, Civilization (now in four editions from Firaxis) offers players a chance to "rule the world" via sixteen classic cultures, from 4000 BC to AD 2050.


14. Ibid.


20. "The Top Trends of 2004," New York Times, December 23, 2004. The same trend is visible in India, where it is seen as a boon for consumerism since young adults living at home have large disposable incomes.

21. "The Kids Are All Right," The Economist, December 21, 2000. These figures would be even older for the United States, but for the role of immigration which lowers mean age across the board.


24. Advertising expenditures projection from Robert Cson, Universal McCann's Insider's Report on Advertising Expenditures, December 2000. While the gross ad figure puts the United States on top, when calculated as a percentage of GNP its foreign aid ranks dead last out of 22 Western countries and (at about 0.14 percent of GNP) leaves it well below the European average of over 0.2 percent and far below the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of 0.7 percent of GNP for developed nations. By 2003 it had improved slightly to 0.22 percent.


26. Brazelton and Greenspan's list of seven irrefutable needs depends to some degree indirectly on economic factors (starving parents are unlikely to be capable of protecting or even loving their children), but except for physical protection and safety, is relational rather than commodity based. See Brazelton and Greenspan, The Irrefutable Needs of Children.


31. From the Center for a New American Dream website (www.newdream.org), citing reports from the advertising company McCann-Erickson and estimates from "Just the Facts about Advertising and Marketing to Children." Gross advertising expenditure estimates vary widely; depending on the source, they range from $174 billion to $264 billion per annum. What is clear is that they are rising rapidly both in the United States and around the world.

32. World advertising figures from Tobi Elkin, "Just an Online Minute... Look East," MediaPost, December 6, 2004.


35. See Jean Shreve, "Let the Games Begin," subtitled "Video games, once confiscaded in class, are now a key teaching tool," Edutopia, April 2005. Shreve reports that in 2004 educational video game titles accounted for $140 million, or 2 percent of the $7.3-billion-a-year video-game American market.

36. Ibid., sidebar, "Shut It Off" (Shreve cites Prensky and then finishes the thought).

37. Channel One Network, originally founded by Chris Whittle (bought by SM Corporation and owned today [2006] by Primedia), leases telecommunications equipment to more than 12,000 high schools throughout the United States. In return, it gains the right to show its soft news programming (nine minutes of teen-slanted soft "educational" news with three minutes of hard advertising) with students obliged to watch during regular class time hours. See www.channelone.com.


39. Morrison, Marketing to the Campus Crowd, p. 225. Morrison cites figures from American
Demographics that put campus sales in the early 2000s at $9 billion on telecommunications, $8.5 billion on textbooks, $5 billion on travel, $5 billion on dorm furnishings, $4.4 billion on bottled water and soft drinks, and $2.7 billion on CDs (p. xvi).


41. Morrison, Marketing to the Campus Crowd, p. 225.

42. In his Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud associates religion with “the figure of an enormously exalted father” and suggests that “the whole thing is so parentally infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life” (edited and translated by J. Strachey; New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, p. 21). The view is further developed in Freud’s The Future of an Illusion. Freud’s instrumentalization of religion is itself simplistic; I have argued elsewhere that it is only fundamentalism rather than “normal religion” that has regressive, infantilizing tendencies.

43. Epstein, “The Perpetual Adolescent.”

44. Schoe, Born to Buy, p. 13.


46. Samuelson, "Adventures in Agelessness."

47. The Cryonics Institute of Clinton Township, Michigan, offers cryonic suspension services and information. As soon as possible after legal death, a member patient is prepared and cooled to a temperature where physical decay essentially stops, and is then maintained indefinitely in cryostasis. When and if future medical technology allows, our member patients hope to be healed and revived, and awaken to extended life in youthful good health” (from the website www.cryonics.org).


49. Klein, No Logo, p. 115.


51. McNeal, Kids as Consumers, p. 250.

52. “To put it cruelly, capital is being invested in new factories to make more things when the market is already struggling with a mounting shortage of buyers” (William Greider, One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997], p. 49).


55. David Jones and Doris Klein, Man-Child: A Study of the Infantilization of Man (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970), p. 341. The authors believed even in 1970 that “we seem to see an exponential increase in the momentum of the process of infantilization in recent times” (p. 343).

56. Thomas Frank has written brilliantly about the ways in which the advertising and men’s apparel industries helped the hippies forge a rhetoric of rebellion and innovation that was a veritable “conquest of cool.” See Frank, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

57. Del Vecchio, Creating Ever-Cool, p. 24. “Cool” remains the most potent word in the youth marketer’s vocabulary, cooler even than rivals such as “hot” and “edgy” and “passionate” — conjoint terms also meant to capture what teens are supposed to be and have that adults don’t and can’t.

58. Mike Davis, “Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,” in Michael Sorkin,

59. McNeal, Kids as Consumers, p. 249.

60. Gina Bellafante, "Dressing Up: The Power of Adult Clothes in a Youth-Obsessed Culture," New York Times, March 28, 2004. Bellafante points out that "From the counterculture movements of the 1960's to the mass embrace of the casual workplace in the 1990's, Americans of a certain age have consistently shown a taste for dressing as if they had yet to be conscripted by adulthood. Not since the late 1950's, in fact, have grown-ups had an identifying look distinctly different from the boys and girls in their charge."


62. As reported in the New York Times, Sharon Warman, "Big Films," December 20, 2004, p. B1. Figures from Exhibitor Relations Co.: Box Office Mojo, through December 19, 2004. Films with an asterisk were still playing at the time of the report, so figures for the year were not complete.


64. There is still some adventure left in the theater in writers-directors-designers such as Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, Simon McBurney, and Josh Fox, among others, but thes is not the way of convention. See Barber, The Price of Irony, Saltzgiver, Fall 2005.

65. Lynn Hirschberg, "Us & Them: What Is an American Movie Now?" New York Times, November 14, 2004. An anonymous Hollywood executive told Hirschberg, "Our movies no longer reflect our culture. They have become gross, distorted exaggerations. And I think America is growing into those exaggerated images." It is interesting that Michael Moore's Fahrenheit 9/11 won the Festival grand prize—primarily for political reasons but perhaps also as encouragement to America's independent producers trying to make serious films.

66. Menand, "Gross Points," p. 85. Menand notes that in the first Terminator film, Arnold Schwarzenegger had exactly seventeen lines. This can hardly be a surprise, writes Menand, since global blockbusters generally feature "wizards; slinky women of few words; men of few words who can expertly drive anything, spectacularly wreck anything, and leap safely from the top of anything; characters from comic books, sixth-grade world-history textbooks, or 'Bulfinch's Mythology'; explosions; phenomena unknown to science; a computer whose attitude; a brand-name soft drink, running shoe, or candy bar [concessions yield 35 percent of theater revenue and theaters can keep it]; an incarnation of pure evil; more explosions; and the voice of Robin Williams."

67. Jones and Klein, Man-Child, p. 177. Jones and Klein wrote an odd book combining a neo-Freudian analysis of infantilization with a rationalization of the regressive as useful to intelligence and to civilization. Although they saw thirty-five years ago many of the trends toward infantilization I discuss here—"we seem to see an exponential increase in the momentum of the process of infantilization in recent (and especially in our own) times," they wrote—for the most part they regard it benignly or even as positive. This perhaps speaks in part to the dialectical take on childhood I advocate below.

68. Ibid., p. 340.


71. For examples of the self-described ranting that typifies this "adult" group (which in fact
sounds like a junior-high clique berating the school principal), see Belkin's "Your Kids Are Their Problem."

72. As Dan Cook has observed, "children's culture has become virtually indistinguishable from consumer culture over the course of the last century" (Dan Cook, "Lunchbox Hegemony? Kids and the Marketplace, Then and Now," August 20, 2001, www.latimes.com).


75. McNeal, Kids As Consumers, p. 18.

76. Ibid., p. 20. It is hardly a surprise then that a world survey of marketing to children in 2006 would boast that "advertising has become pervasive in daily life and continues to expand into new realms." Increasingly, advertisers are marketing to children to shape consumption preference early and to take advantage of the growing amount of money that people are spending on children, which hit $405 billion globally in 2000 ("Marketing to Children: A World Survey, 2001," Euromonitor International, cited in the Worldwatch Institute's Vital Signs 2003 (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003)).


79. One marketing group offered both a Youth Power 2005 conference aimed at marketing to youngsters fifteen to twenty-four and a Kid Power 2006 conference aimed at kids aged two to twelve, the latter held at the Disney Yacht and Beach Club in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.


90. That the juvenile is less responsible as well as less free has been widely recognized not only in psychology but in law. Marketers know full well that they are exploiting rather than empowering the young when they play on their youthfulness or seek to encourage regression in adults. The marketer looks to the juvenile as the ideal consumer precisely because the merchandising industry shares the understanding of the juvenile favored by the U.S. Supreme Court majority in its 2005 decision outlawing the death penalty for juveniles. In Roper v. Simmons (March 2005), a 5-4 majority ruled that juveniles should not be subject to the death penalty.
because a "lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility are found in youth more often than in adults and are more understandable among the young." If, as the court ruled, such "qualities often result in impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions," and if this diminishes juvenile culpability in capital crime cases, then surely it diminishes juvenile responsibility and liberty in consumer decision making. The ruling also noted that "juveniles are more vulnerable or susceptible to negative influence and outside pressures, including peer pressure," and that "the character of a juvenile is not as well formed as that of an adult. The personality traits of juveniles are more transitory, less fixed." (A summary of the case can be found at www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/1724.)

The court knows children when it sees them. Market capitalism pretends not to. The infantilist ethos insists they are not children. If we spare juveniles the death penalty when they commit capital crimes, should we not refrain from insisting they are liberated and empowered when we play on their "lack of maturity" and "underdeveloped sense of responsibility" to get them to buy things they don't need, and exploit their tendencies to be "impetuous" and to engage in "ill-considered actions and decisions" in order to condition them to the obligatory shopping consumer capitalism needs to survive?

