



RESEARCH ARTICLE

<https://doi.org/10.37093/ijsi.1454849>

Approaching Huxley's Prognosis: The Subjugation of Science to Propaganda

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Abstract

In the previous century, Sigmund Freud developed a method called psychoanalysis. By analyzing dreams, exploring the unconscious processes of the mind, and practicing the free association method, he came up with theories about human nature. According to Freud, powerful instinctual drives govern individuals and masses. He was called the archeologist of mind and argued that these primitive drives are remnants of the human's animalistic past. If not repressed and controlled, they would have led societies into destruction and chaos. The article offers a historical overview and reflects on how authorities used psychoanalytic and scientific findings on group behavior to manipulate and control masses and eventually, to foster consumerism. The article also discusses the reasons why the Freudian theory of repression, initially serving the system of power, gradually failed to do so and thus, discusses the historical context that explains the transition into the ideology of the liberated self to serve financial purposes. Finally, the article suggests that consumerism, governing many contemporary societies, is a political ideology, not much different from types of mass control generally associated with totalitarianism.

Keywords: Edward Bernays, Sigmund Freud, propaganda, psychoanalysis, public relations

Cite this article: Krupa, H. (2024). Approaching Huxley's prognosis: The subjugation of science to propaganda. *International Journal of Social Inquiry*, 17(2), 197–214. <https://doi.org/10.37093/ijsi.1454849>

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Article Information

Received 18 March 2024; Revised 24 June 2024; Accepted 29 June 2024; Available online 30 August 2024

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1. Introduction

Meanwhile impersonal forces over which we have almost no control seem to be pushing us all in the direction of the Brave New Worldian nightmare; and this impersonal pushing is being consciously accelerated by representatives of commercial and political organizations who have developed a number of new techniques for manipulating, in the interest of some minority, the thoughts and feelings of the masses.

—Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*, 2000, p. 8.

When the First World War began in 1914, the famous psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud perceived the war as a terrible demonstration of the findings he had acquired in the field of psychoanalysis. In his letter to Lou-Andreas Salome in the autumn of 1914, Freud wrote that the war was driven by governmental authorities unleashing the primitive forces lying deep within the human psyche, claiming that “the saddest thing about it is that it has come out just as from our psychoanalytic expectations we should have imagined man and his behavior” (cited in Jones, *Life and Work of Sigmund Freud*, 1961, p. 358). Likewise, Freud asked his students to consider the cruelty, massive destruction, and brutality played out in the war within the context of human psychic forces, and as evident in the quote below, he emphasized that it is these primitive instinctual forces that had been unloosed by the authorities:

And now turn your eyes away from individuals and consider the Great War which is still laying Europe waste. Think of the vast amount of brutality, cruelty and lies which are able to spread over civilized world. Do you really believe that a handful of ambitious and deluding men without conscience could have succeeded in unleashing all these evil spirits if their millions of followers did not share their guilt? Do you venture, in such circumstances, to break a lance on behalf of the exclusion of evil from the mental constitution of mankind? (Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, 1977, p. 146)

Freud not only acknowledges the existence of primitive instinctual drives within the individual psyche but also points out the danger they might pose to civilization. The First World War, Freud wrote, “revealed our instincts in all their nakedness and let loose the evil spirits within us which we thought had been tamed for ever by centuries of continuous education by the noblest mind” (‘On Transience’ in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 1915/2001, p. 307). What Freud’s observation seems to imply is that no matter how enlightened humanity evolves to be, the instinctual animalistic drives remain to govern the human psyche.

Ironically, one of the first people to have greatly utilized Freud’s scientific findings was Freud’s own nephew, Edward Bernays. Working as an adviser for political leaders as well as major American corporations, Bernays was responsible for manipulating the masses for political and financial ends— a task for which Freud’s psychoanalytic findings were pragmatically put into use. During the First World War, the president of the USA was Woodrow Wilson, for whose administration at the Committee on Public Information Bernays worked. When the USA declared war against Germany, Bernays, who at the time worked as a press agent, was asked to launch a media propaganda campaign that aimed to persuade the

American public that sending American soldiers to the European war was in American best interest.

In no time, the American media, serving the governmental agenda, embarked on producing war propaganda to recruit for various armed services as well as to raise finance for the war. The entire propaganda campaign was built on the ideology of freedom and democracy, presenting President Wilson as a leader willing to enter the war in order to liberate and democratize Europe. Consequently, the propaganda that portrayed Wilson as the liberator of European people, fighting to create a better and safer democratic world, proved extremely successful both in the USA and abroad. Wilson became a hero to the masses, and those who could influence public opinion and move the masses by propaganda, such as Bernays and his team of propagandists, soon realized the power of media influence and propaganda. This led to numerous projects exploring how the propaganda model of mass persuasion could be utilized during peacetime.

Thus, in alignment with Huxley's predictions, the subjugation of science to propaganda has begun steering us towards a *Brave New World*-like dystopia. This disturbing trend is being deliberately accelerated by commercial and political organizations, which have developed sophisticated techniques to manipulate the thoughts and emotions of the masses for the benefit of a select few. These techniques, grounded in the very psychoanalytic principles uncovered by Freud, have been weaponized to control public perception and behavior on an unprecedented scale. The mass media, once a tool for information dissemination, has increasingly become a vehicle for propaganda, shaping societal values and norms in ways that serve the interests of the powerful. The implications of this shift are profound. As scientific knowledge and psychological insights are often co-opted for manipulative purposes, the potential for genuine progress and enlightenment is undermined. Instead, we find ourselves on a path where individual autonomy is eroded, and critical thinking is supplanted by manufactured consent. This trajectory mirrors the dystopian vision that Huxley so vividly depicted, where technology and psychology are harnessed not for human flourishing, but for control and subjugation. The intersection of Freud's psychoanalytic discoveries with Bernays' propaganda techniques marks the beginning of a new era of mass manipulation, characterized by the deliberate and calculated influence over public thought and emotion, signaling the onset of a dystopian reality where the few dominate the many. As we move forward, it is crucial to remain vigilant and critically aware of these forces, striving to reclaim the potential of science and technology for the betterment of society rather than its exploitation.

