

Priming the Pump: “Educating” for Market Democracy

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By a show of hands, how many of you like candy, you know, World's Finest[®] Milk Chocolate with almonds or the delicious Mint Meltaways[®] that everybody knows and loves? Many of you have raised your hands. This is absolutely great.

How many of you like cars, especially limousines with lunch in the back with your favorite person? Now, some of you aren't raising your hands. But I know something that absolutely everybody wants and that's money: cold, hard cash....

The preceding is an introduction similar to the one presented in the corporate-sponsored (OSP, Inc., a subsidiary of *Reader's Digest*) fund-raiser put on at my daughter's middle school. This presentation was designed to entice an assembly of sixth and seventh graders to help generate much needed cash for “economically strapped [insert name here] Middle School and to make [insert name here] Middle School the best darn school in Orange County, Florida.”

If you want to be a part of something exciting and good, the perpetrators of this introduction went on, if you want to help your school and community, then stand up and show that you are willing to take part in this wonderful opportunity. Come on, stand up! Some of you aren't standing. Look around at your friends. Come on, get them on their feet and make them a part of this fantastic opportunity.

The presentation went on to suggest that the selling and consuming of candy, wrapping paper, stationery, Christmas candles, and various other

overpriced trinket items are the essence of good community life. Therefore, the latter portion of the corporate "spiel" included a crash course aimed at schooling these children on how to be good public servants armed with the proper smile and techniques necessary to sell The Good Life®.

The commercialization of public schools concerns me as a parent who has kids in public schools that are becoming saturated with corporate advertising and commercialism. Furthermore, as a philosopher of education, I am concerned about what the unquestioned faith in corporate-school partnerships portend for the idea of a democratic education. Let me explain what I mean.

I teach a graduate course in the history and philosophy of American education framed around the ongoing problem of defining and securing "democratic justice"—the struggle over the meaning of "freedom" and "equality" in education. In this course, we go through the history of American education in order to get a more concrete sense of what the struggles over these concepts have been in the past and to understand what forms these struggles currently take.

A recurring task that I face while teaching this course is helping students understand the idea that there is no such thing as freedom in general but rather freedom or capacity (power) to do specific things within a given context or set of circumstances. Furthermore, they struggle to see that individuals do not always mean the same thing when they use terms appealing to a common social good. "Democracy," "freedom," and "equality" have been—and are—used to cover over all sorts of hegemonic relations and debilitating social arrangements. Perhaps the most difficult problem that I face teaching this course is leading students to recognize the possibility that public schools have been used and are used as a means to train obedient and uncritically minded workers who, unwittingly, are eager to serve as fodder for predatory capitalism. The difficulty does not stem from the students' inability to understand the causal relation expressed in the idea. They are quick to see that schools *can be* used as a means to quell critical analysis of social practices and, thus, to foster worldviews beneficial to the workings of the powerful. The difficulty stems from their immediate refusal to see that schools *are* used in this way. They are fast to point out that schools are used to indoctrinate and manipulate in communist countries such as Cuba and China but, the students hastily contend, schools are not used for such purposes in a democracy such as the United States. My attempt to confront their refusal with concrete examples, drawn from the ever-encroaching commercialization in schools and business-school partnerships, so as to suggest that corporations are using schools as a means to foster an unquestioning faith in the inherent benevolence of corporate America often is met with further resistance and scorn. To my students, any suggestion that business-school partnerships are in any sense forms of corporate exploitation, especially in a time when schools are so economically

"strapped" as they are now, amounts to reckless cynicism and social irresponsibility.

Recurrent classroom discussions with my philosophy of education students about these matters give further evidence to the often heard complaint (expressed by philosopher John Dewey as early as 1922 in the brief article "Education as Politics") that public schools leave students ripe to be gulled by any and every form of socio-political bunk:

Our schooling does not educate, if by education be meant a trained habit of discriminating inquiry and discriminating belief, the ability to look beneath a floating surface to detect the conditions that fix the contour of the surface, and the forces which create its waves and drifts.... This fact determines the fundamental criticism to be leveled against current schooling, against what passes as an educational system. It not only does little to make discriminating intelligence a safeguard against surrender to the invasion of bunk, especially in its most dangerous form—social and political bunk—but it does much to favor susceptibility to a welcoming reception of it. There appear to be two chief causes for this ineptitude. One is the persistence, in the body of what is taught, of traditional material which ... affords no resource for discriminating insight, no protection against being duped in facing the emergencies of today.... The other way in which schooling fosters an indiscriminating gulping mental habit, eager to be duped, is positive. It consists in a systematic, almost deliberate, avoidance of the spirit of criticism in dealing with history, politics, and economics. There is an implicit belief that this avoidance is the only way by which to produce good citizens. The more indiscriminating the history and institutions of one's own nation are idealized, the greater is the likelihood, so it is assumed, that the school product will be a loyal patriot, a well-equipped good citizen. If the average boy and girl could be walled off from all ideas and information about social affairs save those acquired in school, they would enter upon the responsibilities of social membership in complete ignorance that there are any social problems, any political evils, any industrial defects. They would go forth with the supreme confidence that the way lies open to all, and that the sole cause of failure in business, family life or citizenship lies in some personal deficiency in character.... The effect is to send students out into actual life in a condition of acquired and artificial innocence. Such perceptions as they may have of the realities of social struggles and problems they have derived incidentally, by the way, and without the safeguards of intelligent acquaintance with facts and impartially conducted discussion. It is no wonder that they are ripe to be gulled, or that their attitude is one which merely perpetuates existing confusion, ignorance, prejudice, and credulity. Reaction from this impossible naïve idealization of institutions as they are produces indifference and cynicism.¹

¹John Dewey, "Education as Politics," *John Dewey, The Middle Works, 1899-1924*, vol. 13, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 331-333.

The systematic avoidance of the spirit of criticism in the public schools not only keeps students ignorant that gross socioeconomic and political inequalities exist in their world but prevents them from developing the critical abilities to identify and evaluate the ideological justifications for such inequalities. In turn, schools deprive students of any real opportunity to define and struggle with their social responsibilities in these matters. As Dewey suggests, by fostering an indiscriminating gulping mental habit in students, schools produce citizens with a crippling artificial innocence about the social institutions that define them and an outright hostility toward individuals who call attention to the detrimental consequences associated with these institutions.

Insofar as Dewey's assessment of public education hits the mark and continues to be relevant, and if his assessment of schools is coupled with the fact of increasing corporate marketing in schools, then the suspicion is warranted that the conditions are ripe for schools to serve as means to produce a consuming, materialistic, product-oriented consciousness in students, whose bodies serve as hosts in which parasitic corporate greed infinitely may infest, feed, and multiply. Thus, in light of Dewey's criticism of twentieth century education, this paper will draw upon John Dewey's idea of social habit and his analysis of economic individualism as the philosophical underpinning of a capitalist democracy in order to suggest that public education primes students with the belief that the ability to consume is *the* mode and measure of participatory democracy.

SOCIAL HABIT

John Dewey's entire philosophy is predicated upon the fact that the human being, fundamentally a creature of habit, is thoroughly saturated by its environment, which is always social. Throughout his professional career, Dewey maintained that the acquisition of habit is the means by which the individual gains a more sensitive and controlled interaction with his or her environment. Put in the psycho-physiological terms Dewey would have used, habit amounts to the tendency to conduct nervous energy along a previously formed sensorimotor channel for the fullest coordination possible at the least cost. By virtue of acquiring habit, the individual comes to develop, widen, and enhance the significance of his or her interest in the world. In a word, habit means growth in one direction or another. This growth, however, can continue only by securing its proper conditions, which always includes attention to the specific needs, desires, expectations, and activities of other human beings. As Dewey pointed out, the inherent social nature of the individual constitutes a fundamental fact of existence:

Since habits involve the support of environing conditions, a society, or some specific group of fellow-men, is always accessory before and after the fact.