91. Marketers themselves divide the population into such consumer-targeted categories and develop merchandising strategies accordingly. A marketing firm called Claritas thus managed to segment America into dozens of neighborhood consumer sectors defined by actual consumables such as "Pools and Patios," "Shotguns and Pickups," "Bohemian Mix," and "Urban Gold."

2 From Protestantism to Puerility

2. Ibid., p. 27. Weber published other studies in later years examining the economic ethos of other religions.
3. Ibid., p. 172.
4. Elizabeth Kolbert cites this phrase in an essay on Max Weber in which she observes that "in the century since then, there is hardly a claim made in 'The Protestant Ethic,' either about the history of religion or about the history of economics, that hasn't been challenged" (Elizabeth Kolbert, "Why Work: A Hundred Years of 'The Protestant Ethic,'" The New Yorker, November 29, 2004).
5. See Max Weber's essay "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, 1946), taken from Weber's "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen" of 1922–1923. Weber writes here of an "economic ethic" that "points to the practical impulse for action which [is] founded in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions" (Gerth and Mills, p. 267). He looks at Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic, and Judaic religious ethics. These somewhat scholastic points are important because they indicate that Weber did not regard the Protestant ethos that informed capitalism as a special case, but as one important instance of an interaction between religion and economics that could be found in every society.
10. David Brooks, On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (and Always Have) in the Future Tense
CONSUMED

How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole

BENJAMIN R. BARBER

W. W. NORTON & COMPANY
NEW YORK • LONDON
Capitalism Triumphant and the Infantilist Ethos

Last of all, that ends [man's] eventful history,
Is second childishness. . .
—Shakespeare, As You Like It, II, vii

When I was a child I spake as a child,
I understood as a child, I thought as a child,
but when I became a man I put away childish things.
—St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:11, the New Testament

In these paltry times of capitalism’s triumph, as we slide into consumer narcissism, Shakespeare’s seven ages of man are in danger of being washed away by lifelong puerility. Pop-cultural journalists have used many terms to depict a new species of perennial adolescent: kidults, rejuveniles, twixters, and adultescents; around the world Germans speak of “Nestbocker,” Italians of “Mammona,” Japanese of “Treeten,” Indians of “Zippies,” and the French of a “Tanguy” syndrome and “puériculture.” What they are discerning with their pop neologisms is the consequence of a powerful new cultural ethos, felt more than recognized. It is an ethos of induced childishness: an infantilization that is closely tied to the demands of consumer capitalism in a global market economy.

This infantilist ethos is as potent in shaping the ideology and behaviors of our radical consumerist society today as what Max Weber called the “Protestant ethic” was in shaping the entrepreneurial culture of what was then a productivist early capitalist society. Affiliated with an ideology of privatization, the marketing of brands, and a homogenization of taste,
this ethos of infantilization has worked to sustain consumer capitalism, but at the expense of both civility and civilization and at a growing risk to capitalism itself. Although we use the term *democratic capitalism* in a manner that suggests a certain redundancy, the reality is that the two words describe different systems often in tension with one another. Consumerism has set the two entirely asunder.

How much should we care? In an epoch when terrorism stalks the planet, when fear of Jihad is as prevalent as the infringement of liberties to which fear gives rise, when AIDS and tsunamis and war and genocide put democracy at risk in both the developing and the developed world, it may seem self-indulgent to fret about the dangers of hyperconsumerism. When poor children in the developing world are being exploited, starved, prostituted, and impressed into military service, anxiety about the prosperous young in the developed world who may be growing up into consumers too fast, or about adult consumers being dumbed down too easily, can seem parochial, even solipsistic.

Yet as James Madison said long ago, the pathologies of liberty can be as perilous as the pathologies of tyranny; and far more difficult to discern or remedy. Although forces of Jihad continue to struggle violently against the successes of McWorld, and the abuse of children living under poverty remains a far greater problem than the infantilization of adults living under prosperity, modernization appears to be irreversible over the long term. But the fate of citizens under capitalism triumphant is another matter. The victory of consumers is not synonymous with the victory of citizens. McWorld can prevail and liberty can still lose. The diseases of prosperity which are the afflictions of capitalism do not kill outright. They violate no explicit laws of justice. Yet capitalism's success breeds new and dangerous challenges.

Capitalism per se is not the issue. The question is not whether there is an alternative to markets but whether markets can be made to meet the real needs capitalism is designed to serve, whether capitalism can adapt to the sovereignty of democratic authority that alone will allow it to survive.

Once upon a time, capitalism was allied with virtues that also contributed at least marginally to democracy, responsibility, and citizenship.
Today it is allied with vices which—although they serve consumerism—undermine democracy, responsibility, and citizenship. The question then is whether not just democracy but capitalism itself can survive the infantilist ethos upon which it has come to depend. This book, after it diagnoses liberty’s market pathologies, offers a qualified yes. What is clear is that either capitalism will replace the infantilist ethos with a democratic ethos, and regain its capacity to promote equality as well as profit, diversity as well as consumption, or infantilization will undo not only democracy but capitalism itself. Much will depend on our capacity to make sense out of infantilization and relate it to the not-so-creative destruction of consumerism’s survival logic.

The idea of an “infantilist ethos” is as provocative and controversial as the idea of what Weber called the “Protestant ethic.” Infantilization is at once both an elusive and a confrontational term, a potent metaphor that points on the one hand to the dumbing down of goods and shoppers in a postmodern global economy that seems to produce more goods than people need; and that points, on the other hand, to the targeting of children as consumers in a market where there are never enough shoppers. Once a staple of Freudian psychology focused on the psychopathology of regression, the term infantilization has in the last several years become a favorite of worrywart journalists: David Ansen fretting about the “widespread infantilization of pop culture”; 2 Leon Wieseltier charging that “Hollywood is significantly responsible for the infantilization of America”; 3 Philip Hensher of Britain’s The Independent sure that the “signs that adult culture is being infantilized are everywhere.” 4

On the potency of adolescent culture, liberals and conservatives agree. Writes Robert J. Samuelson, a moderate liberal: “We live in an age when people increasingly refuse to act their age. The young (or many of them) yearn to be older, while the older (or many of them) yearn to be younger. We have progressively demolished the life cycle’s traditional stages, shortening childhood and following it with a few murky passages. Adolescence . . . begins before puberty and, for some, lasts forever . . . age denial is everywhere.” 5 Samuelson is echoed by Joseph Epstein, a moderate conservative: “The whole sweep of advertising, which is to say of market, culture since soon after World War II has been continuously to lower the criteria
of youthfulness while extending the possibility for seeming youthful to older and older people.⁶ Even conservatives who reject the charge of consumer infantilization recognize its potency. George F. Will thus charges progressive thinkers with advancing the thesis of the “infantilism of the American public” as one more “we are all victims of manipulation” explanation for Bush’s victory in the 2004 presidential campaign.⁷ Little surprise then that popular magazines such as Time (“They Just Won’t Grow Up”) and New York Magazine (“Forever Youngish: Why Nobody Wants to Be an Adult Anymore”) worry in major cover articles about America’s Peter Pan tendencies.⁸

There is anecdotal evidence everywhere: airport police handing out lollipops to placate irate passengers at inspection points;⁹ television news divisions turned over to entertainment executives, Vanity Fair–style pop-cultural chatter about “enfantrepreneurs,” and the New York Times Magazine enthusing about “what kids want in fashion, right from the filly’s mouth” on the way to urging thugs on seven-year-olds;¹⁰ the professionalization of high-school sports that turns teen basketball courts into NBA recruiting turf and basketball-player bodies into advertising billboards; adult fiction readers flocking to Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings (when they are not abandoning reading altogether); fast-food franchises girdling the world to exploit (among other things) children’s restless aversion to grown-up sit-down dining; teen guy games such as World of Warcraft, Grand Theft Auto, and Narc and comic-book films such as Terminator, Spider-Man, Catwoman, and Shrek dominating the entertainment market; new “educational” television channels such as BabyFirstTV and videos such as “Baby Einstein”; cosmetic surgery and Botox injections promising a fountain of youth to female baby boomers who envy their daughters;¹¹ sexual performance drugs such as Levitra, Cialis, and Viagra (2002 sales of over $1 billion) becoming staples of equally uncomfortable male boomers trying to smuggle atavistic youth into the age of social security; and businessmen in baseball caps, jeans, and untucked shirts mimicking the studied sloppiness of their unformed kids. Beyond pop culture, the infantilist ethos also dominates: dogmatic judgments of black and white in politics and religion come to displace the nuanced complexi-
ties of adult morality, while the marks of perpetual childishness are grafted onto adults who indulge in puerility without pleasure, and indolence without innocence. Hence, the new consumer penchant for age without dignity, dress without formality, sex without reproduction, work without discipline, play without spontaneity, acquisition without purpose, certainty without doubt, life without responsibility, and narcissism into old age and unto death without a hint of wisdom or humility. In the epoch in which we now live, civilization is not an ideal or an aspiration, it is a video game.12

These myriad anecdotes tell a story, but infantilization—not second childhood but enduring childishness—is much more than just a mesmeric metaphor. A new cultural ethos is being forged that is intimately associated with global consumerism. Those responsible for manufacturing and merchandizing goods for the global marketplace, those who are actually researching, teaching, and practicing marketing and advertising today, are aiming both to sell to a younger demographic and to imbue older consumers with the tastes of the young.