2. From Propaganda to Public Relations

The first significant change needed was in language. Since the word *propaganda* had acquired a negative connotation, being defined by the Oxford Dictionary (2012a) as "selected information, especially of a biased or misleading nature, used to promote a political cause or point of view", the initial propaganda effort, therefore, was ironically a propaganda campaign aimed at altering the perception of the word itself and the meaning it carried. Thus, the word *propaganda* was soon substituted with the word *public relations*, which, in the 1920s, Bernays coined to re-define the profession for public persuasion. To no surprise, the current Oxford

Dictionary (2012b) defines *public relations* as “the professional maintenance of a favourable public image by a company or other organization or a famous person”. Juxtaposing these definitions reveals that what was initially described as “biased and misleading” has been replaced with the more positive phrase “favourable image.” Despite the linguistic differences, both definitions ultimately refer to the manipulation and misrepresentation of facts to serve specific agendas by which the public is often sold dishonesty and crooked facts.

Edward Bernays, who has earned his title and is often called *the Father of Public Relations* (PR) ever since, based his practices precisely on social theories and psychological scientific studies. His ideas on public relations still comprise the foundation of the theory used today. His writings reveal that he drew heavily from the psychoanalytic findings of his uncle, Sigmund Freud, particularly regarding the theories on the human unconscious, the instinctual drives, and the irrational motives that shape human behavior. Bernays’ writings also reveal that he thoroughly studied the psychoanalytical findings on crowd psychology in Freud’s *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921/1949), Gustave Le Bon’s *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1895/2009), and the work of Wilfred Trotter, whose studies of group psychology generated the concept of herd instinct, explained in *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War* (1916/2005). In 1928, Edward Bernays himself published his famous book *Propaganda* (2005), revealing not only Bernays’ faith in the power of psychology but also his beliefs that if one could understand psychology, and precisely the working mechanism that governs group psychology, one could as well manipulate and control people. Bernays’ explicitly states that:

If we understand the mechanism and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it? The recent practice of propaganda has proved that it is possible, at least up to a certain point and within certain limits. (2005, p. 47)

Bernays’ familiarity with psychoanalytic studies becomes evident as he often cites Freud, Le Bon, and Trotter. Bernays seemed fascinated with theories on crowd psychology and the unconscious mind, suggesting that individuals may lose their individuality in a crowd (disappearance of conscious personality) and be driven by the phenomenon of the herd instinct to act differently as members of a group (predominance of unconscious personality) by suggestibility and contagion. Bernays also believed that understanding the collective mind’s mechanisms allowed for the manipulation of the masses and so his attention as a propagandist was turned on the studies focusing on the working mechanism of the crowd, perceived as forming a novel organism characterized by a single way of thinking, the so-called collective mind, which according to studies, manifests in a state of suggestibility and contagion. Additionally, the studies of Freud, Le Bon, and Trotter also reveal that within the act of merging with the crowd, an individual might easily manifest as being driven by their unconscious, repressed, and often irrational instincts (manifestation of unconscious), demonstrating that the collective mind is a primitive one, often with a sense of omnipotence, operating on the basis of the pleasure principle that has overridden the reality principle of an individual’s psyche. Utilizing these researches, Bernays’ writing demonstrates his firm belief in not only the possibility of manipulation of the collective mind but also that the manipulation of the collective mind was inevitable in democratic societies precisely because the masses were

inherently psychically primitive, driven by irrational desires, which made them dangerous. Bernays argues that the masses, inherently driven by irrational desires, needed to be controlled to ensure the survival of democracy. He envisions a form of enlightened control where those in power were to control and those in public relations were to influence the public opinion into consent. To put it differently, Bernays' view of democracy is that of a covert totalitarianism masked as democracy, based on manipulation by propaganda to manipulate and control free will. Bernays' perspective on democracy is evident in his assertion, which opens with a statement that ironically links the phrases manipulation and democratic society:

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society... in almost every act of our daily lives, whether in the sphere of politics or business, in our social conduct or our ethical thinking, we are dominated by the relatively small number of persons . . . who understand the mental processes and social patterns of the masses. It is they who pull the wires which control the public mind...and guide the world...It is not usually realized how necessary these invisible governors are to the orderly functioning of our group life...In theory, every citizen may vote for whom he pleases...In theory, every citizen makes up his mind on public questions and matters of private conduct...In theory, everybody buys the best and cheapest commodities offered him on the market... (*Propaganda*, 2005, pp. 9-11)

Bernays' statement suggests that free will does not exist in practice. While the public may believe they live in democratic societies, they are, in reality, controlled by those, who as Bernays states, understand the mechanism by which the masses operate. This raises the question of what truly defines democracy. If people are denied to exercise their will and free decision-making, in public and private spheres alike, then it becomes evident that the elemental aspects of what defines democracy is fundamentally violated. In his work of political philosophy, published as *Aristotle's Politics*, which dates back to the fourth century BC, Aristotle defines the concept of democracy as a political system characterized by a rule by many and in which the usual principles are liberty and free will. According to Aristotle, in democratic societies people take turns being rulers and being the ruled and the majority makes decisions while people are let to live as they please. To clarify, Aristotle contrasts democracy, a rule by many, with a system called oligarchy, defined as a rule of the few over many. Thus, for Aristotle the fundamental principle of democracy is freedom and therefore, it is precisely the exercise of free will and decision-making that emerges as the ultimate aim of a democratic society.