Some activity proceeds from a man; then it sets up reactions in the surroundings. Others approve, disapprove, protest, encourage, share and resist. Even letting a man alone is a definite response. Envy, admiration, and imitation are complicities. Neutrality is non-existent. Conduct is always shared; this is the difference between it and a physiological process. It is not an ethical "ought" that conduct should be shared. It is social, whether bad or good.²

As Dewey maintained, the inherent social nature of the individual suggests that every one of the individual's habits is nourished and cultivated by means of association with others. The lives of others stimulate impulse and stoke emotion. Their occupations furnish purpose and sharpen skill. Their expressions conspire in memory, fuel imagination, and haunt plans. In other words, the joys and sufferings of others are metabolized into the very fiber of the individual's conduct:

A being whose activities are associated with others has a social environment. What he does and what he can do depend upon the expectations, demands, and condemnations of others. A being connected with other human beings cannot perform his own activities without taking the activities of others into account. For they are indispensable conditions of the realization of his tendencies. When he moves, he stirs them and reciprocally.³

As indicated in the preceding quotation, Dewey well understood the mechanism of habit to be the basis for the psychological and social development of moral conduct.⁴ He maintained that habit consists of a train of associated impulses, accumulated and modified over time according to the quality of consequences produced in the social environment and retained by the individual. The stimulation of one impulse calls up the train of others such that those called up check, inhibit, direct, and stimulate its further expression. That is, the associated impulses give social relation and significance to the inducing impulse: They serve as the standard for its measurement (the right) and constitute its good. Again, as Dewey puts it, "In this aspect, they are the law, the controlling power of that impulse. They determine in what form, under what conditions of time, place and quality, it may be satisfied. Thus they determine or measure its value."⁵

² John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 16.

³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to The Philosophy of Education* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916/1950), 14.

⁴ See for example *Ethics, The Later Works*, vol. 7; *Human Nature and Conduct; The Study of Ethics: A Syllabus* (1894), *John Dewey: The Early Works, 1882-1898*, vol. 4, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971).

⁵ Dewey, *The Study of Ethics, The Early Works*, vol. 4, 248. Dewey most thoroughly explains the psychological basis of moral conduct in *The Study of Ethics*: "Psychologically, the mediation of impulse (a) idealizes the impulse, gives it its value, its significance or place in the whole system of action, and (b) controls, or directs it. The fundamental ethical categories result from this distinction. The worth of an impulse is, psychologically, the whole set of (continued)

The upshot of this discussion so far has been to underscore the simple point that the social environment affects the growth of the individual and the individual affects the social environment, all for better or worse. Therefore, it is an ontological fact that individuals may affect patterns of thought and desire by way of affecting shared conditions and practices. As Dewey pointed out, "Social institutions, the trend of occupations, the pattern of social arrangements, are the finally controlling influences in shaping minds."⁶ Now, in what sense does economic individualism serve as the philosophical underpinning of capitalist democracy and in what sense may it be said that schools provide the means by which this underpinning insidiously infects the consciousness of students?

ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM AS THE PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNING OF CAPITALIST DEMOCRACY

Throughout his political works, Dewey suggested that the same forces that have made democratic forms of self-government possible also have served as the means by which laissez-faire capitalism flourishes. In *Liberalism and Social Action*, Dewey argues that whereas the concern about the essence of and proper relation between the individual, freedom, and the universal may be traced back to Greek thought, the modern formulation of this relation developed out of the empiricist-rationalist traditions, particularly out of the work of John Locke.⁷ Since the early Enlightenment, philosophers had been strug-

⁶ (continued) experiences which, presumably (that is, upon the best judgment available) it will call into being. This, ethically, constitutes the goodness (or badness) of the impulse—the satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) which it carries. But the thought of the consequences which will follow, their conscious return back into the impulse, modify it—check it, increase it, alter it. . . . In this modification, through reaction of anticipated experiences, we have the basis of what, ethically, we term obligation—the necessity of modifying any particular expression of impulse by the whole system of which it is one part" (pp. 238–239).

⁷ John Dewey, *Individualism, Old and New* (1929), *John Dewey, The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 5, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984): p. 102. The evidence that Dewey was aware of and understood the need to combat powerful influences shaping social institutions is clear and prevalent. For example, Dewey writes, "It is indeed necessary to have freedom of thought and expression. But just because this is necessary for the health and progress of society, it is even more necessary that ideas should be genuine ideas, not sham ones, the fruit of inquiry, of observation and experimentation, the collection and weighing of evidence. The formation of the attitudes which move steadily in this direction is the work and responsibility of the school more than any other single institution. Routine and formal instruction, undemocratic administration of schools, is perhaps the surest way of creating a human product that submits readily to external authority, whether that be imposed by force or by custom and tradition, or by the various forms of social pressure which the existing economic system produces" ("Freedom," *John Dewey, The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 11, edited by Jo Ann Boydston [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987], 253–254).

