

# **an american courtship: psychologists and advertising theory in the progressive era**

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In the waning years of the nineteenth century, a book of advertising advice boasted that there was “no stratum of society not reached by advertising. The bluest blue-blooded descendent of the oldest family, who prides himself upon his impenetrability from things common is affected. . . . In no place within reach of the mail can there exist an impregnable spot.”<sup>1</sup> Although accurate at the time, the writer’s claim was to become by the First World War only a timid half-truth. For during the next twenty years, advertisers learned how to penetrate beyond vision into the American psyche itself.

Fully confident of the sweep of their work, advertisers, urged on by academic psychologists, turned to experimental psychology with the hope of making consumption a central function in the life of the individual. The new advertising theory born of the union between science and business envisioned advertisements with greater attention-getting value and stronger, deeper appeals to the needs and desires of the consumer. Throughout the progressive era, a growing number of adherents to the new theory sought copy which not only would tie tangible products to intangible needs but also would create new needs to be satisfied by either an existing or new product.

Underlying the search for more control over consumer habits were changed assumptions about the nature of man. The established advertising world mostly fought these changes, defending the common sense, reportorial style of copywriting with its view of man as rational and capable of determining his own needs if only given adequate information.<sup>2</sup> The reportorial style of copywriting primarily attempted to establish and maintain brand loyalty and to achieve broad awareness of a firm’s trademark or slogan. A leading practitioner of the old style, John Powers of Wanamaker’s—one of the largest retail stores in the 1890’s along

with A. T. Stewart and Marshall Field's—represented a school of copywriters distinctly different from modern advertising men. He advocated “the commonplace [as] the proper level for writing in business; in business, where the first virtue is plainness, ‘fine writing’ is not only intellectual, it is offensive.” Powers collectively labeled these attitudes “honesty,” by which he meant simply telling the story of the product without flourish.<sup>3</sup>

The impetus for a new theory of advertising and thus a concept of man as non-rational, whose desires and aspirations could be manipulated for the good of economic stability, came chiefly from the first generation of university-trained social scientists. The new psychologist-advertising theorists were unique in desiring scientific control over consumer buying habits. They developed their ideas, however, amidst a host of social thinkers and activists who called for improved methods of general social control. Along with most progressive reformers, the advertising profession (and the manufacturers they served) unabashedly assumed the task of defining the Good Life for Americans.<sup>4</sup> Yet interest in social control was hardly new. What was new in the progressive era was the precision brought by the new sciences of human behavior, particularly psychology and sociology, to this age-old drive for social stability.

Edward Alsworth Ross, a leading sociologist in the period, first used the term “social control” in a series of articles appearing in the 1890's. In 1898, he candidly mapped out the work of social science for the approaching century. Ross urged “the right persons,” meaning social scientists, to undertake “the study of moral influences . . . in the right spirit as a basis for a scientific control of the individual.” Ross warned social scientists not to bare with undue haste the “secrets of control” as they discovered mental laws and the techniques through which society controlled the mind. “To betray the secrets of social ascendancy is to forearm the individual in his struggle with society,” and risk “rashly strengthening an individualism already too rampant.” Ross hoped that “as soon as the conditions which reconcile order with progress are made clear to the leaders of opinion, the control of society over its members ought to become more conscious and effective than it now is.” Achieving this, “the dismal seesawing between change and reaction that has been the course of the [nineteenth] century ought to disappear.”<sup>5</sup>

Conscious attempts to develop institutions for more effective social control came sooner than Ross reckoned. During the next two decades, industrial managers turned to social scientists for help in developing tighter controls over workers. Educators began educating for social adjustment and good citizenship. Further, businessmen promoted regulatory laws to achieve influence over political involvement in the business sector.<sup>6</sup> The move to achieve broad social control and redefine America's conception of the good life to increase economic stability forms a central theme of progressive social science. The emergence of national adver-

tising as an adjunct to the nationalization of business only extended the range of social control. Advertising helped producers convince consumers that purchases in the marketplace were essential to individual happiness.

