


Advertising is Evil [1]

Extract from Chapter 10 in *Fernando the Flute IV* (2019)
by Philip Tagg

... Like everywhere else in the postwar western world, consumerist propaganda in Sweden has since the 1950s dominated the force field at the intersection between self and society. It's there that individual consumers ('customers') are triaged like cattle into psycho-sociologically determined herds of intersubjectivity (target groups, personality types, etc.) at which propaganda 'creatives' can aim their weapons of deceit.

I will not aggravate the reader (nor risk a heart attack myself) by exemplifying such iniquity but I am duty-bound to underline that we hear/see brands shouting or pouting at us — and at millions of other atomised subjects in the herd — several thousand times daily.¹ Thanks to this carpet bombing, consumerist propaganda has so massively occupied the public headspace housing the dynamic between self and society that it can be hard to even imagine links between the two other than those constructed for consumerist purposes. We are instead primed as targets to bond with a brand through a 'look', a 'lifestyle', a celebrity or some other spurious symbol of identity and belonging. Those links and identities, determined *not by but for us*, are rarely made explicit.

Indeed, 'People must be trained to desire, not to need' and 'You have to play to people's *irrational emotions*' are position statements presented by prestigious business and PR gurus.² In other words, the emotional, implicit and psychological aspects of propagandist links between self and society are used to cause consumer regression into irrational states of desire: it's an infantilisation process involving subversion of the indi-

1. According to Red Crow Marketing Inc., US-Americans are exposed to between 4,000 and 10,000 ads a day (Marshall, 2015). The figures are similar for Sweden, see *Så många reklambudskap nås du av dagligen*  /xrefs/ReklamDagligen.htm [190713].

vidual's object relations and it's something our society seems to blithely accept as normal.³ Such machinations and their apparent normalcy make it difficult to identify the true nature of the consumerist individual, even harder to contest it...

References

☐ CURTIS, Adam (2002) *Century of the Self*, 1 ☎ BBC2: xtr. at 📺 284207304 [190713].

☰ KLEIN, Melanie (1921) 'Love, Guilt and Reparation'. *Love, Guilt and Reparation and other works 1921–1945*. London: Hogarth Press (2002).

☰ = verbal text | ☎ = off-air | ☐ = TV broadcast | 📺 = Vimeo file

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2. The first statement is by Paul Mazur of Lehman Brothers and was published in the 1927 *Harvard Business Review* (Curtis, 2002: 16:32); the second is by Pat Jackson, colleague of Edward Bernays, interviewed in Curtis (2002: 09:20) (Jackson's *emphasis*). Playing to people's *irrational emotions* meant, says Curtis, referring to Bernays' *Torches of Freedom* campaign to get women to smoke, 'that irrelevant objects could become powerful emotional symbols of how you wanted to be seen by others';... and, at 28:11, 'By stimulating people's inner desires and then satiating them with consumer products [Bernays] was creating a new way to manage the irrational force of the masses. He called it the "engineering of consent"'. This was something that greatly interested Goebbels (*ibid.*, ±31:00).
 3. 'Object relations': see Klein (1921); see also 📺 *Object relation theory* [190721].