

MARKETING FOR HUMAN NEEDS IN A HUMANE FUTURE

New marketing paradigms must be indispensable to a humane future in which quality is as important as quantity, people are not regarded just as consumers, and more is not necessarily better.

LESLIE M. DAWSON

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Albert Einstein once remarked, "It was as if the ground had been pulled out from under one, with no firm foundation to be seen anywhere, upon which one could have been built."¹ The renowned scientist was describing his emotional state at the moment it became apparent that his theory of relativity would force reexamination of the most fundamental concepts of physics.

Marketing professionals—business managers and academicians alike—are not apt to remain on a firm foundation very much longer, either. None of the other functional

1. Albert Einstein, "Autobiographical Note," in *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, P. A. Schilpp, ed. (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1949): 45.

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areas of business comes close to matching marketing as a target of criticism and source of controversy. The new breed of "radical economist" singles out marketing as the area of business that "must go," blaming it for most of the wastes, misplaced priorities, and excesses decried in our system.² Even marketers themselves recognize the shaky base on which their discipline rests. Two recent articles by marketing professionals contained these statements:

"To much of the non-marketing world, the marketing system is the most obvious symbol of America's social, economic, and political malaise, including a highly-skewed distribution of personal income and wealth, an increasing concentration of business, and a solidifying class structure."³

"But sadly, we are still humans, full of

2. See, for example, Michael Sherman, *Radical Political Economy* (New York: Basic Books, 1972).

3. David Carson, "Gotterdammering for Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 42 (July 1978): 15.

messy greeds and aggressions. Marketing, without really realizing it, drifted right into the middle of this problem. Marketing essentially deals with greed and selfishness and base human desires.”⁴

No thoughtful marketer can really believe that it will be business as usual for marketing in the years to come. “More is better” solutions are simply less and less acceptable in a world animated by changing values and harsh reminders of growth limits. The question is not *whether* marketing will change, but *how*. As the marketing profession leaves level ground, is it to begin a spiral downward or upward in terms of its role in the affairs of mankind?

It is my contention that the answer rests squarely with marketers themselves. The marketing profession *could* be endowed with an incredibly rich future; but only if the traditional paradigms of marketing are replaced by a radically new framework of thought concerning the nature and role of marketing in society.

PRESENT-DAY PARADIGMS

Whether or not marketing deserves to be labeled a science, marketers have certainly practiced the scientific method. Marketers have sought to develop theories, laws, and generalizations and to combine them into paradigms, or patterns. By this time there exists in marketing a well-developed central paradigm system—a framework of beliefs about marketing recounted in textbooks, taught in universities, and endorsed throughout the mainstream of business. The essence of marketing’s paradigm system is reflected in the following definitions, explanations, and statements gleaned from a representative sampling of contemporary books and articles:

4. Richard N. Farmer, “Would You Want Your Son to Marry a Marketing Lady?” *Journal of Marketing*, 41 (January 1977): 18.

Marketing is the creation and delivery of a standard of living to society.

The essence of marketing is a transaction—an exchange—intended to satisfy human needs and wants.

Marketing is a set of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and distribute want satisfying goods and services to present and potential customers.

Marketing directs the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user.

The Marketing Concept is a company-wide consumer orientation with the objective of long-run survival.

Marketing provides for the efficient distribution of goods and services in a mass production economy.

Marketing consists of two different but related processes, the first dealing with the search for and stimulation of buyers and the second with the physical distribution of goods.

Marketing creates time, place, and possession utilities and by so doing marketing adds to consumer welfare.

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The above beliefs about the nature of marketing are familiar to academicians and practitioners alike. Moreover, while marketers may argue about how far to extend the boundaries of marketing, or what to emphasize in its definition, there would be near-unanimous agreement that the above statements capture the essence of what marketing is.

PROBLEMS WITH PARADIGMS

Paradigms are the basic explanations of reality that lie at the core of any science or pseudo-science. Problems arise when the paradigms of a field become (or are revealed as) powerless to deal with the phenomena of the real world; when, as one scientist put it, there are “awkward facts” for which the paradigms cannot account. Several familiar examples may be cited:

“None of the other functional areas of business comes close to matching marketing as a target of criticism and source of controversy. The new breed of ‘radical economist’ singles out marketing as the area of business that ‘must go,’ blaming it for most of the wastes, misplaced priorities, and excesses decried in our system. Even marketers themselves recognize the shaky base on which their discipline rests.”