Several factors account for the new advertising and its destined role as the premier institution for shaping the new America and the new American.<sup>7</sup> As previously implied, the development of a national advertising industry in response to the phenomenal growth of the American economy accompanied the interest in social control. National advertising grew tremendously after the Civil War as businesses nationalized to follow the spread of transportation networks across the country. Cheap mail rates brought financial stability to magazines through increased circulation. In the 1880's, magazines tripled their advertising volume and independent national advertising agencies increasingly acted as middlemen between the manufacturer and the media. As manufacturing concerns increased investments at the turn of the century, the large manufacturer spurned the unpredictable retailers and turned to advertising to get closer to the consumer. Almost to 1900, his product's fate had rested in the hands of the retailer. If a retailer refused to handle his goods, the manufacturer who did not use the mails had no way to reach the consumer. He needed some way to create a demand for his goods and force retailers to stock his specific brand. What better way, he reasoned, than to get the consumer to work for him, and how better enlist the consumer than through advertising? Thus, by 1900, millions of Americans had become familiar with brand names such as Kodak, Heinz, Prudential, Coca-Cola and Cream of Wheat.<sup>8</sup>

*Printer's Ink*, since 1888 one of the major voices of the advertising industry, has tried to explain why the vast majority of producers so quickly accepted advertising as a "potentially profitable sales tool." In the fiftieth anniversary issue published in 1938, the editors asserted that "once the example [of efficacious advertising] had been set by one company or perhaps several in a particular business, other firms in the same line, impressed by the success of their advertising rivals or perhaps acting in self defense, entered the lists."<sup>9</sup> Advertising copywriters aided by promoting themselves and their techniques: an example was the formation of local advertising clubs into the Associated Advertising Clubs in 1904. Advertising advanced so rapidly as an institution that by 1917 the national government recognized advertising as an effective technique of persuasion and propaganda. George Creel, chairman of the Committee on Public Information during World War I, used advertising men to help sell Liberty Bonds and boost support for an unpopular war. He believed the advertising man's participation in the war effort changed the public's view of him from a show barker and check-suited salesman to that of a respectable professional who had unstintingly served his nation's interest in a time of crisis.<sup>10</sup>

Yet participation in the war effort was a minor factor in advertising's

increased acceptance in the 1910's. For over fifty years, profound economic changes had radically altered the nature of the American economy. Product sales expanded greatly before 1920 and carried the advertising industry with them. Annual advertising expenditures grew by 100 percent between 1910 and 1920, and increased by fifty percent in the next decade. The marketplace before 1900 tended to be a seller's market in which buyers had only to be shown a given price and to whom an item could be easily sold. The emerging buyer's market in the first decades of the century, however, increased competition. Selling became more difficult, necessitating new techniques and pressures; the advertising industry responded by becoming more expansive, efficient and aggressive. The growth of American productive capacity beyond normal market demands, plus advertising's aggressiveness and increasingly sophisticated techniques, thus led to the differentiation of products through advertising. In short, the great firms in the oligopolistic industries realized that if they were to maintain their domination of the market, they would have to convince consumers that one brand of cigarettes or washing machine or cornflakes differed from another.<sup>11</sup>

As important as economic growth to advertising's development were fundamental changes within the discipline of psychology which laid the groundwork for an applied psychology. The result was a growing body of psychologists aggressively interested in influencing the world around them. As early as 1900, Walter Dill Scott of Northwestern University began to encourage businessmen to accept and utilize the new psychology for better control over workers and consumers. He soon received support from such leading members of the profession as Hugo Münsterberg and John Broadus Watson, the founder of behaviorism. Help from lay psychologist-advertisers came most effectively from William Shryer in the 1910's and later from Edward L. Bernays, nephew of Sigmund Freud and founder of public relations in America. In promoting the new psychology as a means of manipulating the individual's consumption habits, psychologists and their lay colleagues argued that the new advertising theory was the necessary fuel of America's industrial machinery. Without advertising to create new wants and tap old desires, the new theorists warned, American industrial progress could not continue.

This new orientation within academic psychology accompanied and reinforced basic transformations occurring in the content and goals of advertising. Around 1900 advertisements increasingly appealed, not to the rational judgment of the potential buyer, but to the emotional and non-rational elements in human beings: the Good Life replaced the Good Product as the salable commodity.<sup>12</sup> Although the operating principles of modern advertising first became widespread in the period between the first and second world wars, the new advertising concepts emerged early in the Progressive period. The first two decades of the century served as a transition period during which reporting on the

product gave way to identifying the advertised item with non-rational desires of the consumer.

Older advertising maxims did not disappear in these decades; they were, however, fading away. Product-oriented advertisements had subscribed to the rules of reason-why or long circuit appeals. The route of appeal was long because the advertisement promoted the product on the basis of economy or quality and required of the consumer a certain amount of thinking as he weighed the merits of rival products. Nineteenth-century copywriters rejected short-circuit appeals at the same time that psychologists were explaining the greater effectiveness of the short-circuit appeal. Short-circuit copy produced a quicker and more uniform reaction. An excellent example of an appeal to the non-rational in man appeared in the early 1910's. The top third of the advertisement showed two hands tied closely together with large rope. The caption asked: "Are *Your Hands Tied?*" The copy below reinforced the message: "Do you want to get on—SUCCEED—*earn more money?* . . ." If so, enroll in the International Correspondence Schools. This advertisement exploited the American success myth, probably with some effectiveness.