The basic of a democratic state is liberty; which according to the common opinion of men, can only be enjoyed in such a state— this they affirm to be the great end of every democracy. One principle of liberty is for all to rule and be ruled in turn, and indeed democratic justice is the application on numerical not proportionate equality; whence it follows that the majority approve must be the end and the just. Every citizen, it is said, must have equality, and therefore in a democracy the poor have more power than the rich, because they are more of them, and the will of the majority is supreme. This, then, is one note of liberty which all democrats affirm to be the principle of their state. Another is that

a man should live as he likes. This, they say, is the privilege of a freeman; and, on the other hand, not to live as a man likes is the mark of a slave. This is the second characteristic of democracy, whence has arisen the claim of men to be ruled by none... ('The nature of Democracy' in *Aristotle's Politics*, Book VI, part II, 1317b, 1920, p. 239)

Unlike Aristotle who seems to have faith in the public, Bernays perceived the public as a subject to the irrational and driven by herd instincts, not to be trusted but instead, necessitating control and manipulation by an elite few. One is reminded of the linguistic play of the definitions of the words *propaganda* and *public relations*, of which as a matter of fact, the aim is identical—the act of moulding of the public mind into certain beliefs by ideologies. In a likewise manner, Bernays covertly advocates for oligarchy in the name of democracy. Inspired by Walter Lippmann, who in *Public Opinion* (1922/1997) refers to the general public as the “bewildered herd” (p. 158), of which the sole desirable function is obedience rather than an active participation in social matters, and thus, the general public requires to be ruled by a governing class, Bernays likewise believes that the elite ought to rule the public without physical coercion by the tools of *propaganda* or what he has re-defined as *public relations*. That Bernays parallels the concept of *propaganda* with his later invented term, *public relations* is evident, and remarkably, the concept corresponds to that which Lippmann presents as the “manufacture of consent”, referring to manipulation of public opinion by propaganda into accepting or even indoctrinating the elite’s ideology “for its own good” because, as he explains, “it is no longer possible, for example, to believe in the original dogma of democracy; that the knowledge needed for the management of human affairs comes up spontaneously from the human heart” (Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 1922/1997, p. 158). Lippmann thus argues that the manipulation of public opinion was essential for the functioning of society. Thus, it becomes clear that both Bernays and Lippmann contend that the core of democracy involves the invisible yet effective manipulation of the collective mind by *propaganda* disguised as *public relations*, within the spheres of both public and private, creating an illusion of free will and decision-making.

To no surprise, the cover page of Bernays’ *Propaganda*, re-published in 2005, appears with a demonstratively eloquent comment by a contemporary philosopher, Noam Chomsky who underscores the relevance of Bernays’ ideas in contemporary society. Chomsky states that “Bernays’ honest and practical manual provides much insight into some of the most powerful and influential institutions of contemporary industrial-state capitalist democracies” (*Propaganda*, 2005, cover page). Chomsky’s comment indicates that Bernays’ concepts of democracy and his notion of public relations are indeed embedded in modern economic and political structures, highlighting the ongoing significance of his theories operating within the contemporary world akin to Huxley’s predictions about the manipulation of the masses by impersonal forces and powerful organizations, controlling the reality of societies. This manipulation of public sentiment, as predicted by Huxley, underscores the alignment of science and technology with propaganda. Huxley warns of a future where impersonal forces and powerful organizations would push society toward a dystopian reality. The deliberate acceleration of these forces by commercial and political entities, using advanced techniques and science to manipulate public thought and emotion, reflects exactly the kind of control Bernays describes and Chomsky warns against. Huxley’s foresight about the subjugation of

science to propaganda and the erosion of individual autonomy in favour of mass control is evident in the way Bernays' ideas have been assimilated into the fabric of contemporary democratic societies.

3. Science Serving Authorities and Ideologies

It was Bernays and his contemporary him-alike propagandists who were the first to harness psychological and psychoanalytical studies and findings to serve and facilitate American corporations in their aim to increase their profits. This was done by a systematical linking of products to people's unconscious fears and desires— the nature and the working mechanism scrutinized and studied by sciences. Bernays and his peers utilized the scientific studies and findings within commerce, and eventually fostered a transformation of businesses from selling what people needed to what people desired. This innovative marketing campaign and strategies, heavily influenced by psychological and psychoanalytical studies, profoundly changed the functioning of American, and later European societies by generating a new operating system that was able to manipulate the crowd into desiring. Such a controlling mechanism was based on fulfilling people's inner desires, often self-centered, making the public docile and easy to manipulate. This novel system also marked the start of what we nowadays define as consumerism— a system based on manipulating people into purchasing for pleasure rather than survival. It is precisely this system that has been dominating many current cultures ever since. Indeed, it is no coincidence that Bernays was listed in the 1990 issue of *Life* magazine as one of the Top "100 Most Influential Americans of the 20th Century" (cited in Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin*, 1996, p. 6).