Marketers and merchandisers are self-consciously chasing a youthful commercial constituency sufficiently padded in its pocketbook to be a very attractive market, yet sufficiently uninformed in its tastes as to be vulnerable to conscious corporate manipulation via advertising, marketing, and branding. At the same time, these avatars of consumer capitalism are seeking to encourage adult regression, hoping to rekindle in grown-ups the tastes and habits of children so that they can sell globally the relatively useless cornucopia of games, gadgets, and myriad consumer goods for which there is no discernible “need market” other than the one created by capitalism’s own frantic imperative to sell. As child-development scholar Susan Linn puts it in her critical study of what she calls “the hostile takeover of childhood,” corporations are vying “more and more aggressively for young consumers” while popular culture “is being smothered by commercial culture relentlessly sold to children who [are valued] for their consumption.”15

As the population in the developed world ages—the irony of infantilization—the definition of youth simply moves up, with baby boomers in the
United States smuggling it into their senior years. Meanwhile, the young are big spenders way before they are even modest earners: in 2000, there were 31 million American kids between twelve and nineteen already controlling 155 billion consumer dollars. Just four years later, there were 33.5 million kids controlling $169 billion, or roughly $91 per week per kid. The potential youth market is even more impressive elsewhere in the world, where a far greater proportion of the population is under twenty-five, and where new prosperity in nations such as India and China promises a youth market of hundreds of millions in the coming years.

The Economist summed it up a few years ago in its millennium special report: "Once, when you grew up you put away childish things. Today, the 35-year-old Wall Street analyst who zips to work on his push-scooter, listening to Moby on his headphones and carrying annual reports in his back- pack, has far more in common with a 20-year-old than he would have done a generation ago." John Tierney notes in the New York Times that Americans are marrying older (since 1970 the median age for marriage has moved up four years, to twenty-five for women and twenty-seven for men), and that thirty is the new twenty, and forty is the new thirty. In Hollywood, where aspiring to stay young is as old as movies and everything is hyperbole, "40 is the new 30 and 50 the new 40, but only, it seems, when that new 40 and 50 have been surgically enhanced. . . . These days, when a 40-plus-year-old actress lands a starring part opposite a 60-plus-year-old actor, such age-appropriate casting seems meaningless because the actress has a face as unlined as a teenage girl's."

As many as four million not-so-young adults between twenty-five and thirty-four still live with their parents in the United States, many of them middle-class. In Britain, the Office for National Statistics revealed the same trend, noting that "57 per cent of men and 38 per cent of women aged 20–24 are now living with their parents." According to the 2005 report, "by their late 20s more than one in five men still live at their parents’ homes, twice the rate of women." "Unencumbered by rent—or mortgages or children," these stay-at-homes have "lots of disposable income, which is why marketers have happily focused on adolescents since at least 1996." A physicians' organization called the Society for Adolescent Medicine reports on its website that it is concerned with people ten to twenty-six
years old, while the MacArthur Foundation's "Transitions to Adulthood" project puts the transition's end at thirty-four years old.

The irony of infantilization is, of course, that Americans are actually getting older, the median age having moved from twenty-five in the baby-boomer high-water year of 1960 to thirty-five in 2000; by 2050 there will be more in their seventies than in their teens.21 The same is true with a vengeance for Europe, and for the indigenous populations (immigrants excluded) of the developed world generally. Only in the Third World and in the Third World immigrant communities of the First World is the majority constituted by the young—although they often lack the means to express their puerility in consumption. Likewise, in the United States, more than a third of those who live below the poverty line are children, who like their cousins in the developing world are relatively insulated by their poverty from the consequences, if not the temptations, of consumer marketing.

Once upon a time, in capitalism's more creative and successful period, a productivist capitalism prospered by meeting the real needs of real people. Creating a synergy between making money and helping others (the Puritan Protestant formula for entrepreneurial virtue), producers profited by making commodities for the workers they employed—a circle of virtue that, while it involved elements of risk-taking for producers and exploitation of workers, benefited both classes and society at large. Today, however, consumerist capitalism profits only when it can address those whose essential needs have already been satisfied but who have the means to assuage "new" and invented needs—Marx's "imaginary needs." The global majority still has extensive and real natural needs mirroring what psychologists T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley I. Greenspan have called "the irreducible needs of children."22 But it is without the means to address them, being cut off by the global market's inequality (the "north/south divide") from the investment in capital and jobs that would allow them to become consumers. This is true not just for the global Third World but for the growing Third World within the First World, the poor who live among the wealthy, exposed to the seductions of the consumer marketplace but without the means to participate in it.

Deinizens of the developed world from North America and Europe to,
Korea and Japan grow older chronologically but younger in their behavior, style, and controlling ethos, with children dominating consumer markets and the taste cultures that support them in ways that subvert adult culture. Elsewhere in the developing world, though the demographic grows younger (recall the familiar fact that more than half of the population of the Middle East is under sixteen), children remain marginalized and in poverty, irrelevant as consumers despite their overwhelming needs and forced to grow up prematurely, becoming little soldiers, little prostitutes, and little garment-factory workers, giving some to the global market economy but gaining little from it. They are wholly disempowered even where they are used and abused. And they are always the first to pay the cost of global economic inequalities. Their needs are ignored by global capitalism since they have no disposable income to pay for them. Even the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the institutions charged with responding to their needs, impose "conditionality" on the aid and loans with which they purport to alleviate their problems. "Corrupt" and "inefficient" Third World governments are punished; the kids starve, fall ill, and die. In war and poverty, in natural disaster and man-made genocide, they are most often the first victims and the last to benefit from capitalism's otherwise voracious appetite for consumers.

In this new epoch in which the needy are without income and the well-heeled are without needs, radical inequality is simply assumed. The United States and Canada, for example, with just over 5 percent of the world's population, control almost one-third (31.5 percent) of the world's private consumption expenditures. Western Europe, with 6.4 percent of the population, controls almost 29 percent of expenditures—that means 11.5 percent of the world's population controls 60 percent of the world's consumer spending. On the other hand, sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly 11 percent of the population, controls only 1.2 percent of consumer expenditures.23

Inequality leaves capitalism with a dilemma: the overproducing capitalist market must either grow or expire. If the poor cannot be enriched enough to become consumers, then grown-ups in the First World who are currently responsible for 60 percent of the world's consumption, and with
vast disposable income but few needs, will have to be enticed into shopping. Inducing them to remain childish and impetuous in their taste helps ensure that they will buy the global market goods designed for indolent and prosperous youth. When translated into figures for comparative spending on advertising versus spending on foreign aid, these grim inequalities yield a remarkable contrast: while the United States spent about $16 billion in foreign aid in 2003, the projected American expenditure for advertising for 2005 was $276 billion (about one-half of the world’s projected advertising expenditure for 2005). If manufacturing needs rather than goods is a primary task of consumer capitalism, however, the massive advertising and marketing budgets are understandable.

Marx himself had remarked in the Communist Manifesto of 1848 on the dislodging of old-fashioned industries by new industries in which “in place of old wants, we find new wants.” Calvin Coolidge had presciently depicted advertising as “the method by which the desire is created for better things,” anticipating by nearly forty years Guy Debord’s more radical claim in the 1960s that “the satisfaction of primary human needs, [is] now met in the most summary manner, by a ceaseless manufacture of pseudo-needs.” Many of the needs of children that can be regarded as “irreducible,” on the other hand, cannot be met by the market at all, but depend on kinship relations, parenting, self-image, learning, and limining. Because so many needs are beyond what capitalism produces and sells, capitalism demands what Keynes called a certain “pumping up” of purchasing power. The founder of Filene’s department store, on a visit to Paris back in 1935, grasped even then that (in Victoria de Grazia’s description) “the chief economic problem facing the industrial world was to distribute goods in accordance with the now patently inexhaustible capacity to produce them. Not the overproduction of merchandise, but its nondistribution was the problem.” From the point of view of businesspeople, they were not producing too much, consumers were buying too little.

This was a theme that coursed through consumerist capitalism from the start. By our own times, it was a theme picked up by marketers for whom the fabricating of needs seemed the better part of wisdom. We no
longer have to reference Vance Packard's warning about hidden persuaders: the persuaders have come out of the closet and are teaching corporate managers the arts of marketing to teens at national conferences and are articulating toddler marketing techniques in textbooks and business-school marketing courses. Nor do we need Herbert Marcuse's subtle argument about the one-dimensionality of modern men: clever marketing consultants are openly subverting pluralistic human identity in pursuit not simply of brand loyalty but of lifelong brand identity.

In other words, I am not reading the notion of infantilization into what the market is doing in order to illuminate its practices in an era of mandatory selling; I am extrapolating out of the actual practices of the consumer marketplace the idea of pumping up purchasing power, manufacturing needs, and encouraging infantilization. I am not suggesting in the passive voice that there "is a process of infantilization under way." I am arguing that many of our primary business, educational, and governmental institutions are consciously and purposefully engaged in infantilization and as a consequence that we are vulnerable to such associated practices as privatization and branding. For this is how we maintain a system of consumerist capitalism no longer supported by the traditional market forces of supply and demand.
Again, these are not philosophical abstractions drawn from the old left cultural critique of capitalism that must be read into the marketplace. It is what marketplace vendors acknowledge, even boast, they are doing. A favorite phrase of the kid marketers is “kid empowerment.”

Youth marketing conferences favor the term. Although actually enabling only irresponsibility and impulse, marketers offer kiddies a flag of a faux “autonomy” that uses the language of liberation and empowerment to justify making the young more vulnerable to the seductions of commercial predators. In a similar rhetorical gesture, a recently defunct teen catalog company, Blu Sphere, wove a rhetoric of “betterment” around its hustling of teen commodities that included clothes, electronics, sports items, and magazine style bibles.

This focus on personal betterment, private liberty, and individual empowerment fosters a potent affiliation between teen marketing and privatization that has been brilliantly exploited by the wildly successful television show American Idol, which draws as many as thirty million mostly young viewers to the program by allowing them to vote for winners and losers competing for their support. In a news report that reads like a promotion, New York Times reporter Alessandra Stanley writes: “‘Idol,’ which is watched by parents and children together, gives people a heady but safe sense of empowerment—choice without consequences.”

Choice without consequences is of course a synonym for disempowerment, but in the new marketing this conflation of consumer games and democratic empowerment is nonetheless everywhere embraced (see chapter 4).