⁸ John Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action, The Later Works*, vol. 11, 6–9. For Dewey's understanding of the philosophical and historical development of democratic forms of self-government in relation to the development of laissez faire capitalism, see all of *Liberalism and Social Action*; *Freedom and Culture* (1939), *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925–1953*, vol. 13, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 136–155; *The Public and Its Problems*, 75–109; and "The Future of Liberalism," *The Later Works*, vol. 11, 289–295.

gling to establish the idea that human beings are held together both physically and spiritually by constant laws permeating the universe. Philosophers from both the empiricist and rationalist traditions argued that all individuals have the capacity to sense and understand the laws of nature for themselves. Through test, intelligence, and effort, individuals could induce the constant truths of the universe and therefore enlighten themselves. This self-enlightenment, in turn, would lead to a freer and more just society, a society in which individuals forge a self-government in keeping with universal law. According to Dewey, by the late 1600s, Locke had worked out a set of moral and political implications from these metaphysical and epistemological tenets.

Locke maintained, according to Dewey, that all individuals have a right to seek and understand the universal laws for themselves, a right not bestowed upon them by any social organization but granted to them by nature itself. Furthermore, Locke suggested that it is a duty for individuals to conduct themselves according to their own understanding of the natural laws and, in turn, to forge a contract of collective regulation with others as they come to understand the natural laws for themselves. This duty rests upon the belief that the individual is the best judge not only of his or her own interests but of the best means necessary to bring these interests to fruition. According to the natural abilities and diligence of the individual in discovering his or her interests, the resulting industry and effort of the individual (the part) would contribute to the social good (the whole). Therefore, Locke argued, the individual must remain free of physical and intellectual coercion of all kinds, including binding tradition and corrupt authority, in order to help realize a better society and thus a more complete universe. Government, then, would not be an imposed or coerced arrangement but a contract of mutual consent entered into by the aggregate of individuals who are assumed to be free and clear about their personal interests beforehand. According to Dewey, democracy, both as a way of living together and as a form of self-government, grew out of the faith in the dignity and natural right of all individuals to realize freely the truths of the universe for themselves.

As Dewey points out, however, it followed from the tenet of the free individual that the human being has a natural right to the fruits of its labor, that is, a natural right to acquire property and profit. Without this right legally secured, the individual would be discouraged to exert energy toward an end that could be taken away, and, thus, social progress, which depends on the individual's industry, would suffer. Therefore, the natural right to own property required full protection from infringement and seizure. Because the tenet of the free individual entailed the dignity to determine one's own interest, any contractual relationship that the individual entered into was assumed to be done out of free choice and with the responsibility for understanding the conditions and consequences of such arrangements. Thus, contracts between individuals necessitated enforcement because they are a means to secure private property. The function of

self-government, therefore, was to ensure that individuals remain free and nonobstructed in pursuit of their own interest:

Economic "laws," that of labor springing from natural wants and leading to the creation of wealth, of present abstinence in behalf of future enjoyment leading to creation of capital effective in piling up still more wealth, the free play of competitive exchange, designated the law of supply and demand, were "natural" laws. They were set in opposition to political laws as artificial, man-made affairs. The inherited tradition which remained least questioned was a conception of Nature which made Nature something to conjure with. The older metaphysical conception of Natural Law was, however, changed into an economic conception; laws of nature, implanted in human nature, regulated the production and exchange of goods and services, and in such a way that when they were kept free from artificial, that is political, meddling, they resulted in the maximum possible social prosperity and progress.... The economic theory of laissez-faire, based upon belief in beneficent natural laws which brought about harmony of personal profit and social benefit, was readily fused with the doctrine of natural rights.... Each person naturally seeks the betterment of his own lot. This can be attained only by industry. Each person is naturally the best judge of his own interests, and if left free from the influence of artificially imposed restrictions, will express his judgment in his choice of work and exchange of services and goods. Thus, barring accident, he will contribute to his own happiness in the measure of his energy in work, his shrewdness in exchange and his self-denying thrift. Wealth and security are the natural rewards of economic virtues.... Under the invisible hand of a beneficent providence which has framed natural laws, work, capital and trade operate harmoniously to the advantage and advance of men collectively and individually. The foe to be dreaded is interference of government. Political regulation is needed only because individuals accidentally and purposely—since the possession of property by the industrious and able is a temptation to the idle and shiftless—encroach upon one another's activities and properties. This encroachment is the essence of injustice, and the function of government is to secure justice—which signifies chiefly the protection of property and of contracts which attend commercial exchange.⁸