• Ptolemaic astronomy constituted a paradigm which placed the earth at the very center of the universe, around which the sun, moon, and planets were said to rotate. To an earthbound observer, such does appear to be the case. Yet, inconsistencies were always evident. For example, Mars at times seems to reverse its usual orbit and move backward. Today, we understand this to be caused by our planet overtaking Mars as both circle the sun. Ptolemy, however, to hold to his basic paradigm, had to work out a complicated explanation, claiming that while each planet circled the earth, it also turned in a small circle, which he called an epicycle. Still, epicycles did not entirely explain the matter. So, he added more epicycles, until epicycles were piled upon epicycles. Ultimately, of course, Ptolemy’s flawed central paradigm was exposed—setting the stage for the Copernican revolution.

• “Classical economics” constituted a paradigm at the core of which was the conviction that full employment was the norm of a laissez-faire economy. The price system was held to be the mechanism by which the self-regulating capitalistic society would always tend toward an equilibrium based on jobs for all. It took the embarrassment of the Great Depression—a ten-year siege of massive unemployment—to break faith in the central paradigm, and to clear the way for the Keynesian reform.

• Alchemy existed as a recognized “science” from the early Christian era to the end of the seventeenth century, holding to

the twin beliefs that there existed a “Philosopher’s Stone” that could turn ordinary metals into gold, as well as an “Elixir of Life” capable of curing all illness and preventing old age.

• “Social Darwinism” provided a paradigm system that virtually mesmerized late nineteenth-century America. This was Herbert Spencer’s theory that Darwin’s biological theory of evolution could be applied to human social systems. It gave the force of natural law to the idea of competitive struggle, holding that only through “survival of the fittest” could society improve.

These paradigm systems endured for generations, even centuries. It is significant that in each case powerful external influence was brought to bear to uphold them. Both Ptolemaic astronomy and alchemy were entwined in religious doctrine. Classical economics and Social Darwinism received great political support because each served to rationalize and justify social systems predicated upon laissez-faire philosophy.

No less do the traditional paradigms of marketing have their steadfast supporters. And, indeed, the paradigms of marketing may be as sound as Einstein’s theory—or as flawed as Ptolemy’s astronomy. The test is a simple one: do the key paradigms of marketing accord with the reality of life?

Standards of Living

Marketing lays claim to the creation and delivery of the highest standard of living in

the history of mankind. Indeed it is undeniable that even in a period of scarcity and runaway inflation, ordinary laborers of many nations enjoy luxuries and conveniences for which the monarch of yesteryear would no doubt have exchanged a goodly part of his kingdom.

Yet, if modern marketing is delivering high standards of living and providing consumer satisfaction, how do we account for unprecedented rates of crime, suicide, and mental illness? Statistics in such categories are prima facie evidence that material possessions ensure neither joy nor solace in living.

Clearly, in the marketing paradigm system, a "standard of living" is measured in quantitative, material terms only. Marketing paradigms in no adequate way encompass any measure of the *quality of living*. To confine marketing's role only to the material side of the marketplace is not an inherent limitation, but rather a conscious choice. An economist recently noted that:

"In theory, it would be possible within the bounds of economics to judge a market system, for example, by its capacity to maximize such human wants as justice, freedom, virtue, self-actualization, culture (civilization), or happiness itself, or combinations of any or all of these. The only conditions would be that the 'goods' satisfying these wants be scarce, durable, and substitutable; bought and sold; and, in a multiperson market, price indexed."⁵

For marketers to prattle about "satisfying consumers," while remaining aloof from virtually all such concerns, is to ignore "awkward facts" on a scale comparable to the alchemists' promise to turn lead into gold.

Directing the Flow of Goods and Services

Marketing is portrayed as indispensable to the efficient operation of a free enterprise, mass production economy. Indeed, the merging of

mass production technology with mass marketing technology *has* led to the mass dissemination of an ever-expanding range of *durable goods*.

Yet, if marketing technology is the solution to the efficient flow of goods and services in an economy, how do we explain the growing crises in the delivery of such crucial goods/services as health care, public transportation, and housing?