In business lingo, this individuation of choice is “market segmentation” which is portrayed as “consistent with a shift in general consumer patterns from family needs and wants to individual consumption.” The child embedded in a family community makes a poor shopper—a disempowered consumer forced to bow to “gatekeepers” like Mom and Dad. But the child liberated through marketing to become a four-year-old “individual” becomes an apt consumer capable even of being an “influencer” over income dispensed by subordinate parents. The child here is autonomous
in a technical sense inasmuch as—with respect to the zone of kids’ shopping—it is on its own and free from parental guidance. But in truth its autonomy leaves it vulnerable, unprotected, and susceptible to outside manipulation.

As one might imagine, like the producers of BabyFirstTV and “Baby Einstein,” those who prey on the very young and write books with titles like What Kids Buy and Why parade their academic and expert credentials. Dan Acuff’s Ph.D. degree is on the cover of his book to help legitimate his anything but academic mission. Most marketing firms boast sociologists, anthropologists, and psychologists on their staffs to give their marketing research the appearance of pure science. Like Dan Acuff, they prattle on about how they are “not just interested in what sells . . . in the bottom line,” but are “four-square against” anything that “can be shown in any significant way to be bad for kids.”82 How can empowering and liberating children be bad? BabyFirstTV issued a guidebook “full of approving pediatricians, psychologists and educators” aimed at immunizing its programming against critics; the guidebook itself says television can “enlighten your baby’s experience by opening up a world of imagination and images.”83

Since kid empowerment is a legitimate aim, why not toddler empowerment? In fact, were it not that younger children are more embedded in families and less autonomous in their spending than older children, their impulsiveness and kid qualities would make them even better targets for consumerism than teens, who are already on the way to becoming dissidents and rebels if not yet adults and may have already begun to put away childish things. The young minds of toddlers are less formed, their tastes more vulnerable to manipulation, their wants more easily played with. “Empowering” them (and thereby disempowering their parents and teachers and pastors) is easier to achieve (if harder to justify). A recent Kaiser Family Foundation survey found that half of all four- to six-year-olds have played video games, while the New York Times reported 14 percent of toddlers under three had done so. Meanwhile, old-fashioned toys that engage the active imaginations of children are being displaced by computers, electronic games, cell-phones, and iPods.84 Unsurprisingly, the trend is ration-
alized by free-market video-game enthusiasts such as Steven Johnson who proposes that "everything bad is actually good for" us, but his empirical evidence is paltry (limited mostly to video games).85

The World Wide Web in fact targets the very young worldwide, offering four-year-olds easy access and designing many of its game and chat sites for preschoolers. There are to be some responsible sites for children. Or sites that offer parents reassuring signs of pedagogical relevance. Road Runner's early 2000's "Kid Stuff" homepage included such features as "Build Your Vocabulary," a "Brain Pop" facts column, and links to videos but also to books and audio tapes of classics such as Charlotte's Web and A Great and Terrible Beauty. But younger children cannot distinguish advertising from storytelling, or fantasy from fact. And until the federal government finally drew a line in the sandbox (in the spring of 2000) on polling and surveying little children, websites often queried tykes as young as three or four about their family's spending habits and their own buying preferences (that's empowerment!) as a condition of logging on. Unlike in Europe, where government protection of children on the web and elsewhere is commonplace, American market ideology prefers self-policing and other market mechanisms to deal with what only some people think are abuses in the first place.

The misuse of normative terms like autonomy and empowerment to rationalize selling to children far too young to possess either liberty or judgment (the two key components of real choice or self-determining power) is typical of an infantilist ethos that reinforces consumer market ideology by providing corporate predators with an altruistic ethic to rationalize selfish and patently immoral ends. Even Dan Acuff, the happy Ph.D. warrior of marketing cited above, feels constrained to problematize empowerment. He acknowledges that it is not so easy to tell "just what is empowering and what is disempowering" for kids. Having raised the crucial question, however, he quickly eludes it by means of a mindless truism: empowerment is whatever nurtures "positive development" and "disempowerment," whatever furthers "negative development"—keeping in mind that "it's not black and white."86 Genuine empowerment always treats the person as an end in herself, and is defined by the domain of edu-
cation, not advertising. It is measured by increased capacity to resist manipulation, not increased vulnerability to it. Hence, infantilization is empowerment’s antonym.

In speaking about infantilization, I have in mind a relationship between infantilism understood in classical developmental psychology as a pathologically arrested stage of emotional development and infantilism understood in cultural psychology as a pathologically regressive stage of consumer market development—the two together comprising what Freud spoke of as “a pathology of cultural communities” on the study of which he hoped one day to embark.87

The cultural pathology of late consumer capitalism effectively prioritizes consumerism at the expense of capitalism’s traditional balance between production and consumption, work and leisure, and investment and spending. As described in the classical Freudian and neo-Freudian literature, infantile behavior is a consequence of a regressive process that offers itself as a defense against intimidating adult dilemmas with which a disordered ego is unable to contend. Peter Pan’s charming narcissism represents the seductive side of regression, while Wendy turns out to be one of those healthy youngsters who is good at growing up, who “grew up of her own free will a day quicker than other girls.”88

The infantilism toward which an unhealthy psyche regresses is marked by an inability to distinguish self and world. As Freud concretizes it, “an infant at the breast does not as yet distinguish his ego from the external world as the source of the sensations flowing in upon him.”89 This confusion of ‘ego and object’ initially leads to a bold but ultimately futile attempt either wholly to master the world (ego triumphant), or to merge wholly with that world (object triumphant). Either way, the self tries to erase the as yet unrecognized boundaries between the emerging ego and the object world and remain in that womb-tomb of preindividuated collective identity that offers blanket security immediately before and after birth. What is a passing stage in early child development becomes a pathology when it persists into the period when normal children acknowledge boundaries and direct their psychological and behavioral efforts
toward accommodating themselves to them and coming to terms with what it means to grow up—subordinating id to superego in Freud's language; that is to say, becoming civilized.90

In the pathological culture of consumer economics, consumer behavior turns out to be remarkably unaccommodating to civilizing tendencies. It mimics infantile aggressiveness in striking ways. The consumer at once both imbibes the world of products, goods, and things being impressed upon her and so conquers it, and yet is defined via brands, trademarks, and consumer identity by that world. She essays to make the market her own even as it makes her its prisoner. She trumpets her freedom even as she is locked up in the cage of private desire and unrestrained libido. She announces a faux consumer power even as she renounces her real citizen power. The dollars or euros or yen with which she imagines she is mastering the world of material things turn her into a thing defined by the material—from self-defined person into market-defined brand; from autonomous public citizen to heteronomous private shopper (this is the subject of chapter 6). The boundary separating her from what she buys vanishes: she ceases to buy goods as instruments of other ends and instead becomes the goods she buys—a Calvin Klein torrid teen or an Anita Roddick Body Shop urbanite or a politically conscious Benetton rebel or a Crate & Barrel urban homesteader or a plasma television Nike spectator "athlete."90

The branding game targets consumers, but it also helps erase the boundaries between consumer and what is consumed. In thinking he has conquered the world of things, the consumer is in fact consumed by them. In trying to enlarge himself, he vanishes. His so-called freedom evaporates even as it is named. For it is private rather than public and so seals off the real public consequences of private choices. The gloating Hummer owner may preen with macho pride, unaware or simply uncaring of the fact that he drives an ecological behemoth that squanders fossil fuel resources, pollutes the environment, and makes the United States more dependent than ever on foreign oil resources—contributing quite inadvertently to the justification for Middle East military interventions he otherwise vehemently opposes. American Idol "voters" mistake a popularity contest for empower-
ment. The public consequences of private choices are masked by brand-identity consumerism in which only the private preference and its subjective entailments are visible.

The hidden social costs of consumer preferences are in fact notated neither in the consciousness of consumers nor the statistical indices of the U.S. Treasury Department; or for that matter in the records of the World Trade Organization or the International Monetary Fund. The consumer here is radically individuated rather than socially embedded, and less rather than more free as a consequence. She is permitted to choose from a menu of options offered by the world but not to alter or improve the menu or the world. In this, the dynamics of consumption actually render the individual more rather than less vulnerable to control, much in the way that the infant, for all its sense of power, is actually powerless in a world from which it cannot distinguish itself. In short, in almost every way, the full-time consumer as imagined by the aggressive marketing executive ideally acts regressively, more like an impulsive child than an adult.

The citizen, on the other hand, is an adult, a public chooser empowered by social freedom to effect the environment of choice and the agendas by which choices are determined and portrayed; the infantilized consumer is the private chooser, whose power to participate in communities or effect changes is diminished and whose public judgment is attenuated. The infantilist ethos, then, does the necessary work of consumer capitalism, but at the expense of the civilization that productivist capitalism helped create.