The short-circuit appeal did not arrive with the professional psychologists in the late 1800's. Psychologists, rather, helped the advertising copywriter to consciously understand what it was, what it did, and how to maximize its effectiveness. They explained the short-circuit appeal chiefly in terms of their own concepts of association and suggestion. Psychologists studied the color, size and design of advertisements for their suggestive effects on human observers. The concept of association taught that the mind never spontaneously created ideas, but introduced them by connecting a new experience with a previous thought. Thus, in the moment when the consumer experiences a particular need, the advertiser hoped that an article previously associated with the need through an advertisement would come to mind, and, further, an article of a particular brand. The concept of association underpinned advertising psychology because it explained the spur to action, or, specifically, the act of purchase. All other considerations—appeals to the imagination, suggestion, and forcing attention through design and color—reinforced the association of the product with a need in the mind of the consumer. If the advertisement proved effective, the advertiser could theoretically control the action of the consumer at the time of purchase.

Articles on the psychology of advertising began to appear around 1895. By 1901 and 1902 professors of psychology were lecturing to advertising clubs in Chicago and New York.<sup>13</sup> Walter Dill Scott, in an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1904 on "The Psychology of Advertising," told his readers that because the entire object of advertising "is to produce certain effects on the mind of possible customers, it is not strange that [advertising men] have turned to psychology in search of such principles" which would prove helpful. He instructed the writers of adver-

tisements that it was their “function in commercial life to create the motives that will affect the sale of the producer’s wares.”<sup>14</sup>

Scott, an assistant professor of psychology in 1903 and later president at Northwestern University, went beyond a mere confirmation of what advertising men of the old school already knew through experience.<sup>15</sup> In writings throughout the early 1900’s, he argued that advertisements whose aims conformed most closely to the nature of the human mind would be the most effective. In 1903, he published his first book on the subject, *The Theory and Practice of Advertising*. Scott discussed some basic concepts of the mind: mental imagery, repetition, suggestion, association. These terms became with few additions the terminology of most advertising texts through the next twenty years. *Printer’s Ink* later called Scott’s book a pioneer investigation which attracted wide attention among advertising men. Frank Presbrey, an advertising man and historian of advertising, wrote in 1929 that Scott had influenced advertising for twenty-five years; Presbrey dated the “real beginning” of advertising’s use of the study of appeal from 1903, the date of Scott’s first book. Presbrey believed that from that time, a special advertising vocabulary had arisen, with most of its terms lifted from psychology.<sup>16</sup>

Although Scott had studied at the Institute for Experimental Psychology at Leipzig under Wilhelm Wundt, a founder of the experimental, structural psychology, William James’ rejection of the content if not the experimental program of the tradition was vital for the development of a psychology of advertising. James published his two-volume *Principles of Psychology* in 1890; two years later he brought out an abridgement entitled *Psychology: Briefer Version*. Almost thirty years later, Scott still recommended the smaller edition to businessmen as “the most significant volume that has yet been written in English on psychology.” Scott’s reliance on James’ ideas is clear in their discussions of the concept of association, so important to the new theory of advertising. James listed four factors which determine the association of objects: habit, recency, vividness, and emotional congruity. Scott omitted only emotional congruity from his three laws of association. He concluded that “the application of all this to advertising is direct. The merchant desires so to advertise his goods that his particular brand or article will be the only one suggested whenever his class of goods is thought of.”<sup>17</sup>

James’ work paved the way for a practical, applied psychology. The structural psychology of Wundt drew upon introspective reports in an attempt to understand the mental elements, or structure, of subjective experience. The functionalist James, however, and his early successors John Dewey and James Rowland Angell, rejected the search for “fixed mental elements (structures),” and “became involved in issues of adaptation, development, and the relationship between organism and environment.” As Angell stated in 1907, functionalism introduced nothing wholly new; the functionalist program rather extended experimentation