Bernays believed that the use of propaganda in politics, designed to manipulate crowds to appealing to the unconscious— both the personal and the collective— could easily be channeled into the realm of commerce. The future of marketing and advertising, if aimed at success, likewise depended on utilizing psychological and psychoanalytical studies that provided ways through the use of images and symbols, linguistics, metaphors, and other means that evoke emotions and tap into the unconscious of individuals but more importantly, groups. In other words, the use of the scientific studies of the human psyche was inevitable if one aimed to make the public react fast and convince them to buy certain products, services, and lifestyles. Since Bernays observed that a clear presentation of accurate information seemed inadequate in marketing, his techniques of mass manipulation and consumer persuasion turned to applying a wide range of strategies that addressed the unconscious—from celebrity endorsements and stunts to techniques of eroticizing products. It becomes evident that Bernays' marketing techniques are still widely used today, and with the advances of technology, even manufactured a commercialized pop-culture of the so-called influencers, likewise selling products, services, and lifestyles to the public. Furthermore, the marketing strategies that promote products or services to a target audience and the advertising practices and tactics used to execute these strategies do not shy away from utilizing even egalitarian movements and ideologies to their service.

One of Bernays' most remarkable achievements was breaking the taboo on women smoking in public. At the time, smoking for women in public places was illegal. For instance, an official

record reveals that in 1922, a woman was arrested for “daring” to light a cigarette on the street in New York City. It was Edward Bernays who was hired by George Washington Hill, the president of the American Tobacco Corporation, to find a way to break this taboo. If women were accepted to smoke in public, it would evidently bring an increase in profit for tobacco companies. Utilizing the psychological and psychoanalytical findings of Freud and him-alike scientists, Bernays observed that a cigarette signified a phallic symbol representing masculine hegemony. He cleverly linked the idea of smoking for women to an act of challenging gender politics, transforming the image of smoking for women into one that signified a new type of liberated woman. This was executed in 1929 during the Easter Day parade, when Bernays and his team persuaded a group of young women to light cigarettes at a given signal, informing the press that a group of suffragettes were to publicly protest by lighting up *Torches of Freedom*. Accordingly, the photographers were ready to capture the moment, which on the first of April, 1929, was printed by almost every newspaper, entitled as “Group of Girls Puff at Cigarettes as a Gesture of Freedom.” This act created a new symbol, shifting the meaning of smoking to one that signified liberty and equality for women. The image of young women walking with *Torches of Freedom* thus became a symbolic representation built upon suppressed emotions, repressed desires, and collective memory or even guilt.

What is even more striking is that this act not only changed the legal system by lifting the ban and generating public acceptance of women smoking in public places but also generated an ideology that made smoking women feel powerful and independent. Today, the idea that smoking makes a woman freer and more equal to men might seem irrelevant or even completely irrational. Nevertheless, the 1929 Easter Day parade demonstrates the ways by which masses can be manipulated into buying products by addressing means other than reason and rationality. Besides, Bernays’ marketing tactics and strategies also reveal how irrelevant objects can become powerful psychic symbols, capable of manipulating masses for generations into irrational actions. The campaign operating under the slogan *Torches of Freedom* is an eloquent example of how science, along with ideologies such as the feminist movement aiming for gender liberation, has been used and abused to manipulate masses and form control over them. In this particular case, it facilitated nicotine addiction that paradoxically became a symbol of freedom. A look behind the scenes clearly uncovers that the sole purpose of the campaign was to increase profit for tobacco corporations rather than liberate women. This manipulation of public sentiment through the strategic use of psychological and psychoanalytical studies aligns seamlessly with Huxley’s prediction of a future where science would be used to manipulate public perception and behavior. Bernays’ techniques epitomize Huxley’s dystopian vision, where the subjugation of science becomes a tool for manipulating the public into desiring products and lifestyles that serve corporate interests. Chomsky’s assertion that Bernays’ ideas are embedded in the structures of contemporary industrial-state capitalist democracies underscores the ongoing relevance of these manipulative strategies. The *Torches of Freedom* campaign exemplifies how scientific insights into human psychology can be exploited to create powerful, enduring symbols that manipulate public behavior, demonstrating a clear intersection of Bernays’ practical applications and Huxley’s theoretical predictions.

4. Justification of Repression

When in 1921, Freud published his studies on crowd psychology in his book *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, his work led to further significant developments in psychological and social theories on group behavior. Freud's work became influential as it attempted to explain precisely how crowd psychology is governed by unconscious and often irrational drives. What is more, Freud's ideas about the nature of human civilization and the necessity of suppression were further elaborated in one of his sociological works, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (2002), published in 1930. The fifth chapter of this book, entitled "Two Artificial Groups: the Church and Army" suggests that civilization, emerging from the suppression and control of instinctual human drives, leaves individuals in a constant state of discontent. Freud also explicitly indicates the findings based on his instinctual theory, or to be more precise, that groups, operating by aggressive and sexual drives, should not be underestimated; on the contrary, these might even pose far more danger than initially presumed. Freud's theories thus imply that free individual expression is impossible within the constraints of civilization, as it is founded on the suppression of instinctual drives. This notion challenges the concept of civilization as a manifestation of human progress. His earlier work likewise proposes that civilization as a manifestation of human progress is, in fact, a false notion. In his 1908 essay, Freud stated that civilization itself is "founded on the suppression of instincts" ('Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervousness' in *Collected Papers*, 1950, p. 82). Freud's studies suggest that since civilization emerges from the suppression and control of instinctual human drives, free individual expression can never take place. Hence, a civilized human can only exist in a constant state of discontent and Freud's findings were soon applied to various systems of control.

At the time, the political situation in Germany in the early 1930s confirmed Freud's warnings. When the National Socialist Party won the election in March 1933, their goal was to manufacture a collective mind by exploiting the anxieties and desires of the masses that could be elicited and channelled into forging a national unity. Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda in Germany, utilized the psychoanalytical studies to elicit precisely those forces within the masses that Freud in his work on group psychology explicitly noted as dangerous instinctual drives that might lead to irrational actions and behavior. As Freud clarifies, these drives generate a binding force within groups and drive the masses by connecting the members of groups to each other, and most importantly to their leader, through the forces of evoked libidinal desires. What becomes even more striking is that once these instinctual forces are unleashed, as Freud explains, they are easily directed against those outside the group (Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*). Thus, it appears that Freud's findings, intended as a warning, were instead used to manipulate and control the masses.