Capitalism itself has come full circle. Originating in an extraordinary synergy between selfishness and altruism, between profit and productivity, it once upon a time allowed energetic and entrepreneurial risk takers to prosper by serving the growth and welfare of emerging nations. It did so with the succor of a Protestant ethos that lent moral weight to hard work, far-sighted investment, and ascetic self-denial—the very qualities productivist capitalism needed to thrive. Today, its productive capacity has outrun the needs it once served even as its distributive capacity has been stymied by the growing global inequalities it has catalyzed. Depending for
its success on consumerism rather than productivity, it has generated an ethos of infantilization that prizes the very attributes the Protestant ethos condemned. It seems quite literally to be consuming itself, leaving democracy in peril and the fate of citizens uncertain. Although it affects to prize and enhance liberty, it leaves liberty's meaning ambiguous in an epoch where shopping seems to have become a more persuasive marker of freedom than voting, and where what we do alone in the mall counts more importantly in shaping our destiny than what we do together in the public square.
1 Capitalism Triumphant and the Infantilist Ethos

7. George R. Will, "Validation by Defeat," *Newsweek*, December 15, 2004. Setting the scene for what will surely be criticism of this book, Will argues that "belief in the infantilism of the American public has been an expanding facet of some 'progressive' thinking for 50 years—since the explosive growth of advertising."
8. Lew Grossman, "They Just Won't Grow Up," *Time*, January 24, 2005; Adam Sternbergh, "Forever Youngish: Why Nobody Wants to Be an Adult Anymore," *New York Magazine*, April 3, 2006. Sternbergh's essay opens this way: "He owns eleven pairs of sneakers, hasn't worn anything but jeans in a year, and won't shut up about the latest Death Cab for Cutie CD. But he is no kid. He is among the ascendant breed of grown-up who has redefined adulthood as we once knew it and killed off the generation gap." (p. 24).
9. "Police at Harrisburg International Airport in Pennsylvania have been sweetening the inspections by passing out lollipops to targeted drivers. 'It's so we don't intimidate,' said Alfred Tesa Jr., the airport's aviation director. The policemen are very polite. They will have a smile on their face.'" "The Infantilization of America," posted on February 19, 2004, on the website AFFBRAINWASH.com, citing Eugene Volokh.
p. 41. This remarkable essay, in America's newspaper of record, was designed as a fashion layout under the subtitle "Babes in Coutureland."

11. In 2002 Americans spent $7.7 billion on 6.9 million cosmetic procedures according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery. This included 1.7 million Botox injections, 495,000 chemical peels, 125,000 face lifts, and 83,000 tummy tucks—88 percent of these on women (Samuelson, "Adventures in Agelessness").

12. Among the most popular video games in the world, Civilization (now in four editions from Firaxis) offers players a chance to "rule the world" via sixteen classic cultures, from 4000 BC to AD 2050.


14. Ibid.


20. "The Top Trends of 2004," New York Times, December 23, 2004. The same trend is visible in India, where it is seen as a boon for consumerism since young adults living at home have large disposable incomes.

21. "The Kids Are All Right," The Economist, December 21, 2000. These figures would be even older for the United States, but for the role of immigration which lowers mean age across the board.


24. Advertising expenditures projection from Robert Cson, Universal McCann's Insider's Report on Advertising Expenditures, December 2000. While the gross ad figure puts the United States on top, when calculated as a percentage of GNP its foreign aid ranks dead last out of 22 Western countries and (at about 0.14 percent of GNP) leaves it well below the European average of over 0.2 percent and far below the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of 0.7 percent of GNP for developed nations. By 2005 it had improved slightly to 0.22 percent.


26. Brazelton and Greenspan's list of seven irreducible needs depends to some degree indirectly on economic factors (starving parents are unlikely to be capable of protecting or even loving their children), but except for physical protection and safety, is relational rather than commodity based. See Brazelton and Greenspan, The Irreplaceable Needs of Children.

31. From the Center for a New American Dream website (www.newdream.org), citing reports from the advertising company McCann-Erickson and estimates from "Just the Facts about Advertising and Marketing to Children." Gross advertising expenditure estimates vary widely; depending on the source, they range from $174 billion to $264 billion per annum. What is clear is that they are rising rapidly both in the United States and around the world.
32. World advertising figures from Tobi Elkin, "Just an Online Minute... Look East," MediaPost, December 6, 2004.
35. See Jenn Shreve, "Let the Games Begin," subtitled "Video games, once confined in class, are now a key teaching tool," EduTopia, April 2005. Shreve reports that in 2004 educational video game titles accounted for $140 million, or 2 percent of the $7.3-billion-a-year video-game American market.
36. Ibid., sidebar, "Shut it Off" (Shreve cites Presley and then finishes the thought).
37. Channel One Network, originally founded by Chris Whistle (bought by 3M Corporation and owned today [2006] by Primedia), leases telecommunications equipment to more than 12,000 high schools throughout the United States. In return, it gains the right to show its soft news programming (nine minutes of teen-slanted soft "educational" news with three minutes of hard advertising) with students obliged to watch during regular class time hours. See http://channelone.com.
39. Morrison, Marketing to the Campus Crowd, p. 225. Morrison cites figures from American
Demographics that put campus sales in the early 2000s at $9 billion on telecommunications, $8.5 billion on textbooks, $5 billion on travel, $5 billion on dorm furnishings, $4.4 billion on bottled water and soft drinks, and $2.7 billion on CDs (p. xvii).


41. Morrison, Marketing to the Campus Crowd, p. 225.

42. In his Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud associates religion with "the figure of an enormously exalted father" and suggests that "the whole thing is so patently infantile, so foreign to reality, that to anyone with a friendly attitude to humanity it is painful to think that the great majority of mortals will never be able to rise above this view of life" (edited and translated by J. Strachey, New York: W. W. Norton, 1961, p. 21). The view is further developed in Freud's The Future of an Illusion. Freud's instrumentalization of religion is itself simplistic; I have argued elsewhere that it is only fundamentalism rather than "normal religion" that has regressive, infantilizing tendencies.

43. Epstein, "The Perpetual Adolescent."

44. Schor, Born to Buy, p. 13.


46. Samuelson, "Adventures in Agelessness."

47. The Cryonics Institute of Clinton Township, Michigan, "offers cryonic suspension services and information. As soon as possible after legal death, a member patient is prepared and cooled to a temperature where physical decay essentially stops, and is then maintained indefinitely in cryopreservation. When and if future medical technology allows, our member patients hope to be healed and revived, and awaken to extended life in youthful good health" (from the website www.cryonics.org).


49. Klein, No Logo, p. 115.


51. McNeal, Kids as Consumers, p. 250.

52. "To put it crudely, capital is being invested in new factories to make more things when the market is already struggling with a mounting shortage of buyers" (William Greider, One World, Ready or Not: The Magic Logic of Global Capitalism [New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997], p. 49).


55. David Jones and Doris Klein, Mon-Child: A Study of the Infantilization of Man (New York: McGraw Hill, 1970), p. 341. The authors believed even in 1970 that "we seem to see an exponential increase in the momentum of the process of infantilization in recent times" (p. 343).

56. Thomas Frank has written brilliantly about the ways in which the advertising and men's apparel industries helped the hippies forge a rhetoric of rebellion and innovation that was a veritable "conquest of cool." See Frank, The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

57. Del Vecchio, Creating Ever-Cool, p. 24. "Cool" remains the most potent word in the youth marketeer's vocabulary, cooler even than rivals such as "hot" and "edgy" and "passionate"—conjoint terms also meant to capture what teens are supposed to be and have that adults don't and can't.

58. Mike Davis, "Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space," in Michael Sorkin,

59. McNeal, Kids as Consumers, p. 249.

60. Gina Bellafante, "Dressing Up: The Power of Adult Clothes in a Youth-Obsessed Culture," New York Times, March 28, 2004. Bellafante points out that: "From the counterculture movements of the 1960’s to the mass embrace of the casual workplace in the 1990’s, Americans of a certain age have consistently shown a taste for dressing as if they had yet to be conscripted by adulthood. Not since the late 1950’s, in fact, have grown-ups had an identifying look distinctly different from the boys and girls in their charge."


62. As reported in the New York Times, Sharon Waxman, "Big Films," December 20, 2004, p. 11. Figures from Exhibitor Relations Co.: Box Office Mojo, through December 19, 2004. Films with an asterisk were still playing at the time of the report, as figures for the year were not complete.


64. There is still some adventure left in the theater in writers-directors-designers such as Robert Wilson, Peter Brook, Simon McBurney, and Josh Fox, among others, but theirs is not the way of convention. See Barber, "The Price of Irony," Selmacum, Fall 2005.

65. Lynn Hirschberg, "Us & Them: What Is an American Movie Now?" New York Times, November 14, 2004. An anonymous Hollywood executive told Hirschberg, "Our movies no longer reflect our culture. They have become gross, distorted exaggerations. And I think America is growing into those exaggerated images." It is interesting that Michael Moore’s Fahrenheit 9/11 won the Festival grand prize—primarily for political reasons but perhaps also as encouragement to America’s independent producers trying to make serious films.

66. Menand, "Gross Points," p. 85. Menand notes that in the first Terminator film, Arnold Schwarzenegger had exactly seventeen lines. This can hardly be a surprise, writes Menand, since global blockbusters generally feature "wizards; sly women of few words; men of few words who can expertly drive anything; spectacularly wreck anything; and leap safely from the top of anything; characters from comic books, sixth-grade world-history textbooks, or Bulfinch’s Mythology; explosions; phenomena unknown to science; a computer whiz with attitude; a brand-name soft drink, running shoe, or candy bar [concessions yield 35 percent of theater revenue and theaters keep it]; an incarnation of pure evil; more explosions; and the voice of Robin Williams."

67. Jones and Klein, Man-Child, p. 177. Jones and Klein wrote an odd book combining a neo-Freudian analysis of infantilization with a rationalization of the regressive as useful to intelligence and to civilization. Although they saw thirty-five years ago many of the trends toward infantilization I discuss here—"we seem to see an exponential increase in the momentum of the process of infantilization in recent (and especially in our own) times," they wrote—for the most part they regard it benignly or even as positive. This perhaps speaks in part to the dialectical take on childhood I advocate below.

68. Ibid., p. 340.


71. For examples of the self-described ranting that typifies this "adult" group (which in fact
sounds like a junior-high clique berating the school principal), see Belkin’s “Your Kids Are Their Problem.”


75. McNeal, Kids As Consumers, p. 18.

76. Ibid., p. 20. It is hardly a surprise then that a world survey of marketing to children in 2001 would boast that “advertising has become pervasive in daily life and continues to expand into new realms.” Increasingly, advertisers are marketing to children to shape consumption preference early and to take advantage of the growing amount of money that people are spending on children, which hit $405 billion globally in 2000 (“Marketing to Children: A World Survey, 2001,” Euromonitor International, cited in the Worldwatch Institute’s Vital Signs 2003 [New York: W. W. Norton, 2003]).