“to a broader range of ideas to which experimental methods had less access, and dealt with material (such as individual differences) that later contributed to applied psychology.” Scott’s advice to advertisers in his *Atlantic* article provides a clear illustration of the functionalist’s concern with the individual mind’s relationship to the environment. In the article, Scott chastized advertisers for failing to appeal to the senses. “How many advertisers,” he asked, “describe a piano so vividly that the reader can *hear* it? How many food products are so described the reader can *taste* the food? . . . How many describe an undergarment so that the reader can *feel* the pleasant contact with his body?” Scott insisted advertisements must do for the reader what the actual object does when the consumer confronts it; it must give him all the possible sensations by exciting his mental imagery. He urged the business man, if he would advertise effectively, to understand “the workings of the minds of his customers, and . . . know how to influence them effectively.”<sup>18</sup>

Scott made his basic contributions to advertising theory in books published in 1903 and 1908 (revised 1910). The currency of his contribution continued, however, into the 1920’s; in 1921, he borrowed twenty-seven of thirty chapters from the early books and published them with only slight changes along with three new chapters. Scott dedicated each volume “to that increasing number of AMERICAN BUSINESS MEN who successfully apply Science where their predecessors were confined to Custom.”<sup>19</sup> Throughout the Progressive period, Scott remained the chief architect of a psychology of advertising, yet in the years preceding America’s entry into World War I, psychologists and advertisers used and expanded the new advertising theory in a number of textbooks and articles. Textbooks on advertising are especially relevant to a study of the motives and theories of advertising since they embody the paradigms of the institution. Furthermore, textbooks initially introduce young copywriters to the principles and worldview of the profession.

The earliest efforts by American business men to apply science to advertising must have seemed disappointingly crude to Scott. In 1905, Ernest Elmo Calkins and Ralph Holden, owners of one of the largest national advertising firms at the turn of the century, awkwardly combined the old ideas with the new psychology of advertising. Their book, *Modern Advertising*, largely concerned itself with jingles, reason-why copy and eye-catching design. Calkins and Holden discussed these often-used techniques generally without the aid of psychological analysis. Although the authors quoted almost all of Scott’s *Atlantic* article, the article’s contents did not enlighten their discussion. They examined photographs and illustrations in advertisements only in terms of their technical quality. Calkins and Holden ignored Scott’s dictum that the consumer be made to feel the touch of the garment upon seeing the advertisement. However, the authors did glimpse one of the prerequisites for modern depth advertising. They advised that a copywriter must

understand human nature—"whether he knows anything about psychology or not"—and he should understand the psychological processes of the people.<sup>20</sup> Just what constituted psychological processes, the authors failed to say; nor did they explain their pertinence to advertising.

If Calkins and Holden did not fully understand the new advertising principles they were helping to introduce, some of the illustrative advertisements in *Modern Advertising* indicated other copywriters used them. An advertisement for tooth powder, for example, communicated its message without detailing the product's physical properties. A photograph showed an attractive woman looking at her image in a handmirror, smiling with obvious pleasure over her whitened teeth. Above was the single word, "Satisfaction." Below, interspersed between paragraphs of reason-why copy, the brand-name "Rubifoam" appeared three times.<sup>21</sup> The copy could be ignored for the message had been communicated through association of the pretty, contented woman, the word "satisfaction" and the product's name, Rubifoam.

A decidedly more sophisticated application of psychology to advertising appeared seven years later in a book, *Analytical Advertising*, written by advertiser William A. Shryer. Shryer devoted chapters to sensation, attention, association, suggestion, reason, instincts and habit, emotions and imagination. His denigration of human reason strikingly parallels the most informed modern works in motivational research. Shryer asserted that since "the ordinary conduct of life demands but little exercise of reason . . . it is therefore unprofitable for the advertiser to center his appeal around copy that presumes the exercise of a function so slightly developed in the average man as that of his faculty of reason."<sup>22</sup>

Imaginative advertisements, Shryer argued, worked most effectively. Emotions, not reason, motivated man in most of his actions, and by understanding the idea of association the advertiser could create imaginative copy which would outsell copy that appealed to reason. He cautioned against an extravagant use of fancy so as not to disappoint the consumer when the promises went unfulfilled after purchase of the advertised item. Even so, the advertisement should appeal to the imagination: "An advertisement should always spur the mind to action by arousing an image susceptible of not only being duplicated through actual possession, but of being appreciated more fully after purchase than before. Every sale of an advertised product should be made on the theory that more is actually given than advertised." This, in proportion to its achievement, marked the success of an advertisement. Arousing the reasoning faculty, Shryer warned, introduced the very processes which would inhibit purchase.<sup>23</sup>

Shryer demonstrated with an automobile advertisement how the advertiser might directly appeal to intangible consumer desires and thus avoid placing the obstacle of reason between desire and purchase. The adver-

tisement, one for Chalmers Motor Car which appeared around 1910, showed two couples in an open roadster surrounded by a winter scene. A trademark on the side identified the vehicle, and large type directly beneath proclaimed: "Spring Days are Motoring Days." The copy below celebrated the joy of spring, which was "just over the hill." Spring, the copy promised, "is the best motoring time of the year, except possibly summer, fall and winter."<sup>24</sup> The trademark, illustration and caption communicated the message. The copy merely reinforced it and hinted to the reader that an automobile is not only a useful object, but also a means of joyful escape, and a way of satisfying a yearning for change, movement and variety.