One of the most prominent ways Goebbels' team manufactured a collective mind to control the masses was through grandiose spectacles, including parades, rallies, public speeches, ceremonies, and ritualized gestures. These were meticulously designed and choreographed to create a collective mind by tapping into the unconscious. For example, the annual Nuremberg Rallies, as documented in Leni Riefenstahl's film *Triumph of the Will* (1935), was manufactured to create a unified power, based on coordinated unifying visual and auditory elements, creating

an overwhelming sense of order and unified strength, aligned with the Nazi rule. Each rally, with its elaborate light displays, synchronized marching, and dramatic music evoking emotional responses in the masses, was designed to be a visual and auditory manifestation of a collective mind of the Nazi ideals. The use of flags, banners, and uniforms likewise created a visually cohesive and emotionally charged unit. The grand scale of these events, along with their repetitive, ritualistic nature, was designed to instill a sense of belonging and loyalty to the regime, utilizing the non-rational aspect of the masses. The widespread use of the swastika, appearing on flags, uniforms, armbands, and public buildings likewise contributed to a visual homogeneity that reinforced the regime's ideals of racial and national unity. By saturating the public realm with these symbols, the Nazi government not only embedded their ideology into the fabric of daily life but also constantly reinforced it in the minds of the public, tapping into the unconscious to unify and create a collective mind.

Larry Tye, a longtime journalist for *The Boston Globe*, reveals that Joseph Goebbels was indeed highly inspired by the work of Edward Bernays, keeping several copies of Bernays' books in his personal library (*The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays and the Birth of Public Relations*, 1998). The Second World War thus tragically confirmed Freud's theories about group psychology, demonstrating the catastrophic consequences of mobilizing unconscious instinctual forces in masses. Susan Sontag's essay 'Fascinating Fascism' (1974) defines fascist propaganda as precisely based on aesthetics that glorify the collective, and discusses the practices aimed at tapping into the unconscious drives and desires through eroticizing and fetishizing of power, blurring the boundaries between politics and sexuality. Here I would like to add that Sontag's observations also indicate the addressing of the audience's non-rational aspects not only by means of aesthetics but also by that which Freud calls the primitive instinctual aspect of the individual's psyche governed by sexual drives. Likewise, Claudia Koonz's book, *The Nazi Conscience* (2003) examines the ways of Nazi propaganda utilizing various media, particularly films and posters, in order to cultivate a collective mind aligned with Nazi ideologies. Koonz's study highlights the extensive use of visual propaganda to communicate Nazi ideology to the masses, designed to foster a sense of collective pride, belonging, and unity among the masses. By embedding racist ideas within culturally resonant aesthetics, addressing the unconscious and the emotional, the regime aimed to normalize and legitimize their brutal discriminatory policies. The horrors of concentration camps tragically speak of what might happen if the instinctual drives are unleashed and mobilized. The Third Reich's use of scientific findings as a tool for control of the masses offers a warning of the dangers inherent in weaponizing and politicizing the sciences. These historical examples underscore the dangers Huxley warns about, in regard of intertwining sciences with authoritarian ideologies that may lead to legitimization of inhuman violence. In contemporary contexts, the legacy of Nazi should serve as Huxley's reminder of the potential consequences of weaponizing science and to underscore the importance of critically examining the ways in which culture and politics intersect, recognizing the operating forces of the power dynamics to ensure that the lessons of the past inform our vigilance against similar tactics today.

In the twisted aftermath, governments were convinced that dangerous forces within the populace needed to be controlled to prevent history from repeating itself. The fear generated by the tragic history of Germany, coupled with the political situation in the Soviet Union post-

world war II, brought about public unease, which was then easily manipulated to incite the Cold War. This era saw the justification of repression as a means to maintain social stability. Once again, it was Edward Bernays, now a central adviser to the American government, who was instrumental in promoting and implanting into the public mind the idea that only capitalism could ensure the survival of democracy. At the 1939 World's Fair in New York, Bernays publicly stated that the event was a prime opportunity to foster the connection between democracy and American business. Because of the assumption that the masses were driven by irrational forces that might endanger the stability of society, in order to create a stable society, governments concluded that citizens needed to be trained into well-behaved consumers, and for this, the right conditions had to be created. This was indeed justified as the sole condition for the survival of future democracy. New strategies for creating docile and obedient societies of customers have arisen and psychologists becoming marketing experts began, once again, pioneering the application of Freudian psychoanalytic research to businesses, marketing, and advertising, solidifying the link between consumer behavior and social control. These strategies, seen as essential for the survival of future democracy, demonstrate the extent to which psychological theories were once employed to justify control for the social good.

5. From Repression to Liberation

Although the system of mass production in America was thriving after the First World War, what threatened the economic stability was the danger of overproduction. The economic system, initially based on purchasing necessities for survival, soon became insufficient, putting commerce at risk because once people had a sufficient amount of supplies, they surely would stop buying. Until then, the majority of products and services were advertised to the public on the basis of necessities, however, the major corporations soon realized that the ideology needed to shift from the economy of a need to one based on a desire culture. The new demands were not for thrift but shifted into creating a culture of profligacy, establishing an ethic of consumption rather than production.