According to Dewey, what the Enlightenment philosophers offered to early capitalist arrangements was a gritty account of man and matter and a reasoned excuse for the accumulation of private property as a natural inclination, right, and duty.⁹ Dewey maintains that insofar as individual liberty and social progress were interpreted and identified strictly with the growth of economic liberty, as opposed to social and political liberty, then the Enlightenment

⁸Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 90–92.

⁹Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, *The Later Works*, vol. 11, 5–22; *Ethics*, *The Later Works*, vol. 7, 331–339. In "Authority and Social Change," Dewey writes, "The new economic forces also claimed the right to supreme authority on the ground that they were pure and literal expressions of natural law—in contradistinction to political laws and institutions which, in so far as they did not conform to the play of economic forces, were artificial and man-made. Economic forces, through their representatives, interpreters and agents—the official economists and industrialists—claimed the divine prerogative to reign supreme over all human terrestrial affairs. The economist and industrialist and financier were the new pretenders to the old divine right of kings" (*The Later Works*, vol. 11, 135).

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principle of individual freedom sanctified the relations of capitalism such that its end became a shared moral compulsion. As Dewey suggests in *Ethics*, this compulsion rests upon "the notion that individuals left free to pursue their own advantage in industry and trade will not only best further their own private interests but will also best promote social progress and contribute most effectively to the satisfaction of the needs of others and hence to the general happiness."¹⁰ According to Dewey, the social claim was and is made that the relations of capitalism rest upon the natural right to industry and profit and that this natural right is essential to the objective realization of the universal law and social good. This claim entails the idea that the objective realization of the universal law directly depends on the degree to which individuals bring their intelligence, industry, thrift, and tenacity to bear. Because the realization of the universal law is not complete as of yet, the only true measure of its present realization is in terms of the resources or wealth generated by industry and thrift. Therefore, the production and accumulation of wealth is claimed as a moral duty commanded by universal law.¹¹

As Dewey suggests in *Liberalism and Social Action*, "When it became evident that disparity, not equality, was the actual consequence of laissez faire liberalism, defenders of the latter developed a double system of justifying apologetics" (p. 37). Dewey points out that appeal to the natural inequalities of individuals is used not only to account for the existence of exorbitant wealth along side heaping poverty but to justify this disparity as the fair workings of nature. That is, because it is a fact that individuals manifest various degrees of intellectual and physical abilities, the differences between wealth and poverty are claimed to be direct results of the differences in these natural abilities. As the argument runs, the laws of conflict and struggle inherent in nature expose those with the superior balance of intelligence and strength, who naturally emerge as the public stewards for those who are less able. Thus, the differences in social and political power are justified as natural.

Dewey suggests that to complete this justification, an appeal is made that the realization of a larger social good lies within each individual's capacity to be more self-reliant, judicious, industrious, and intelligent.¹² The appeal co-

¹⁰ Dewey, *Ethics*, *The Later Works*, vol. 7, 331.

¹¹ See *Ethics*, *The Later Works*, vol. 7, 331-333; *The Public and Its Problems*, 90-92.

¹² Dewey, *Liberalism and Social Action*, *The Later Works*, vol. 11, 29-30. As Dewey was well aware, "Even when words remain the same, they mean something very different when they are uttered by a minority struggling against repressive measures, and when expressed by a group that has attained power and then uses ideas that were once weapons of emancipation as instruments for keeping the power and wealth they have obtained. Ideas that at one time are means of producing social change have not the same meaning when they are used as means of preventing social change. This fact is itself an illustration of historic relativity, and an evidence of the evil that lay in the assertion ... of the immutable and eternal character of their ideas. Because of this latter fact, the laissez faire doctrine was held ... to express the very order of nature itself. The outcome was the degradation of the idea of individuality until in the minds of many who are themselves struggling for a wider and fuller development of individuality, individualism has become a term of hissing and reproach, while many can see no remedy for the evils that have come from the use of socially unrestrained liberty in business enterprise, save changes produced by violence" ("The Future of Liberalism," *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 11, 291).