New books by psychologists did not substantively change the principles initially outlined by Scott. Harry L. Hollingworth published his textbook, *Advertising and Selling*, in 1913 while teaching psychology at Columbia University and lecturing in business psychology at the School of Commerce of New York University. He had delivered a series of lectures to the Advertising Men's League of New York during the several years preceding the book's publication. At the League's request, he published the lectures. Hollingworth catalogued the factors of appeal and the different strength values of intangible desires more thoroughly than his predecessors had. To increase the effectiveness of advertising, he advised the use of suggestion to connect the product with these instinctual wants and needs in the consumer's mind. He evaluated fifty appeals (instincts) for their effectiveness as advertising lures. Some were efficiency, family affection, ambition, reputation, popularity, maternal love, modernity, elegance, youth, social standing and patriotism.<sup>25</sup> Hollingworth urged the advertiser to "throw an atmosphere of elegance, of style or of healthfulness about clothing, breakfast foods, soaps, musical instruments, etc., as the case may be, and the reader will at once react to it by 'short circuit' response, either favorably or unfavorably, according as the conception used is in his particular case *effective or weak*."<sup>26</sup>

An instructor in psychology at the University of Michigan, Henry F. Adams, published a work in 1916, *Advertising and its Mental Laws*, which generally reflected the conclusions and content of existing books in the field. Although he admitted his debts to the former psychologists of advertising, Gale, Hollingworth and Scott, Adams relied extensively on advertising trade magazines such as *Printer's Ink* and *Advertising and Selling*. Adams emphasized that advertising was "very largely a visual affair."<sup>27</sup>

Even as psychologists and advertising writers synthesized and urged application of the new advertising theory, many advertisers still relied on straight, "honest" copy and unsophisticated visual aids—although the biggest manufacturers, guided by the large, modern agencies, had turned to improved visual aids and short-circuit appeals. The crude elements which often obtruded in the most sophisticated copy appeared in a

Woodbury Facial Soap advertisement reprinted in Adams' book. The advertisement pictured a soft-skinned woman leaning languidly back on a couch. A man, hovering over her, kissed the nape of her neck. Above were the simple words: "A skin you love to touch." A small block of copy below the photograph indicated that: "You, too, can have [her] charm if you will begin the following treatment tonight: . . ." Two features marred the advertisement: a request that the reader write for "this beautiful picture" (an awkward attempt to determine the advertisement's effectiveness and to reinforce the copy) and the illustration on the packaging of the soap. The name "John H. Woodbury's Facial Soap" surrounded a sketch, not of the soft-skinned woman, but of the mustachioed face of John H. Woodbury.<sup>28</sup>

Although in retrospect the influence of psychology on advertising theory seems obvious, psychologists interested in business were not always satisfied. One eminent psychologist worried over the slow pace of psychology's entry into the marketplace. In 1909, Hugo Münsterberg, former president of the American Psychological Association and a pioneer in industrial psychology, lamented in a popular magazine the meager use of the findings of psychology by those who ran the marketplace. Münsterberg decried the annual waste of hundreds of millions of dollars on advertisements that failed to probe the minds of consumers. Too many advertisements either did not catch the consumer's attention, failed to remain in his memory, or did not transfer the desired suggestion. Because non-experts often misused psychology, Münsterberg advocated that "the well-trained expert . . . always remain the middleman between science and the needs of practical life."<sup>29</sup>

John B. Watson, founder of behaviorism and president of the A. P. A. in 1915, blamed the discipline of psychology rather than business. In 1914, he chided the older, introspective psychology for its practical uselessness. Watson called for a new psychology of behavior which would furnish data to the "educator, the physician, the jurist, and the business man." He believed the psychology of advertising was, however, one of the most flourishing branches of applied experimental psychology. Psychologists who ignored practical matters, Watson argued, were not "interested in a psychology which concerns itself with human life."<sup>30</sup>