Obviously, in the paradigm system of marketing, the term "goods" means only those suitable for mass production and mass marketing. Assembly lines, branding, self-service, national advertising, and low prices are most easily applied where there can be a high degree of standardization. Therefore, consumers have been able to acquire an impressive array of durable articles designed to give pleasure, save time, and reduce work. Handily, some of the time saved can now be spent in waiting for medical appointments or public transportation; similarly, personal energy saved can be applied to a second job to help the young family catch up to the wildly escalating price of a home.

Marketing's conception of "directing the flow of goods and services" is rather reminiscent of Social Darwinism: only the fittest (goods and services) survive.

The Marketing Concept

In the paradigm of the "marketing concept" is found a philosophy held to be the key to the very survival of a business organization. Yet, if focusing on customers is the secret to corporate health and vitality, how do we explain the frequent aches and pains suffered by cigarette producers, oil companies, cereal manufacturers, and gun makers, to cite but a few. Their problems in the main come not from customers, but from a formidable array of health advocates, nutritionists, environmentalists, consumerists, politicians, religious leaders, and others. The validity of the marketing concept has been questioned at length elsewhere. Suffice it to say that since it

5. Robert E. Lane, "Markets and the Satisfaction of Human Wants," *Journal of Economic Issues*, 12 (December 1978): 799-800.

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regards people only in their role as consumers or buyers, it is severely limited in scope and one dimensional in character.

The business manager who accepts the marketing concept paradigm of the consumer being at the dead center of the universe may find such a perspective to be about as sound and helpful as Ptolemy’s version of the heavens.

Demand Stimulation, Physical Distribution

Marketing, so says the paradigms, accomplishes the mighty task of distributing goods and services by performing the dual functions of “demand creation” and “physical supply.” Textbooks explain boastfully how even the Communist nations, philosophically opposed to demand creation in particular, have nonetheless come around to adopting numerous techniques of free enterprise marketing.

The basic knowledge of marketing has been available for the greater part of a century, and has been widely disseminated throughout the world over the past three decades. In the light of such readily available knowledge, how well is the profoundly important task of distributing goods and services performed in the world today? We might consider the present situation with respect to the most basic of goods, food. According to a report of the *New York Times*:

In America:

Malnutrition affects millions and is increasing in extent and severity each year.

Hunger related crimes are sharply on the rise.

Thousands of babies die in infancy each year because their mothers cannot nurse them nor afford to buy milk.

A large number of children suffer from the ancient diseases of scurvy and rickets, caused by inadequate diet.

In the World:

At least ten million persons (and probably twice that number) die each year as a direct result of receiving too little food.

Today 500 million men, women, and children bear severe and often irreversible effects of malnutrition.

Over one half the human race exists in conditions of chronic poverty that keep them underfed and uncertain about their next meal.⁶

Admittedly, it is a cheap shot to imply even remotely that marketing is to blame for a condition caused by such overwhelming, interacting forces as overpopulation, climate, and politics. Moreover, the current food crisis is but one dimension—albeit the most tragic—

6. *New York Times, Give Us This Day* (New York: Arno Press, 1975).

of the gross inequities in world resource distribution (a problem which is getting worse, not better).

Nonetheless, by emphasizing “demand creation”—a task which by definition focuses effort on luxuries and conveniences—the harsh reality is that marketing has contributed more to the problem than it has to the solution.

Just as the classical economists were forced to concede that the paradigms of their “science” were powerless to cope with the reality of the Great Depression, so too must marketers concede that the paradigms of their discipline have been of scant help in rectifying the world’s resource and wealth imbalances.