79. One marketing group offered both a Youth Power 2005 conference aimed at marketing to youngsters fifteen to twenty-four and a Kid Power 2006 conference aimed at kids aged two to twelve, the latter held at the Disney Yacht and Beach Club in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.


90. That the juvenile is less responsible as well as less free has been widely recognized not only in psychology but in law. Marketers know full well that they are exploiting rather than empowering the young when they play on their youthfulness or seek to encourage regression in adults. The marketer looks to the juvenile as the ideal consumer precisely because the merchandising industry shares the understanding of the juvenile favored by the U.S. Supreme Court majority in its 2005 decision outlawing the death penalty for juveniles. In Roper v. Simmons (March 2005), a 5–4 majority ruled that juveniles should not be subject to the death penalty.
because a "lack of maturity and an underdeveloped sense of responsibility are found in youth more often than in adults and are more understandable among the young." If, as the court ruled, such "qualities often result in impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions," and if this diminishes juvenile culpability in capital crime cases, then surely it diminishes juvenile responsibility and liberty in consumer decision making. The ruling also noted that "juveniles are more vulnerable or susceptible to negative influence and outside pressures, including peer pressure," and that "the character of a juvenile is not as well formed as that of an adult. The personality traits of juveniles are more transitory, less fixed." (A summary of the case can be found at www.oyez.org/oyez/resource/case/1724.)

The court knows children when it sees them. Market capitalism pretends not to. The infantilist ethos insists they are not children. If we spare juveniles the death penalty when they commit capital crimes, should we not refrain from insisting they are liberated and empowered when we play on their "lack of maturity" and "underdeveloped sense of responsibility" to get them to buy things they don't need, and exploit their tendencies to be "impetuous" and to engage in "ill-considered actions and decisions" in order to condition them to the obligatory shopping consumer capitalism needs to survive?

91. Marketers themselves divide the population into such consumer-targeted categories and develop merchandising strategies accordingly. A marketing firm called Claritas thus managed to segment America into dozens of neighborhood consumer sectors defined by actual consumables such as "Pools and Patios," "Shotguns and Pickups," "Bohemian Mix," and "Urban Gold."

2 From Protestantism to Puerility


2. Ibid., p. 27. Weber published other studies in later years examining the economic ethos of other religions.

3. Ibid., p. 172.

4. Elizabeth Kolbert cites this phrase in an essay on Max Weber in which she observes that "In the century since then, there is hardly a claim made in 'The Protestant Ethic,' either about the history of religion or about the history of economics, that hasn't been challenged" (Elizabeth Kolbert, "Why Work? A Hundred Years of 'The Protestant Ethic,'" The New Yorker, November 29, 2004).

5. See Max Weber's essay "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: A Galaxy Book, Oxford University Press, 1946), taken from Weber's "Die Wirtschaftslehre der Weltreligionen" of 1922–1923. Weber writes here of an "economic ethic" that "points to the practical impulse for action which is conducted in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions" (Gerth and Mills, p. 267). He looks at Confucian, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Islamic and Judaic religious ethics. These somewhat scoliotic points are important because they indicate that Weber did not regard the Protestant ethos that informed capitalism as a special case, but as one important instance of an interaction between religion and economics that could be found in every society.


10. David Brooks, On Paradise Drive: How We Live Now (and Always Have) in the Future Tense
BOOK I

Of the Causes of Improvement in the productive Powers of Labour, and of the Order according to which its Produce is naturally distributed among the different Ranks of the People

CHAPTER I

Of the Division of Labour

The greatest "improvement" in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour.¹

¹ An improvement

¹ The first considered exposition of the term division of labour was probably by Sir William Petty: "Those who have the command of the Sea Trade, may Work at easier Freight with more profit, than others at greater: for as Cloth must be cheaper made, when one Card, another Spins, another Weaves, another Draws, another Dresses, another Presses and Packs; than when all the Operations above-mentioned, were clumsily performed by the same hand; so those who command the Trade of Shipping, can build long slight Ships for carrying Masts, Fir-Timber, Boards, Barks, etc." (Political Arithmetic (London, 1690), 10, in C. H. Hull, The Economic Writings of Sir William Petty (Cambridge, 1899), i. 260). "For in so vast a City Manufactures will beget one another, and each Manufacture will be divided into as many parts as possible, whereby the work of each Artisan will be simple and easy: As for Example. In the making of a Watch, if one Man shall make the Wheels, another the Spring, another shall Engrave the Dial-plate, and another shall make the Case, then the Watch will be better and cheaper, than if the whole Work be put upon any one Man." (Another Essay in Political Arithmetic, concerning the Growth of the City of London (London, 1683), 36–7, in C. H. Hull, ii 473.)

Later use was by Mandeville and Harris: "There are many Sets of Hands in the Nation, that, not wanting proper Materials, would be able in less than half a Year to produce, fit out, and navigate a First-Rate [Man of War]: yet it is certain, that this Task would be impracticable, if it was not divided and subdivided into a great Variety of different Labours; and it is as certain, that none of these Labours require any other, than working Men of ordinary Capacities." (B. Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, pt. ii.149, ed. F. B. Kaye (Oxford, 1924), ii.142.) "No number of Men, when once they enjoy Quiet, and no Man needs to fear his Neighbour, will be long without learning to divide and subdivide their Labour." (Ibid., pt. ii.155, ed. Kaye ii.284.) "The advantages accruing to mankind from their betaking themselves severally to different occupations, are very great and
2 The effects of the division of labour, in the general business of society, will be more easily understood, by considering in what manner it operates in some particular manufactures. It is commonly supposed to be carried furthest in some very trifling ones; not perhaps that it really is carried further in them than in others of more importance: but in those trifling manufactures which are destined to supply the small wants of but a small number of people, the whole number of workmen must necessarily be small; and those employed in every different branch of the work can often be collected into the same [7] workhouse, and placed at once under the view of the spectator. In those great manufactures, on the contrary, which are destined to supply the great wants of the great body of the people, every different branch of the work employs so great a number of workmen, that it is impossible to collect them all into the same workhouse. We can seldom see more, at one time, than those employed in one single branch. Though in such manufactures, therefore, the work may really be divided into a much greater number of parts, than in those of a more trifling nature, the division is not near so obvious, and has accordingly been much less observed.

3 To take an example, therefore, from a very trifling manufacture; but one in which the division of labour has been very often taken notice of, the trade of the pin-maker; a workman not educated to this business (which the division of labour has rendered a distinct trade), nor acquainted with the use of the machinery employed in it (to the invention of which the same division of labour has probably given occasion), could scarce, perhaps, with his utmost industry, make one pin in a day, and certainly could not make twenty. But in the way in which this business is now carried on, not only the whole work is a peculiar trade, but it is divided into a number of branches, of which the greater part are likewise peculiar.

\[\text{obvious: For thereby, each becoming expert and skilful in his own particular art; they are enabled to furnish one another with the products of their respective labours, performed in a much better manner, and with much less toil, than any one of them could do of himself.} \]

\(\text{(J. Harris, An Essay upon Money and Coins (London, 1757), i. 16.)}\)

The advantages of the division of labour are also emphasized by Turgot in sections III and IV of his Reflections on the Formation and Distribution of Riches (1766). The translation used is by R. L. Meek and included in his Turgot on Progress, Sociology and Economics (Cambridge, 1973).

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2} Cf. ED 2.4: 'to give a very frivolous instance, if all the parts of a pin were to be made by one man, if the same person was to dig the metall out of the mine, separate it from the ore, forge it, split it into small rods, then spin these rods into wire, and last of all make that wire into pins, a man perhaps could with his utmost industry scarce make a pin in a year.' Smith added that even where the wire alone was furnished an unskilled man could probably make only about 20 pins a day. Similar examples occur in LJ (A) vi.29-30 and LJ (B) 213-14, ed. Cannan 163. It is remarked in LJ (A) vi.30 that the wire used in pin manufacture generally came from Sweden.}\]
trades. One man draws out the wire, another straightens it, a third cuts it, a fourth points it, a fifth grinds it at the top for receiving the head; to make the head requires [8] two or three distinct operations; to put it on, is a peculiar business, to whiten the pins is another; it is even a trade by itself to put them into the paper; and the important business of making a pin is, in this manner, divided into about eighteen distinct operations, which, in some manufactories, are all performed by distinct hands, though in others the same man will sometimes perform two or three of them. I have seen a small manufactury of this kind where ten men only were employed, and where some of them consequently performed two or three distinct operations. But though they were very poor, and therefore but indifferently accommodated with the necessary machinery, they could, when they exerted themselves, make among them about twelve pounds of pins in a day. There are in a pound upwards of four thousand pins of a middling size. Those ten persons, therefore, could make among them upwards of forty-eight thousand pins in a day. Each person, therefore, making a tenth part of forty-eight thousand pins, might be considered as making four thousand eight hundred pins in a day. But if they had all wrought separately and independently, and without any of them having been educated to this peculiar business, they certainly could not each of them have made twenty, perhaps not one pin in a day; that is, certainly, not the two hundred and forty, perhaps not the four thousand eight hundredth part of what they are at present capable of performing, in consequence of [9] a proper division and combination of their different operations.

3 Eighteen operations are described in the *Encyclopædia* (1755), v.804–7. See also Chambers' *Cyclopaedia* (4th ed. 1747), s.v. Pin.

4 A very similar passage occurs in Ed 2.4 which also concludes that where the processes of manufacture are divided among 18 persons, each should in effect be capable of producing 2,000 pins in a day. These figures are also cited in Lj (A) vi 39 and 51 and Lj (B) 214, ed. Cannan 163. In referring to the disadvantages of the division of labour in Lj (B) 329, ed. Cannan 255, the lecturer mentions the example of a person engaged on the 17th part of a pin or the 80th part of a button. See below, V.i.f.50.
CHAPTER II
Of the Principle which gives occasion to the Division of Labour

1 This division of labour, from which so many advantages are derived, is not originally the effect of any human wisdom, which foresees and intends that general opulence to which it gives occasion. It is the necessary, though very slow and gradual consequence of a certain propensity in human nature which has in view no such extensive utility; the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another.