To exemplify the need of these new policies, in his *Introduction to Action Writing*, Michael Hrebeniak quotes a Wall Street Banker of the 1930s, Paul Maser, who clearly stated that "people must be trained to desire; to want new things even before the old has been entirely consumed" (Hrebeniak, 2006, p. 3). Hence, Maser argued for "a new mentality" that must be formed and imposed on customers whose "desires must overshadow his needs" (2006, 3). It soon became evident that in order to establish this novel commerce system, a kind of emotional and personal connection to products and services needed to be generated and put into use. As political propaganda proved successful in generating a collective mind by addressing the unconscious, soon the sphere of public relations began to likewise generate a consumerist psyche in ways that address satisfying inner, often irrational, desires; a system which has come to dominate the capitalistic world to this day.

None seemed more experienced and suited for the assignment to manufacture these new types of customers who desired rather than needed products than Edward Bernays. This started the promotion of products by famous people and the placement of goods in media. Various scientists were employed to popularize products, whose studies then were shown as

independent, or directly advertise products as experts on the topic. Motorcars and other goods began to be eroticized, and the advertisements promoted not a purchase for need but rather the advertised products were signifying within a symbolic realm, for instance, exhibiting the inner sense and personality of the purchasers to the world. As a result, in 1929, American president Herbert Hoover stated to a group of advertisers and the team members of his public relations that consumerism had become the new ideology governing American society: "You have taken over the job of creating desire and have transformed people into constantly moving happiness machines. Machines which have become the key to economic progress" (Ebeling, 'Marketing Chimeras' in Aronczyk and Powers, *Blowing up the Brand: Critical Perspective on Promotional Culture*, 2010, p. 241). Hoover's statement eloquently indicates Edward Bernays' success not only in transforming the public into customers driven primarily by unconscious instinctual desires but also in generating democracy into his personal beliefs, discussed above, or put differently, manufacturing a democratic society consisting of docile and obedient, satisfied consumers. This issue was pointed out by a journalist, Samuel Strauss, who in 1924 wrote for *The Atlantic Monthly*:

The problem before us today is not how to produce the goods, but how to produce the customers. Consumptionism is the science of compelling men to use more and more things. Consumptionism is bringing it about that the American citizen's first importance to his country is no longer that of citizen but that of consumer. ('Things Are in the Saddle', *The Atlantic Monthly*, Nov. 1924, pp. 577-588)

By the 1950s, most corporations and advertising companies employed psychologists as marketing experts that would foster and control the desires of customers and help advertise products by appealing to public desires. One such prominent psychologist working in marketing was Ernest Dichter, who in his work, *The Strategy of Desire* (1960), studied and revealed the ways in which unconscious motivations of potential consumers could be uncovered through methods of psychoanalysis. Dichter also worked out and advocated for strategies of identification of the consumer with a product, which, as he argued, could have a *therapeutic effect* since products, if marketed in certain ways, might have the power to improve self-image or dissolve individual frustrations by spending money on self-gratification. Such novel strategies were supposed to be utilized to create a better society and were simply called *the strategy of desire*.

On the other hand, a wave of counter-reaction emerged, objecting to practices of putting psychological findings and psychoanalytical methods into use by which authorities gained power to manipulate and control the public for the sake of profit. For instance, an American journalist and social critic, Vance Packard, published his objections in 1957, entitled *The Hidden Persuaders*, in which he openly questioned the morality of using psychological findings in politics and commerce.

The use of mass psychoanalysis to guide campaigns of persuasion has become the basis of a multimillion-dollar industry. Professional persuaders have seized upon it in their groping for more effective ways to sell us their wares— whether products, ideas, attitudes, candidates, goals, or states of mind. (1957/2007, p. 31)

In his work, Packard explicitly accused authorities of having degenerated the public by manipulating and channeling people's unconscious desires and by doing so, debasing them into passive consumers whose only function in society was to purchase and consume. Since psychological and psychoanalytical methods were put into practice of mass manipulation, the public had no choice but to participate in this "disturbing Orwellian configuration of world today", the world that likewise corresponds to Huxley's warning prediction (*The Hidden Persuaders*, p. 214). Another harsh reaction to the system and *the strategy of desire* came from the prominent German-American philosopher, social critic, and political theorist Herbert Marcuse, who in *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1964/1991) firmly opposes the system of consumerism. Marcuse views consumerism as indeed a form of authoritarian social control that promotes the ideology of freedom as a purchase of happiness and satisfaction. Consumerism, Marcuse argues, is dehumanizing people, turning them into instruments and sprockets in industrial and consumer machines. He also notes that this so-called democratic system, which promotes the ideology that happiness can be purchased, will bring about psychological damage to individuals and eventually, lead to the destruction of societies.

What becomes significant in Marcuse's work and his critique of the system, which he expressively defines as corrupt, is that he fundamentally shifts the destructive force, and by implication the source of evil, previously perceived as hidden irrational forces that drive masses, from individuals that build up masses to the very system that governs, controls, and manipulates these masses. In yet another work, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, published in 1955, Marcuse suggests that the very idea of the need to control people due to their unconscious instinctual drives is but an ideology aimed at justifying power control. He argues that what makes these drives dangerous and destructive is indeed the governmental systematic repression, in other words, Marcuse suggests that systematic repression that aims to civilize through suppression facilitates dangerous and destructive forces. Marcuse's work alludes to Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* but unlike Freud, Marcuse envisions a non-repressive society, claiming that societal progress could emerge only within non-repressive systems, where non-alienating libidinal labour replaces the alienated one. Marcuse firmly argues that Freud was wrong in his assumption that individuals are driven by unconscious destructive forces that needed to be repressed by civilization, and unlike Freud who believed that civilization required the suppression of libidinal drives, Marcuse views these drives as unconscious forces that correspond to the sexual instinctive drive, the so-called Eros, which indeed is liberating and constructive. This argument becomes evident in the following quote:

Culture demands continuous sublimation; it thereby weakens Eros, the builder of culture. And desexualization, by weakening Eros, unbinds the destructive impulses. Civilization is thus threatened by an instinctual de-fusion, in which the death instinct strives to gain ascendancy over the life instinct. Originating in renunciation and developing under progressive renunciation, civilization tends toward self-destruction. (*Eros and Civilization*, 1974, p. 83)

Thus, unlike Freud for whom only the suppression of libidinal drives could produce civilization and progress, Marcuse views the libidinal force as the source of producing civilizations and progress, pointing out that the suppression of Eros can only create guilt and destruction. According to Marcuse, the issue of dangerous forces thus lies within the system, as he explains that “the irreconcilable conflict is not between work, understood as driven by reality principle, and Eros (pleasure principle), but between *alienated* labour (performance principle) and Eros” (emphasis original, 1974, p. 47). Marcuse claims that societal progress can emerge only in non-repressive systems, in which a non-repressive sublimation of Eros is enhanced by the substitution of alienated labour with non-alienating libidinal labour.

Marcuse’s open attacks on the governing system, viewed as destructive by the social control it exercised, have gained wide attention, challenging the ideology of suppression and promoting the liberation of the self. The Freudian idea that every individual is driven by inner irrational forces that need to be controlled for the sake of stability in society was thus fading away, becoming gradually substituted by a new ideology promoting that the inner self needed to be freed and encouraged to express itself. Marcuse’s ideas that the way to structure a progressive society was by liberation were soon twisted and cherry-picked. Popular literature and media were publicizing and implanting the idea that the primary duty of each individual was to liberate the self. As a consequence, the governing system, based on mass production and moulding the public to purchase what has been mass-produced, or to put differently, the system that was profitable only if large numbers of the same product were produced and sold was suddenly seriously threatened by this new ideology of self-expressiveness. Since the shift towards self-expressiveness clashed with the profit-driven system, it also required a significant shift within the means of production and the economic system.

6. From Economy of Need to Desire

By the 1970s, corporations and advertising companies were preoccupied with the idea of how to appeal to the masses of these novel and unpredictable individuals who demanded self-expressiveness while maintaining the system of mass production and economic growth safe. The capitalistic system soon found a way how to fulfill these self-directed desires. This marked the beginning of lifestyle marketing. Organizations and research institutions, such as Stanford Research Institute, were established to facilitate economic development, and by the late 1970s, social scientist and consumer futurist Arnold Mitchell introduced a psychographic methodology called *the Values and Lifestyle* that predicted product choices by these new consumers. Once again, science was put in service for commerce, leading to a wide industry of psychological market research that significantly boosted the economy. A magazine entitled *Advertising Age* rightly acknowledges Mitchell’s *Values and Lifestyle* methodology as one of the ten top market research breakthroughs. Planned obsolescence also became a crucial strategy within this framework. Corporations began to design products intentionally with limited lifespans, ensuring that consumers would need to replace them frequently. This approach guaranteed a steady stream of sales and continuous economic growth. The ideology of selling lifestyles and expressing individuality through consumption dovetailed perfectly with

planned obsolescence, as consumers were constantly enticed to upgrade to the latest models, styles, and technologies.

The societal context of the 1970s, marked by individual self-liberation and self-actualization, thus generated a new economic system operating on the ideology that particular products express the values, inner self, and personality of a consumer. The Freudian view, which previously shaped the economy by manipulating the masses into purchasing a limited range of mass-produced products, was successfully replaced with an ideology advocating the exploration of the inner self while this new approach would expose the consumers to a wide range of products that were marketed as allowing expression of this newly found individuality corresponding to the individual's inner values. It is profoundly ironic that those who advocated for liberation and explicitly reacted against mass conformity and control has thus implicitly contributed to imposing a system of consumerism. Their arguments were soon used and twisted by the controlling system, which rapidly adapted and exploited the ideology of the liberated self to impose an even greater control of the masses. Instead of repression, the system gave vent to the so-called liberated self, enhancing and feeding the infinite desires of this seemingly liberated self, thus engendering a valid justification for an even greater consumerist system. In theory, the shift from the suppressed individual to a liberated one implies that an individual has a free choice to become whomever they choose to be. In practice, this shift has undoubtedly transformed the focus from the collective to an individual whose sole purpose and meaning in life became finding happiness within the self. What becomes fundamentally eloquent in this context is the fact that the initially altruistic concerns focused on altering and bettering societies have become not only irrelevant, shifting the focus from the system into the self, but also by such manipulation of liberating ideology, the system has cunningly transformed societies into a cluster of individuals concerned only about their own well-being, measuring everything through self-satisfaction and individual gratification.

The ideology of products selling lifestyles, enhancing self-expression, expressing identity, and representing values fitted perfectly well with the system of consumerism. Soon, industrial production, which due to fast technological innovations evolved into computer manufacturing system production, allowed for the production of short runs of products. The former fears of overproduction by corporations have dissolved because not only the computer manufacturing system production enabled fast variations in production but also because these *liberated* consumers seemed to have no limits for their liberated desires and self-expressions. The *desire* for self-expression has soon shifted into the *need* for self-expression and this *need* for self-expression requiring a *need* for purchasing of identities. This ideology that fabricates the *need* to purchase identities and lifestyles not only serves and maintains the system of consumerism by which it controls and manipulates masses on individual levels but also it produces economies of unlimited horizons.