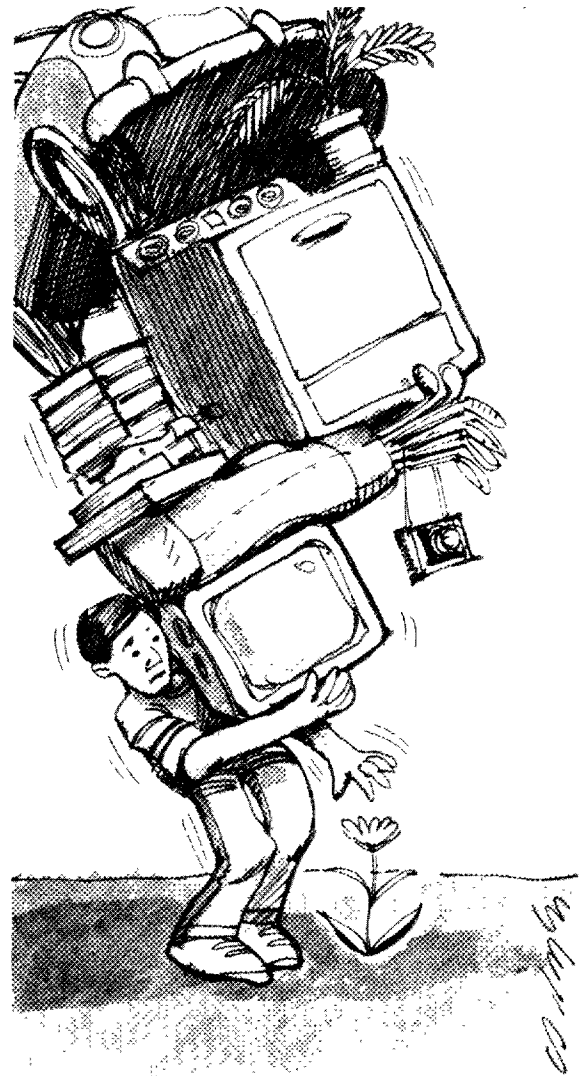
PARADIGMS FOR THE FUTURE

Most thoughtful people agree that mankind is now living in a times between times; a moment when one era is ending and another, emergent era not yet fully shaped. For two centuries the basic answer to human and social problems has always been: “more, simply *more*.” The paradigms of marketing were forged in that era. They served its needs well. Now, a cluster of interacting limits—resource, population, economic, environmental, social, and political—is bringing that era to an end. As one author puts it: “We, the human family, cannot afford the modern world; and neither can the rest of nature.”⁷

It is not the intent here to speculate about the future of our planet. But, philosopher Erich Fromm states eloquently that “for the first time in history, the physical survival of the human race depends on a radical change of the human heart.”⁸ Fromm continues that this means a change from a *having* mode of existence to a *being* mode. *Having* concentrates on material possessions, acquisitive-

7. Robert Heilbroner, *An Inquiry Into the Human Prospect* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974): 12.

8. Erich Fromm, *To Have Or to Be?* (New York: Harper, 1976): 128.



ness, power, and aggression. *Being* focuses on relationships, love, and sharing.

Need it be asked to which mode of existence the traditional paradigms of marketing are best suited? Instead, and more importantly, we should ask, *could* the knowledge of marketing be reordered into a framework of thought—a new paradigm system—attuned to a society animated by ethics of relationships, love, and sharing?

I answer, *yes*; and offer, as a stimulus for discussion, a central paradigm system for a revitalized science of marketing. These paradigms—interrelated and global—attempt to re-

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A Distribution Paradigm

Marketing is the key to a more equitable distribution of the world's material resources. Most warfare since the dawn of civilization has been attributable to the unequal distribution of the world's material (not only natural) resources. In terms of nations and continents, the world's land and mineral resources are unevenly divided in the extreme. Relative to their populations, some areas are rich, others abysmally poor. Concomitantly, the world's manmade resources, manufactured and processed goods, are abundant in some nations, almost nonexistent in others. While the nations of the Third World account for 60 percent of the world's population, they consume but 15 percent of the global output of goods.

If unequal resource distribution lies at the core of much of the world's misery and discontent, simple charity is not the answer. We might conceive of the world's wealth as a liquid, and the nations as if separated by watertight doors. Humanitarian instinct might suggest that the world's ills could be cured overnight simply by throwing open all doors and allowing a levelling of living standards. A moment's reflection reveals the fallacy of such a belief. First, the staggering declines of living standards in the prosperous nations

would be matched by only moderate gains in the impoverished, densely populated regions. Moreover, whatever temporary gains might be achieved in the poorer nations would almost certainly soon be cancelled out by explosive population growth. The end result far more likely would be a tragic spread of poverty, not wealth.

The effective solution requires some method of raising economic living standards differentially, region by region, until a sufficient degree of equalization is achieved to enable all doors to be thrust open without catastrophic adjustments ensuing. The knowledge of marketing is indispensable to such a solution.