2 Whether this propensity be one of those original principles in human nature, of which no further account can be given; or whether, as seems more probable, it be the necessary consequence of the faculties of reason and speech, it belongs not to our present subject to enquire. It is common to all men, and to be found in no other race of animals, which seem to know neither this nor any other species of contracts. Two greyhounds, in running down the same hare, have sometimes the appearance of acting in some sort of concert. Each turns her towards his companion, or endeavours to intercept her when his companion turns her towards himself. This, however, is not the effect of any contract, but of the accidental

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1 LJ (B) 218-19, ed. Cannan 168 reads: 'We cannot imagine this to have been an effect of human prudence. It was indeed made a law by Sesostris that every man should follow the employment of his father. But this is by no means suitable to the dispositions of human nature, and can never long take place. Everyone is fond of being a gentleman, and be his father what he would.' The law is also mentioned in LJ (A) vi.54. See below, liii.31 and IV.ix.43.

2 This paragraph closely follows the first three sentences in ED 2.12. The propensity to truck and barter is also mentioned in LJ (A) vi.44, 48 and LJ (B) 219 ff., ed. Cannan 169. Cf. LJ (B) 306-1, ed. Cannan 232: 'that principle in the mind which prompts to truck, barter and exchange, the it is the great foundation of arts, commerce and the division of labour, yet it is not marked with any thing amiable. To perform any thing, or to give any thing without a reward is always generous and noble, but to barter one thing for another is mean.' In a Letter from Governor Pownall to Adam Smith, being an Examination of Several Points of Doctrine laid down in his Inquiry, into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (London, 1776), the author objected that the analysis of this chapter stopped short in ascribing the division of labour directly to a propensity to barter (4-5). Pownall, a former Governor of Massachusetts, also criticized Smith's views on labour as a measure of value, paper money, the employments of capital, colonies, etc. Smith acknowledged Pownall's work in Letter 182 addressed to Pownall, dated 19 January 1777. In Letter 208 addressed to Andrew Holt, dated 26 October 1780 Smith remarked that: 'In the second edition I flattered myself that I had obviated all the objections of Governor Pownall. I find however, he is by no means satisfied, and as Authors are not much disposed to alter the opinions they have once published, I am not much surprised at it.' There is very little evidence to suggest that Smith materially altered his views in response to Pownall, but see below, p. 50, n. 15.

3 In LJ (B) 221, ed. Cannan 171, Smith argued in referring to the division of labour that 'The real foundation of it is that principle to persuade which so much prevails in human nature.' The same point is made in LJ (A) vi.56.
concurrency of their passions in the same object at that particular time. Nobody ever saw a dog make a fair and deliberate exchange of one bone for another with another dog. Nobody ever saw one animal by its gestures and natural cries signify to another, this is mine, that yours; I am willing to give this for that. When an animal wants to obtain something either of a man or of another animal, it has no other means of persuasion but to gain the favour of those whose service it requires. A puppy fawns upon its dam, and a spaniel endea-[21]ours by a thousand attractions to engage the attention of its master who is at dinner, when it wants to be fed by him. Man sometimes uses the same arts with his brethren, and when he has no other means of engaging them to act according to his inclinations, endeavours by every servile and fawning attention to obtain their good will. He has not time, however, to do this upon every occasion. In civilized society he stands at all times in need of the cooperation and assistance of great multitudes, while his whole life is scarce sufficient to gain the friendship of a few persons. In almost every other race of animals each individual, when it is grown up to maturity, is entirely independent, and in its natural state has occasion for the assistance of no other living creature. But man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and shew them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from

4 The example of the greyhounds occurs in LJ (B) 219, ed. Cannan 169. LJ (A) vi. 44. uses the example of 'hounds in a chase' and again at 57. Cf. LJ (B) 222, ed. Cannan 171. 'Sometimes, indeed, animals seem to act in concert, but there is never any thing like a bargain among them. Monkeys when they rob a garden throw the fruit from one to another till they deposit it in the hoard, but there is always a scramble about the division of the booty, and usually some of them are killed.' In LJ (A) vi. 57 a similar example is based on the Cape of Good Hope.

5 In ED 2.12 an additional sentence is added at this point: 'When any uncommon misfortune befals it, its pitious and doleful cries will sometimes engage its fellows, and sometimes prevail even upon man, to relieve it.' With this exception, and the first sentence of this paragraph, the whole of the preceding material follows ED 2.12 very closely and in places verbatim. The remainder of the paragraph follows ED 2.12 to its close.

6 'To expect, that others should serve us for nothing, is unreasonable; therefore all Commerce, that Men can have together, must be a continual bartering of one thing for another. The Seller, who transfers the Property of a Thing, has his own Interest as much at Heart as the Buyer, who purchases that Property; and, if you want or like a thing, the Owner of it, whatever Stock of Provision he may have of the same, or how greatly soever you may stand in need of it, will never part with it, but for a Consideration, which he likes better, than he does the thing you want.' (Mandeville, The Fable of the Bees, pt. ii. 421-2, ed. Kaye, ii.249.)
the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their [22] regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. 7 Nobody but a beggar chuses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow-citizens. Even a beggar does not depend upon it entirely. The charity of well-disposed people, indeed, supplies him with the whole fund of his subsistence. But though this principle ultimately provides him with all the necessaries of life which he has occasion for, it neither does nor can provide him with them as he has occasion for them. The greater part of his occasional wants are supplied in the same manner as those of other people, by treaty, by barter, and by purchase. With the money which one man gives him he purchases food. The old cloaths which another bestows upon him he exchanges for other old cloaths which suit him better, or for lodging, or for food, or for money, with which he can buy either food, cloaths, or lodging, as he has occasion.

As it is by treaty, by barter, and by purchase, that we obtain from one another the greater part of those mutual good offices which we stand in need of, so it is this same trucking disposition which originally gives occasion to the division of labour. In a tribe of hunters or shepherds a particular person makes bows and arrows, for example, with more readiness and dexterity than any other. He frequently exchanges them for cattle or for venison with his companions; and [23] he finds at last that he can in this manner get more cattle and venison, than if he himself went to the field to catch them. From a regard to his own interest, therefore, the making of bows and arrows grows to be his chief business, and he becomes a sort of armourer. 8 Another excels in making the frames and covers of their

7 Cf. L] (B) 220, ed. Cannan 169: 'The brewer and the baker serve us not from benevolence but from self-love. No man but a beggar depends on benevolence, and even they would die in a week were their entire dependance upon it.' Also L] (A) vi.46: 'You do not adress his [the brewer's and baker's] humanity but his self-love. Beggars are the only persons who depend on charity for their subsistence; neither do they do so altogether. For what by their supplications they have got from one, they exchange for something else they more want. They give their old cloaths to a one for lodging, the money they have got to another for bread, and thus even they make use of bargain and exchange.'

6 Cf. L] (A) vi.46: 'This bartering and trucking spirit is the cause of the separation of trades and the improvements in arts. A savage who supports himself by hunting, having made some more arrows than he had occasion for, gives them in a present to some of his companions, who in return give him some of the venison they have caught; and he at last finding that by making arrows and giving them to his neighbour, as he happens to make them better than ordinary, he can get more venison than by his own hunting, he lays it aside unless it be for his diversion, and becomes an arrow-maker.' Similar points are made in L] (B) 230, ed. Cannan 169-70, and a similar passage occurs in ED 2.13, Mandleveille (The Fable of the Bees, pt. ii. 235-6, ed. Kaye ii.284) also noted that: 'Man', as I have hinted before, naturally loves to imitate what he sees others do, which is the reason that savage People all do the same thing: This hinders them from meliorating their Condition, though they are always wishing for it: But if one will wholly apply himself to the making of Bows and Arrows, whilst another provides Food, a third builds
little huts or moveable houses. He is accustomed to be of use in this way to his neighbours, who reward him in the same manner with cattle and with venison, till at last he finds it his interest to dedicate himself entirely to this employment, and to become a sort of house-carpen ter. In the same manner a third becomes a smith or a brazier, a fourth a tanner or dresser of hides or skins, the principal part of the clothing of savages. And thus the certainty of being able to exchange all that surplus part of the produce of his own labour, which is over and above his own consumption, for such parts of the produce of other men's labour as he may have occasion for, encourages every man to apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and bring to perfection whatever talent or genius he may possess for that particular species of business.

Huts, a fourth makes Garments, and a fifth Utensils, they do not only become useful to one another, but the Callings and Employments themselves will in the same Number of Years receive much greater Improvements, than if all had been promiscuously follow'd by every one of the Five.

9 Cf. Hutcheson (System, i.288–9): 'Nay 'tis well known that the produce of the labours of any given number, twenty, for instance, in providing the necessaries or conveniences of life, shall be much greater by assigning to one, a certain sort of work of one kind, in which he will soon acquire skill and dexterity, and to another assigning work of a different kind, than if each one of the twenty were obliged to employ himself, by turns, in all the different sorts of labour requisite for his subsistence, without sufficient dexterity in any. In the former method each procures a great quantity of goods of one kind, and can exchange a part of it for such goods obtained by the labours of others as he shall stand in need of. One grows expert in tillage, another in pasture and breeding cattle, a third in masonry, a fourth in the chase, a fifth in iron-works, a sixth in the arts of the boon, and so on throughout the rest. Thus all are supplied by means of barter with the work of complete artists. In the other method scarce any one could be dextrous and skilful in any one sort of labour.'