Nowadays, the corporate ideology that emphasizes individuality not only shifts societal discontent as individual failure to succeed at happiness but also encourages the belief that individuality and happiness require self-expression. Simultaneously, it offers a wide range of products and services that express individuality, creating a paradox where people feel liberated from societal restrictions while being enslaved by consumerist capitalism. In other words, an

individual's freedom paradoxically enslaves them. Herbert Marcuse described this state of current societies as follows:

... the goods and services that the individuals buy control their needs and petrify their faculties. In exchange for the commodities that enrich their life, the individuals sell not only their labour but also their free time. The better living is offset by the all-pervasive control over living... [People] have innumerable choices, innumerable gadgets which are all of the same sort and keep them occupied and divert their attention from the real issue...The ideology of today lies in that production and consumption reproduce and justify domination... [and] the individual pays by sacrificing his time, his consciousness, his dreams; civilization pays by sacrificing its own promises of liberty, justice, and peace for all. (*Eros and Civilization*, 1974, pp. 100-101).

Although such an operating system seems to be immune, because no individual would want to be deprived of their individual freedom, one element poses a serious threat to the system: contentment and satisfaction. Therefore, everything that makes an individual feel inadequate, unsatisfied, or unhappy is indeed covertly encouraged by the system that readily sells short instances of instant happiness yet makes sure they quickly fade away. Planned obsolescence plays a crucial role in this system by ensuring that consumers remain perpetually unsatisfied and continuously seeking new products. This mechanism aligns perfectly with the ideology of self-expression and the consumerist agenda. Incorporating planned obsolescence into this narrative illustrates how consumer behavior evolved from need-based to desire-based consumption and underscores the manipulation and control exerted by the consumerist system, ensuring perpetual economic growth at the expense of genuine human fulfillment and societal progress. The feeling of inadequacy and dissatisfaction on an individual level is thus linked to economic profit, and anything that cannot be turned into profit, even if it fosters social progress, is discouraged. This manipulation of desires and the emphasis on fleeting happiness echo Aldous Huxley's predictions in *Brave New World*. Huxley foresaw a society where people's manufactured pleasures are likewise controlled to maintain order and stability, where genuine contentment is unattainable because it poses a threat to the system based on control and manipulation. In such a society, individuals are constantly kept in a state of control, preventing them from seeking deeper satisfaction or questioning the system. Thus, the very fabric of modern consumerism aligns with Huxley's vision, where happiness is manufactured to be superficial and genuine fulfillment is systematically undermined to ensure continuous consumption and economic growth.

7. Conclusion

Everything is turned into servitude of the governing system. As explored in the previous chapters, scientific research and technology have become the tools to serve rather than to better the governing systems, manipulating scientific knowledge and controlling information. Technological innovations have been manufacturing confined information and administered knowledge, creating a culture based on escapism and escapist behavior, operating through systematic desensitization, and the notion of standardization of human thought is becoming more relevant today than ever. Even *the Father of Propaganda*, Edward Bernays, noted the enormous potential of technological innovations, which in his lifetime was merely the

television, viewing technology as a great means to a standardization of human thinking and manipulation of knowledge. In his famous work *Propaganda*, Bernays writes:

The American motion picture is the greatest unconscious carrier of propaganda in the world to-day. It is a great distributor for ideas and opinions. The motion picture can standardize the ideas and habits of a nation. Because pictures are made to meet market demands, they reflect, emphasize and even exaggerate broad popular tendencies, rather than stimulate new ideas and opinions. The motion picture avails itself only of ideas and facts which are in vogue. As the newspaper seeks to purvey news, it seeks to purvey entertainment. (*Propaganda*, 2005, p. 156)

It has been almost a century since Bernays' publication of *Propaganda* in 1928, and the current situation seems to have not only not improved but also escalated to an even greater extent. Nowadays, one cannot be sure whom to trust. The boundaries between news, sciences, entertainment, and profit-making have gradually disappeared. Individuals have been successfully trained to desire and require products that express their identity, falsely believing in their free will and thinking within the box designed by and serving the system.

Nowadays, we are surrounded by *experts* and *expert influencers* who tell us how to live—how to fix cars, decorate homes, raise children, cook meals, what wine to drink, whom to vote for, what art to buy, what opinions to hold, how to eat right, how to exercise, how to dress, how to cure diseases, and even what to do to live forever. Every day, armies of new experts, analysts, advisers, business coaches, consultants, and all kinds of authorities appear in the media and elsewhere to fulfill our needs created by the system. The cult of experts is becoming our religion, and their jargon is the sacred language. By living hectic lives created by the system, we grow more and more dependent on these experts. It is no surprise that nowadays, there are even experts on experts, not to mention institutes of expertology.

This manipulation of desires and emphasis on fleeting happiness echoes Aldous Huxley's warning, foreseeing a society where people's pleasures are fabricated and controlled to maintain order and stability and where individuals are constantly kept in a state of control, preventing them from seeking deeper satisfaction or questioning the system. Huxley's warning clearly resonates deeply with our current reality generated by the system that covertly encourages inadequacy ensuring control through continuous consumption. Thus, the very fabric of modern consumerism that created the culture of desire aligns with Huxley's vision, where superficial happiness is manufactured and genuine fulfillment is systematically undermined, and in which the ideology of products selling lifestyles, enhancing self-expression, expressing identity, and representing values perfectly fits the system of control fostering an endless cycle of desire and consumption. This paradoxical freedom enslaves individuals, creating an illusion of liberation while deepening their dependence on consumerist capitalism. In essence, our contemporary society exemplifies Huxley's grim prediction, as it perpetuates a cycle of manufactured desires and superficial happiness, ensuring the dominance of consumerist ideologies and the continuous growth of economic profit at the expense of genuine human and societal progress.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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FUNDING

No financial support was received from any person or institution for the study.

ETHICS

The author declares that this article complies with ethical standards and rules.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Henrieta Krupa  General contribution rate: 100%

The author has confirmed that there is no other person who meets the authorship condition of this study.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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