While Münsterberg and Watson worried over the slow progress toward consumer control, the new advertising theorists gloried in the potential power of their work. Calkins and Holden, however little they understood the new ideas, proudly believed that "advertising has come to mean not merely the printed announcement of the merits of an article or an institution, but that high and unusual power of impressing a great number of people with a given idea. . . ." Advertising, they wrote, "is that subtle, indefinable, but powerful force whereby the advertiser creates a demand for a given article . . . or arouses the demand that is already there in latent form."<sup>31</sup> Almost ten years later, Hollingworth more

skeptically assessed the present power of advertising, yet expressed similar optimism over the institution's possibilities for control. He urged advertising writers on to greater effectiveness, especially since economic production had become so efficient that the consumer no longer could merely be asked to buy the available products. Advertising men would have to create consumer needs so that the burgeoning fruits of production could always find buyers. Need-creation had become the task of advertising, and Hollingworth recommended any tactic that would better touch the pocketbook of the consumer.<sup>32</sup>

An advertiser, Paul T. Cherington, writing in 1913, used the war-model to talk of advertising even more than had Hollingworth in his discussion of tactics. Cherington saw "advertising as a business force." He advised the advertiser to plan his "attacks" with the consumer's "defenses" in mind so that the "consumer, as an individual or as a class, may be led, stimulated, diverted, directed or otherwise influenced in buying." Cherington's use of the language of this ultimate symbol of man-made power revealed his belief in advertising's potential for control while making the statement of it unnecessary. For advertiser Lee Galloway, writing in the same year, advertising supported the expansive nature of modern industrial society. Admitting advertising had come into existence because of industrialism, nevertheless, it had become the impetus to industrial progress. "It is very evident," Galloway asserted,

that the art of advertising grew out of an industrial condition which made it necessary to announce to the consumer that products in abundance were for sale. It is also a conspicuous fact that advertising in turn became the means whereby new wants were created and old desires quickened to such a degree that both production and consumption were stimulated and industrial progress was promoted.<sup>33</sup>

Indeed, by the 1930's, it was clear to the editors of *Printer's Ink* that the "development [around 1900] of new effectiveness in the advertising message, which departed radically from previous concepts and produced greater results," had helped make advertising necessary to marketing.<sup>34</sup> Certainly by the depression decade, scores of studies supported advertising's ability to affect brand purchases, and thus a company's share of the existing market.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the best proof of the new advertising's greater effectiveness and range was that by the 1920's it had won almost universal acceptance over the reportorial style. Edward L. Bernays, often called the founder of public relations, emerged in the 1920's as one of the most influential propagandists for the science of propaganda. His ideas about propaganda, or public relations, closely reflected the new advertising theory. In his 1928 volume, *Propaganda*, Bernays relied heavily on psychology to teach others how to manipulate public behavior. Though he wrote

mainly of group psychology his ideas closely followed those which advertising held of the individual. "The group mind," Bernays asserted, "does not *think* in the strict sense of the word. In place of thoughts it has impulses, habits and emotions." If a man bought a motor car in the belief that he had chosen on the basis of a technical and mechanical comparison between his choice and the other makes, he was "almost certainly fooling himself." Although Bernays erroneously cited his uncle, Sigmund Freud, as the source of advertising's appeal to repressed desires in man, he rightly ascribed to advertising the practice of selling a product as a symbol of something else. Because the same general principles lay at the basis of mass and individual psychology, he advised the propagandist to study human desires since they "are the steam which makes the social machine work." Advertisers, because of the manufacturer's increased ability to supply goods, must create a demand correspondingly great. "To make customers is the new problem," Bernays insisted, and to do so required an understanding of the "structure, the personality, the prejudices, of a potentially universal public."<sup>36</sup>

Bernays played an important role in spreading the new techniques of social control throughout the business world of the 1920's. Yet he suffered from founder's enthusiasm when he imagined himself plowing virgin land. Rather, he had become one more member of an increasingly vast group marriage. The partnership of advertising and psychology to better control the consuming habits of Americans certainly became more formal when the International Advertising Association created a social science research program in 1927. The real consummation of the union, however, had come with the founding of the *Journal of Applied Psychology* in 1917 and the Psychological Corporation in 1921 under the leadership of the distinguished psychologist, J. McKean Cattell. Scott had formed a similar corporation several years earlier, but Cattell's organization, based on the contributions of many leading psychologists, proved the more enduring.