10 This paragraph is based on ED a.13, which it follows very closely.

11 'When we consider how nearly equal all men are in their bodily force, and even in their mental powers and faculties, till cultivated by education; we must necessarily allow, that nothing but their consent could, at first, associate them together, and subject them to any authority.' (D. Hume, 'Of the Original Contract', in Political Discourses (1752); Essays Moral, Political and Literary, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London, 1882), i.444–5.) Cf. Treatise of Human Nature, III.i: 'The skin, pores, muscles, and nerves of a day-labourer, are different from those of a man of quality: so are his sentiments, actions, and manners. The different stations of life influence the whole fabric, external and internal; and these different stations arise necessarily, because uniformly, from the necessary and uniform principles of human nature.' On the other hand, Harris (Essay, i.75) believed that: 'Men are endowed with various talents and propensities, which naturally dispose and fit them for different occupations; and are... under a necessity of betaking themselves to particular arts and employments, from their inability of otherwise acquiring all the necessaries they want, with ease and comfort. This creates a dependance of one man upon another, and naturally unites men into societies.'
CHAPTER II
Of Restraints upon the Importation "from foreign Countries of such Goods" as can be produced at Home

1 By restraining, either by high duties, or by absolute prohibitions, the importation of such goods from foreign countries as can be produced at home, the monopoly of the home-market is more or less secured to the domestick industry employed in producing them. Thus the prohibition\(^1\) of importing either live cattle or salt provisions from foreign countries secures to the graziers of Great Britain the monopoly of the home-market for butchers-meat. The high duties upon the importation of corn, which in times of moderate plenty amount to a prohibition, give a like advantage to the growers of that commodity.\(^2\) The prohibiton of the importation of foreign woolens is equally favourable to the woollen manufacturers.\(^3\) The silk manufacture, though altogether employed upon foreign materials, has lately obtained the same advantage.\(^4\) The linen manufacture has not yet obtained it, but is making great strides towards it.\(^5\) Many other sorts of manufacturers have, in the same manner, obtained in Great Britain, either altogether, or very nearly a monopoly against their countrymen.\(^6\) The variety of goods of which the importation into Great Britain is prohibited, [177] either absolutely, or under certain circumstances, greatly exceeds what can easily be suspected by those who are not well acquainted with the laws of the customs.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) By 18 and 19 Charles II, c. 2 (1666) in Statutes of the Realm, v.597; 18 Charles II, c. 2 in Ruffhead's edition. Imports from Ireland were allowed from 1759 by 32 George II, c. 11 (1759). See above, III.iv.20, and below, IV.ii.16 and V.ii.k.13.

\(^2\) 22 Charles II, c. 13 (1676). See above, III.i.20, and below, IV.ii.16, IV.v.a.23, IV.v.b.33 and 37, IV.vii.b.33, V.ii.k.13.

\(^3\) By 4 Edward IV, c. 1 (1464). Controls over the import and export of wool are discussed at IV.viii.17, where it is pointed out that the manufacturers of woollen products had been more successful than others in persuading the legislature to meet their special needs. Cf. Pownall, Letter, 29–31. In Letter 203 addressed to William Eden, dated 3 January 1780, Smith called for a repeal of all prohibitions on importation, and that on the exportation of wool.

\(^4\) 6 George III, c. 28 (1766), extended by 11 George III, c. 49 (1771). See below, IV.iv.7. See also above, II.v.15 and III.iii.19, where Smith comments on the fact that the silk manufacture was based on foreign materials.

\(^5\) Additional duties were imposed from 25 May 1767 by 7 George III, c. 28 (1766).

\(^6\) In the letter (292) to Eden just cited, Smith commented on the ineffectiveness of absolute prohibitions on importation, and added that:

About a week after I was made a Commissioner of the Customs, upon looking over the list of prohibited goods, (which is hung up in every Customhouse and which is well worth your considering) and upon examining my own wearing apparel, I found, to my great astonishment, that I had scarce a stock, a cravat, a pair of ruffles, or a pocket
2 That this monopoly of the home-market frequently gives great encouragement to that particular species of industry which enjoys it, and frequently turns towards that employment a greater share of both the labour and stock of the society than would otherwise have gone to it, cannot be doubted. But whether it tends either to increase the general industry of the society, or to give it the most advantageous direction, is not, perhaps, altogether so evident.\(^6\)

3 The general industry of the society never can exceed what the capital of the society can employ. As the number of workmen that can be kept in employment by any particular person must bear a certain proportion to his capital, so the number of those that can be continually employed by all the members of a great society, must bear a certain proportion to the whole capital of that society, and never can exceed that proportion. No regulation of commerce can increase the quantity of industry in any society beyond what its capital can maintain. It can only divert a part of it into a direction into which it might not otherwise have gone; and it is by no means certain that this artificial direction is likely to be more advantageous to the society than that into which it would have gone of its own accord.\(^7\)

\(^6\) Certain f

handkerchief which was not prohibited to be worn or used in G. Britain. I wished to set an example and burn them all. I will not advise you to examine either your own or Mrs Eden’s apparel or household furniture, lest you be brought into a scrape of the same kind.

See below, V.i.ii.64: ‘to pretend to have any scruple about buying smuggled goods ... would in most countries be regarded as one of those pedantic pieces of hypocrisy which ... serve only to expose the person who affects to practice them, to the suspicion of being a greater knave than most of his neighbours.’ Smith’s appointment afforded Edward Gibbon an opportunity for some heavy humour; In Letter 187 addressed to Smith, dated 26 November 1777 he wrote that:

Among the strange reports, which are every day circulated in this wide town, I heard one to-day so very extraordinary, that I know not how to give credit to it. I was informed that a place of Commissioner of the Customs in Scotland had been given to a Philosopher who for his own glory and for the benefit of mankind had enlightened the world by the most profound and systematic treatise on the great objects of trade and revenue which had ever been published in any age or in any Country.

\(^7\) See above, II.v.31. Smith comments frequently on the ‘natural balance of industry’ in this chapter and throughout Book IV. See, for example, IV.ii.12,31, IV.iv.14, and IV.v.a.39. The claim that an artificial direction regarding the use of resources is less satisfactory than a ‘natural’ one is made at IV.v.a.34, IV.vii.c.43,97, and cf. IV.ix.51. The idea is applied in the analysis of taxation, for example, at V.i.ii.69. It will be observed that in making this point, the reference is to the dynamic analysis of II.v. and III.ii rather than to the treatment of the static allocative mechanism offered in Book I.

\(^8\) In L.J. (B) 234–4, ed. Cannan 180–1, Smith refers to ‘a natural balance of industry’ and to the ‘natural connection of all trades’, and makes the point that regulation will break the ‘balance of industry’. A similar point is made in L.J. (A) vi.92. The doctrine is succinctly stated in ED 3.5: [continues]
Every individual is continually exerting himself to find out the most advantageous employment for whatever capital he can command. It is his own advantage, indeed, and not that of the society, which he has in view. But the study of his own advantage naturally, or rather necessarily leads him to prefer that employment which is most advantageous to the society.

First, every individual endeavours to employ his capital as near home as he can, and consequently as much as he can in the support of domestic industry; provided always that he can thereby obtain the ordinary, or not a great deal less than the ordinary profits of stock.

There is in every country what may be called a natural balance of industry, or a disposition in the people to apply to each species of work precisely in proportion to the demand for that work. That whatever tends to break this balance tends to hurt national or public opulence; whether it be by giving extraordinary discouragement to some sorts of industry or extraordinary encouragement to others.

In this context, the critician is extended to bounties (see below, IV.v.) and occurs in the discussion of policies which prevent the coincidence of market and natural price. See especially, L[.J] (B) 292–3, ed. Cannan 130–1, and above, I.vii. Compare Mandeville’s comment in the Sixth Dialogue: ‘we may learn, how the short-sighted Wisdom, of perhaps well-meaning People, may rob us of a Felicity, that would flow spontaneously from the Nature of every large Society, if none were to divert or interrupt the Stream.’ (The Fable of the Bees, pt. ii. 425, ed. Kaye ii.353.)
7 Secondly, every individual who employs his capital in the support of domestick industry, necessarily endeavours so to direct that industry, that its produce may be of the greatest possible value.

8 The produce of industry is what it adds to the subject or materials upon which it is employed. In proportion as the value of this produce is great or small, so will likewise be the profits of the employer. But it is only for the sake of profit [181] that any man employs a capital in the support of industry; and he will always, therefore, endeavour to employ it in the support of that industry of which the produce is likely to be of the greatest value, or to exchange for the greatest quantity either of money or of other goods.11

9 But the annual revenue of every society is always precisely equal to the exchangeable value of the whole annual produce of its industry, or rather is

9 Rather similar terms are used in the discussion of equilibrium price, in I.vii.15.
10 Above, II.v.27. 11 See above, II.iii.6.
precisely the same thing with that exchangeable value. As every individual, therefore, endeavours as much as he can both to employ his capital in the support of domestic industry, and so to direct that industry that its produce may be of the greatest value; every individual necessarily labours to render the annual revenue of the society as great as he can. He generally, indeed, neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. By preferring the support of domestic to that of foreign industry, he intends only his own security; and by directing that industry in such a manner as its produce may be of the greatest value, he intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affect to trade for the public good. It is an [182] affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.

What is the species of domestic industry which his capital can employ, and of which the produce is likely to be of the greatest value, every individual, it is evident, can, in his local situation, judge much better than any statesman or lawyer can do for him. The statesman, who should attempt to direct private people in what manner they ought to employ their capitals, would not only load himself with a most unnecessary attention, but assume an authority which could safely be trusted, not only to no single person, but to no council or senate whatever, and which would nowhere be so dangerous as in the hands of a man who had folly and presumption enough to fancy himself fit to exercise it.

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12 A similar point is made at I.vi.17, I.xi.p.7, and II.i.r.
13 See below, IV.vii.c.88.
14 Cf. TMS IV.i.i.10, where Smith also uses the concept of the 'invisible hand' in an economic context.
15 There is an interesting variation on this theme in Steuart's Principles, i.165, ed. Skinner i.142-4.
16 Similar sentiments are expressed in IV.v.b.16 and IV.ix.51, where intervention is said to be presumptuous and impolitic, not to mention unjust. The argument is also applied at I.x.c.12.