mes with the promise that exhibiting and intensifying these virtues will create the opportunity for personal and social improvement. In keeping with the atomistic tenets of the Enlightenment philosophy, the appeal entails the assumption that all individuals, regardless of circumstance, are equally free to judge, choose, and execute what is in their best interests, insofar as their interests are consistent with the universal law. For example, as Dewey describes the matter, "In legal theory, the individual who has a starving family to support is equal in making a bargain about hours and conditions of labor and wages, with an employer who has large accumulated wealth to fall back on, and who finds that many other workers near the subsistence line are clamoring for an opportunity to earn something with which to support their families."¹³ The outcome or degree of success, however, is claimed to be directly dependent on natural capacities and effort. As Dewey points out, the appeal entails extortion through fear. Those entrenched with great economic power make the claim that any disturbance of existing economic conditions will undermine both the just order of nature and the further realization of personal welfare and the public good:

Their use of power to maintain their own interests is met, from the other side, by widespread fear of any disturbance, lest it be for the worse. This fear of any change is greatly enhanced by the complexity of the existing social scheme, where a change at one point may spread in unforeseen ways and perhaps put all established values in peril. Thus an active and powerful self-interest in maintaining the status quo conspires with dread ... to identify loyal citizenship with mental acquiescence in and blind laudation of things as they are.¹⁴

To state it simply, Dewey acknowledged the threat of overt force and implicit coercion as forms of power over others. In various places, he suggested that the interpretation and justification of the atomistic individual as the backbone of democratic liberty provides the sanction for governmental force against striking workers who supposedly violate their employment contracts, interfere with the capitalist claims to profit, and hence impede the so-called social good. He also understood that the ability to administer rewards and punishments in consequence of actions in support and protest of

¹³Dewey, *Ethics*, *The Later Works*, vol. 7, 335.

¹⁴Dewey, *Ethics*, *The Later Works*, vol. 7, 360. See also *Liberalism and Social Action*, *The Later Works*, vol. 11, 43–47. Although in somewhat different terms, Dewey, in *Individualism, Old and New*, suggests that the coercive power of capitalism lies in the threat that failure to support existing economic relations will jeopardize social progress. "Speeded-up mass production demands increased buying. It is promoted by advertising on a vast scale, by installment selling, by agents skilled in breaking down sales resistance. Hence buying becomes an economic 'duty' which is as consonant with the present epoch as thrift was with the period of individualism. For the industrial mechanism depends upon maintaining some kind of an equilibrium between production and consumption. If the equilibrium is disturbed, the whole social structure is affected and prosperity ceases to have a meaning" (*The Later Works*, vol. 5, 62).

capitalist relations enable those invested with great economic power to command attention to their demands as social claims of right. Dewey's recognition of physical threat and implicit coercion as means to command attention, coupled with his understanding of the influence of the social environment on the development of impulse and habit, suggests that power can be as productively oppressive as it can be suppressively oppressive. Now, how do schools serve as means by which to produce individuals motivated by values conducive to corporate profit?

Insofar as corporations weave their way into the schools ostensibly to serve as dutiful citizens doing their part to save an economically ailing public good, then corporations gain access to a captive and highly impressionable public. By means of deception, promise of reward, and implicit coercion (all embodied in corporate advertisements on school walls, in corporate-sponsored curriculum materials and programs, and through corporate-sponsored fund-raisers and contests), corporations come to influence the particular conditions that feed shared habits and therefore, in various degrees, command impulse, need, want, and desire. Insofar as the ends and means serving corporate interest—profit—become a—if not the—mediating law of shared habit, then this end becomes the standard of measurement regulating all associated impulses and emotions, working to inhibit, stimulate, or reinforce their expression. In this sense, corporations use schools (particularly if the leaders of which uncritically accept business-school partnerships as the touted “win-win” solution to their economic woes) as conduits by which to establish consumption as the ultimate expression of participatory democracy.

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