Most tenacious, however, was the relationship between psychology and advertising, a fact best explained by the strengthening of the conditions which had introduced them. Corporate capitalism was firmly entrenched by World War I and men such as Münsterberg and Watson pulled the discipline of psychology into behaviorism, a school of psychology more specific about its desire to predict and control. A growing number of academics rushed to serve the political-economic machinery of American society and advertising expenditures doubled in the 1910's. In the coming years, these trends, plus the popularization of Freud in America after the war, were to refine further the new advertising theory. Already in 1920, however, advertising theorists had developed the basis of a science with the capacity to create consumer needs and associate existing needs with intangible desires. Americans could at last purchase cereal

which filled young stomachs while making better mothers and mouth-washes which cured halitosis while making better lovers.

The Franklin Institute

## footnotes

1. Quoted in Frank Presbrey, *The History and Development of Advertising* (New York, 1929), 312.

2. Merle Curti describes the "Changing Concept of 'Human Nature' in the Literature of American Advertising" (1890-1955), *Business History Review*, XLI, 4 (Winter, 1967), 335-357. Relying almost completely on advertising's leading trade journal, *Printer's Ink*, he related the shift from advertising as "information" to the dominant modern mode of "manipulation." Because of his heavy reliance on *Printer's Ink*, Curti missed the importance of the new psychology of the new advertising theory and psychologists' early and aggressive interest in advertising (345, 349). As he admitted, "many writers for *Printer's Ink*, including its editors, continued to belittle the use of psychology until at least the late 1920's" (348).

3. P. H. Erbes, Jr., ed., *Printer's Ink: Fifty Years, 1888-1938* (New York, 1938), 47, 72-73; Presbrey, *History . . . of Advertising*, 303.

4. An increasing number of historians of Progressivism are discussing the social control aspects of the period. Perhaps the best overview of the bureaucratic values emergent in the era which urged continuous management and social control is Robert Wiebe's *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York, 1967), especially Chapter Six on "The Revolution in Values." See also Stow Persons, *American Minds: A History of Ideas* (New York, 1958), 431-439; Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence (1912-1917)*, (New York, 1959), 154-158; John C. Burnham, "Psychiatry, Psychology, and the Progressive Movement," *American Quarterly*, XII, 4 (Winter, 1960), 457-465; Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York, 1963), 359-390, on John Dewey and Progressivism in education; and Christopher Lasch, *The New Radicalism in America, 1889-1963* (New York, 1965), *passim*.

5. Edward A. Ross, "The System of Social Control," *American Journal of Sociology*, III, 6 (May, 1898), 819-821.

6. For the close relation between business goals and major Progressive political reforms, see Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism (1900-1916)*, (New York, 1963), and James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston, 1968). See Loren Baritz, *The Servants of Power: A History of the Use of Social Sciences in American Industry* (Middletown, Conn., 1960) for industry's use of social science to manage workers, and Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism*, on education.

7. By "new American" I refer to the tendency of Americans to define themselves in terms of external, material possessions. As C. B. McPherson has shown in *The Theory of Possessive Individualism* (Oxford, 1962), liberal individualism included from its inception the idea of possessiveness. Even so, the concrete expression of possessive individualism in America heightened and became more pronounced in the Progressive life-style and mentality. The most lucid general discussions of the nature of the new American can be found in David Riesman, *et al.*, *The Lonely Crowd* (abridged ed., New York, 1953); Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964); and Allen Wheelis, *The Quest for Identity* (New York, 1958).

8. Erbes, *Printer's Ink: Fifty Years*, 12-14.

9. *Ibid.*, 15-16.

10. George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York, 1920), 156-165.

11. The discussion of economic factors comes largely from Otis Pease, *The Responsibilities of American Advertising: Private Control and Public Influence, 1920-1940* (New Haven, 1958), 13, and Ross M. Robertson, *History of the American Economy*, 2d ed. (New York, 1964), 593-594.

12. As implied in Footnote 7, advertising did not invent the attitudes underlying the Good Life; it reinforced them. Anthropologist Jules Henry describes the cultural function of modern advertising in *Culture Against Man* (New York, 1963), 45. "Advertising is an expression of an irrational economy that has depended for survival on a fantastically high standard of living incorporated into the American mind as a moral imperative. Yet a moral imperative cannot of itself give direction; there must be some institution or agency to constantly direct and redirect the mind and emotions to it. This function is served . . . by advertising."

13. Oscar Herzberg, "Human Nature as a Factor in Advertising," *Printer's Ink*, XIII (October 2, 1895), 4; Presbrey, *History . . . of Advertising*, 441-442.

14. Walter Dill Scott, "The Psychology of Advertising," *The Atlantic Monthly*, XCIII, 555 (January, 1904), 31-32. Italics mine.