Peter Drucker, in a classic article, referred to marketing as a *multiplier* of economic growth; a multiplier in the sense that it can provide a basis for the better utilization of the limited natural resources available to a nation. There is the obvious contribution of preventing food and other perishables from rotting on docks and in warehouses, through improvements in physical distribution efficiency. But also, there is evidence that marketing research, modern retailing techniques, and advertising can contribute significantly to an acceleration of the economic growth process. Inherent in this paradigm must be the precept that the world's material resources are *expandable*. Only now are we beginning to appreciate the true potential of transforming the useless into the useful; recycling waste so that it becomes raw material of value. Certain aspects of marketing, such as product and

package design, relate directly to this effort. Finally, maximizing the full potential of the world's material resources requires highly sophisticated techniques of determining what is needed where, when, and how to get it there—the natural province of marketing planning.

A Need Satisfaction Paradigm

Marketing constitutes the prime source of insight and understanding as to how human needs and wants can be satisfied in non-material ways. There can hardly be doubt that a de-emphasis of materialism will be both a necessary and desirable aspect of a humane future. Marketing, which has focused on human motivation, consumer behavior, and purchase decision making, offers both the knowledge and techniques of research essential to efforts to understand better how human needs and wants can be satisfied in other than material ways.

While the nature of nonmaterial needs is not yet well understood, their existence and intensity cannot be doubted (consider, for example, the yearnings awakened by the television showing of "Roots"). Moreover, resources exist in the world to satisfy such needs, but they are cultural, artistic, and religious rather than material. The extent and allocation of such resources in the world is but dimly known. With respect to resources that may give man peace of mind, what proportions do the "advanced" nations of the West hold, as against nations of the Middle and Far East? A tremendous challenge exists to determine how the cultural experiences of one people may be brought into the consciousness of another. The dissemination of such resources is an undertaking so new and different that we can only vaguely presage its nature. The noted anthropologist, Margaret Mead, made this observation:

"The frenetic, foolhardy shipping of original works of art around the world in ships and planes, however fragile they may be, can

be looked upon as a precursor of this kind of change—as tales of flying saucers preceded man's first actual venture into space. It is as if we already dimly recognized that if we are to survive, we must share all we have, at whatever cost, so that men everywhere can move toward some as yet undefined taking off point into the future."⁹

Recently, the overwhelming public response to the King Tut exhibit in several American cities gives testimony to the potential impact and benefit of such sharing.

Marketing can and should be central to the search for a deeper understanding of human needs and the means of their satisfaction. Marketing offers the logical starting point in its well-developed behavioral field; it offers, in its physical supply branch, solutions to the formidable logistical problems involved in the worldwide sharing of cultural artifacts; finally, its powerful instruments of demand creation can find genuinely useful purpose in arousing the latent demand for "goods and services" that are uplifting to man's nature.

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A Mass Persuasion Paradigm

Marketing provides the only known means for redirecting the attitudes, perceptions, and values of a mass society. If there can be any single keynote to this "time between times," it likely is the near-universal recognition that any hope for a better future rests upon a fundamental change in human thinking.

The literature of those who worry most about global well-being shows a remarkable consensus about this. Despite wide differences in both diagnosis of the present and prognosis for the future, there is one solid common conclusion: ours is a time in which change in perception is critical to *any* kind of humane future.¹⁰

Outside of sheer coercive force, market-

9. Margaret Mead, "The Future as the Basis for Establishing a Shared Culture," *Daedalus* (Winter 1965): 137.

10. Rene Dubos, *Reason Awake: Science for Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970): 6.

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ing’s powerful mass persuasion techniques constitute the only known social mechanism for redirecting attitudes on a mass basis. Already in this country, government-sponsored efforts to alter life styles have become familiar. Americans are being urged to drive less, walk more, smoke less, exercise more, lower thermostats, eat less, prevent forest fires, and preserve the scenic landscape. Unable to compel such change through police power, the government employs marketing’s arsenal of mass promotion techniques instead. Noteworthy is the rapid response of marketers in contributing new ideas and approaches, such as those christened “demarketing,” “remarketing,” and “countermarketing.”