15. In contrast, see Harlow Gale, "On the Psychology of Advertising," *Psychological Studies*, No. 1 (Minneapolis, Minn., 1900), 69. Gale, a University of Minnesota psychologist, tended to defend the factual, reason-why copy of the Powers' school.

16. Erbes, *Printer's Ink: Fifty Years*, 146; Presbrey, *History . . . of Advertising*, 443.
17. James, *Psychology: Briefer Version* (New York, 1892), 264-267; Scott, *The Psychology of Advertising* (Boston, 1921), 90-92. Scott reprinted the chapter on association from his 1903 book. For James, see the excellent chapter in Paul F. Boller, Jr., *American Thought in Transition: The Impact of Evolutionary Naturalism, 1865-1900* (Chicago, 1969), 123-147. Professor Boller argues that James intended his pragmatic, humanistic psychology "to help make life . . . happier and more livable for people" and to promote freedom; James rejected America's "squalid cash interpretation" of life.
18. David Shakow and David Rapaport, *The Influence of Freud on American Psychology* (New York, 1964), 36-38. See also W. M. O'Neil, *The Beginnings of Modern Psychology* (Baltimore, 1968), 17, 90-94; and, besides James' works, J. R. Angell, "The Province of Functional Psychology," *Psychological Review*, XIV (1907), 61-91, especially 62, 85. Scott, *Psychology of Advertising*, 34, 36.
19. *The Theory and Practice of Advertising* (Boston, 1903) and *The Psychology of Advertising in Theory and Practice* (Boston, 1908, 1910) were combined under the latter title (Boston, 1921). The 1921 volume also contained the copyright dates of 1902-1903 (the first book originally appeared in serial form), 1908, and 1910. For more on Scott see Edmund C. Lynch, "Walter Dill Scott: Pioneer Industrial Psychologist," *Business History Review*, XLII, 2 (Summer, 1968), 149-170.
20. Ernest Elmo Calkins and Ralph Holden, *Modern Advertising* (New York, 1905), 144.
21. *Ibid.*, 320.
22. William A. Shryer, *Analytical Advertising* (Detroit, 1912), 47. For a modern counterpart see Pierre Martineau, *Motivation in Advertising: Motives That Make People Buy* (Chicago, 1957).
23. Shryer, *Analytical Advertising*, 68-69.
24. *Ibid.*, 73.
25. Harry L. Hollingworth, *Advertising and Selling: Principles of Appeal and Response* (New York, 1913), 259 ff.
26. *Ibid.*, 243.
27. Henry Foster Adams, *Advertising and Its Mental Laws* (New York, 1916), 197.
28. *Ibid.*, 312.
29. Hugo Muensterberg, "Psychology and the Market," *McClure's Magazine*, XXXIV (November, 1909), 88-90. See Baritz, *Servants of Power*, 35-38, on Muensterberg's work in industrial psychology from 1910. Muensterberg had been at Harvard University in the early 1890's but had returned to Europe. He came back to Harvard in 1897 only after continuous urging by Harvard's president Charles W. Eliot and William James.
30. John B. Watson, *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (New York, 1914), 11-13.
31. Calkins and Holden, *Modern Advertising*, 4.
32. Hollingworth, *Advertising and Selling*, 213-215.
33. Paul Terry Cherington, *Advertising as a Business Force* (Garden City, N.Y., 1925 [c1913]), 94; Lee Galloway, "Advertising," Part 1, *Advertising and Correspondence* (New York, 1913), 2.
34. Erbes, *Printer's Ink: Fifty Years*, 142.
35. Literature on the economic effects of advertising is vast. Daniel Starch, *Measuring Advertising Readership and Results* (New York, 1966), who has worked in the area since hearing Scott speak in 1909, convincingly demonstrates advertising's ability to increase sales. Economist Julian L. Simon, *Issues in the Economics of Advertising* (Champaign-Urbana, Ill., 1970), concludes: "It is clear that advertising can affect consumer's choices among brands. . . . But this may not mean a net effect on consumer demand," 206. He argues that the "standard of living" is probably a more important determinant of increased aggregate consumption, yet concedes that, in spite of the difficulty of measuring it, advertising could "affect the long-run propensity to consume by affecting tastes just as education affects tastes," 205.
36. Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York, 1928), 50-52, 63. David M. Potter, *People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character* (Chicago, 1954), 7, confirms the optimism of the early advertising theorists. He ranks advertising with education and religion as a significant institution of social control, for "advertising modifies the course of a people's daily thoughts, gives them new words and phrases, new ideas, new fashions, new prejudices and new customs."