Perhaps nowhere is a new perspective more significant to human survival than in the matter of the world hunger crisis. The statistics, as cited earlier, stagger the imagination. Yet, prevailing attitudes may be at least as much an underlying cause as actual food shortages. The chairman of the Interreligious Task Force on U.S. Food Policy discerns two quite different viewpoints:

On the one hand, there are those who see world hunger as an *historical misfortune*. Millions are malnourished; that’s too bad. Little babies die; that’s a pity. The impoverished suffer; that’s the way things are. According to this view, hunger, like cancer, is one of the baffling mysteries of life. . . . In

the other perspective, as in the first, those who suffer hunger are seen as victims; but their plight is regarded not as inevitable misfortune but as *moral outrage*, not as the fruit of the strange working of fate but as the consequence of the current political, social and economic arrangements, not as evidence that life is “unfair” but as a symptom of a human-created disorder.¹¹

If the traditional paradigms have tended to bring marketing down on the wrong side of the problem, its potential for contributing to the solution side is enormous.

A Growth and Development Paradigm

Marketing, the essence of which is exchange, offers the most viable path for growth and development off all nations. The concept of a “New International Economic Order” has been advocated in many recent international forums, and has been unanimously endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. There may be as many detailed formulations of a NIEO as there are advocates, but at the core of each is the idea that the developing nations of Asia, Latin America, and Africa must play an expanded, more dynamic role in the world economy.

Any such NIEO must surely repudiate the

11. George A. Chauncey, *Statement to Presidential Commission on World Hunger* (Washington: Interreligious Taskforce on U.S. Food Policy, 1979): 3.

chauvinistic notion that the American model of industrial development is the penultimate goal toward which all other nations should aspire. Not only is this made impossible by energy and resource limitations, but neither should industrial development be regarded as the only, or best, pathway to progress for all peoples of the world. The road that America has followed has led to magnificent accomplishments in many areas, technology in particular; but it has not proved spectacularly successful in advancing individual happiness nor social welfare. Different roads may yield better net results for other peoples.

The emerging nations now recognize that neither the perceptions of their problems nor solutions suggested by rich countries are necessarily on target. However well-intentioned the United States may be with respect to aiding, say, Ghana, it is difficult for officials to advise when they have never experienced quite the same circumstances and obstacles. It is analogous to the affluent suburban matron who tells ghetto dwellers how to solve all their problems.

The inclination of the wealthy nation is to promote greater production capacity. But, while infusions of capital and manufacturing technology may improve a weak trade position, it may be at the cost of worsening the country's labor problems and energy dependence. The poor nation may find it can sometimes learn more of value and relevance from the experiences, good or bad, of its counterparts throughout the world. Perhaps, for example, it will see the merits of a "soft technology," emphasizing land and labor, rather than capital and energy. (Ironically, may the day come when the energy-depleted rich nation comes to the LDC seeking to borrow such technology?)

In any NIEO, a new concept of "comparative advantage" will be required to guide trade relations. Each of the emerging nations will have to consider what path of development it wishes to pursue; what resources or other inputs it requires from industrial nations and

other LDC's; what assets, talents, or resources it has to offer in return. Lacking hard currency, the emerging nation may have to develop "horse-trading" skill, bartering what it can spare for what it needs.

The prevailing theme throughout the above is *exchange*. Thus, while production technology may remain an essential component of national development, it is *marketing*—in all of its dimensions—that offers the most viable and flexible path to growth and progress for all peoples of the world.

A CHALLENGE TO ALL MARKETERS

In its seventy-odd years of existence, marketing has grown to be an immensely powerful technology; perhaps a true science. Yet, looking honestly at its central paradigms, there can be little optimism about marketing's long-range future in a world moving (as we all hope) in the direction of humaneness, sharing, and nonacquisitiveness.

But if the knowledge of marketing does not appear compatible with such a future, it is only because of the way that knowledge has to date been ordered and how it has been applied. Marketing is an essentially neutral force; it can lead to evil or good, just as the knowledge of physics can lead to neutron bombs or the generation of nuclear power.

A reordering of marketing knowledge—a new framework of thought about what marketing *is* and what it can *do*—can invest the discipline of marketing with a bright, positive future. Such new paradigms would become the basis of how marketing is described in books and journals, taught in universities, and understood by practitioners. They would reconstitute the conceptual framework within which further research and investigation would be conducted by marketing scholars.

The new paradigms set forth in this article are intended not as definitive statements of marketing's future role, but as tentative propositions which will, I hope, provoke further

ideas and discussion. Marketing is, after all, what its practitioners make it; and all

marketers share the responsibility of ensuring the survival of their profession. □