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Chapter 7: Morality as Consumption

“Philanthropy is about feelings, not facts. It is about icons that move us, not arguments that persuade us.”²¹¹

"Getting involved in something, helping others, improving the fabric of the universe – I believe if you do that, even just a little bit, I think you'll find your life gets better, too."²¹²

“The individual who burns with desire for action but does not know what to do is a common type in our society. He wants to act for the sake of justice, peace, progress, but does not know how. If propaganda can show him this “how,” it has won the game; action will surely follow.”²¹³

Perhaps the most interesting intersection with morality in marketing is to be found in “cause” marketing that goes beyond offering moralized identity packages as commodities to portray the act of consumption itself as moral activism. The latter is, of course, made possible by the former. The marketing project of branding, of cultivating deep emotional attachments to the symbolic face of commodities, commodifies those very emotions, blurring the boundary between the private/personal and the market, between personhood and consumer object, with far-reaching impact on both moral and metaphysical structures. If we see ourselves primarily, or at least frequently, in market terms, as instances of market-derived identities configured through mythic images and narratives whose character is ineluctably spectacular, then our encounter with “others,” particularly others in “need,” almost always as spectacle presented through the same market-inflected and market dominated communication media, must inhabit the same existential

mode. “Others” are market objects too. Our engagement with them is appropriately expected to occur in and through the marketplace.

Žižek calls this way of thinking “cultural capitalism” and claims that its inception occurred in the late 1960s. In both a book and an RSA lecture delivered in 2009, both entitled *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, he develops the idea that charity is integral to the current form of capitalism in the current global economy.²¹⁴ He argues that there are new “global citizens” whose primary, almost exclusive, interaction with the world is through business and humanitarianism, with the result that more and more frequently and broadly the two are brought together as one activity. He cites a number of examples of the way that blending has been adopted in the regular consumer marketplace, such as Starbucks’s insistence that when you buy a cup of their coffee, you “buy into” a larger effort to do something good for the environment through their “Shared Planet Program,” or that when you buy a pair of TOMS shoes, you do something good for others in need. Žižek argues that this form of capitalism offers the consumer the chance to buy their redemption (echoing the PSA message from Keep California Beautiful), at the very least from being merely a consumer. The very act of self-interested consumption is at the same time an act of redemption, connecting one to the broader world in ways that accomplish “good.”

In his lecture and book, Žižek refers to an “old form” of charity, in which a capitalist makes money “in the morning” and then gives part of it back “in the afternoon” through charity, a form in which the activity of the marketplace and that of humanitarian or ecological activism were at least more clearly distinct, if not fully separable. However, his analysis offers a narrative about charity that already fully participates in the construction of caring as shifted from direct action to those near us in need to “causes” one “supports” when one has achieved sufficient

material well-being. Such a notion exhibits the same dynamic he is critiquing: humanitarianism envisioned as primarily, if not exclusively, occurring through economic activity.

What Žižek calls “cultural capitalism” goes by many names now, such as “conscious consumerism,” which urges us to be a consumer in the most responsible way, with an emphasis on limiting that role as much as possible.²¹⁵ It is also called “conscientious consumerism,” or “ethical consumerism,” or even “green” marketing or consumption. All these “movements” share an emphasis on the social consequences of consumption and valorize whatever is organic, recycled, cruelty-free (or free-range), and procured through “fair-trade” or locally. There are “ethical” investment strategies and specific financial market products which limit their portfolios to companies who have approved social sensitivities. An earlier example of this cultural consumer impulse (before the 1960s) might be the exhortation to buy “union-made” goods, or even, in a sense, general interest in kosher products.²¹⁶

These movements gathered steam in the US in the 1970s by emphasizing the protection of life in food harvesting practices and caring for the planet we all “share,” such as buying tuna captured with methods that protected dolphins.²¹⁷ Early activism in these movements frequently took the form of boycotts or protests, but dedicated organizations soon developed. In 1982, *Green America* (originally *Co-op America*), was formed “to harness economic power—the strength of consumers, investors, businesses, and the marketplace—to create a socially just and environmentally sustainable society,” thereby expressing the union of economic and social forces and both consumer and social “goods” in the way to which Žižek calls attention.²¹⁸ The central assumption of this particular mission statement and these movements in general is that the only forces powerful enough to instigate or institute social change are market forces, or that, at the least, such forces are simply more effective. Well-meaning ideas or intentions, stirring

humanitarian or environmental rhetoric, by themselves, are inadequate to properly move us to do the “right” things. This way of thinking accepts as given that we are market-driven and consumer oriented at our core.

The term “green” is so broadly used today (even strictly within the marketplace and not in its broader political formulations) that it is in danger of becoming vapid; and many analysts question both its marketing and environmental effectiveness.²¹⁹ Market rhetoric about green marketing promotes the idea of recruiting or enlisting all “stakeholders” in the process of marketing the product, with the result that consumers participate in marketing as ideologically committed parties, promoting the product as a way of promoting moral or social values.²²⁰ “Green” marketing is a clear example of a social concern that has been largely co-opted by marketing and repurposed for increasing sales and fostering brand loyalty. There is even a term for this co-option: greenwashing – the outward adoption of “green” practices, or at least rhetoric, with the primary motivation of increasing profits.²²¹

Recent trends have broadened the focus of ethical consumerism beyond the environment to include almost any activity or decision that could be considered to have moral implications, which doesn’t seem to exclude much consumer activity. John McMurtry argues that there is no purchasing decision that is not ultimately moral or does not involve moral choice.²²² An early instance of broader ethical concern connected to brand identity, and one that strongly influenced the direction of the ethical consumerism movement as well as corporate business models, was Ben & Jerry’s Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reports first produced in the 1980s. Ben & Jerry were early adopters of the notion that “business can be a source of progressive change,” by “behaving in a socially responsible manner, and dealing with other business parties who...behave in the same manner.”²²³ However one views that possibility for corporate

behavior, probably the majority of corporations now have some form of CSR policy or corporate philanthropy which they frequently trumpet on websites or other marketing material.²²⁴ Since bought out by Unilever in 2000, however, Ben & Jerry's CSR has been largely reduced to the typical set of "values" and lists of "issues" they "care about" along with other corporate philanthropic activity.²²⁵

Efforts to put social "responsibility" and ethics at the heart of a business strategy have generated significant interest and discussion over the past decade or so. A catch-all label for this approach is "doing well by doing good," and operates under the idea that not only is there social pressure from a range of what are often referred to as "stakeholders" to which businesses and brands must be accountable if they wish to be successful in the marketplace, but that putting some kind of "social responsibility" into business strategies just makes good business sense as well. A central and growing moral theme in capitalist culture is that businesses have a responsibility, even obligation, to deliver on "social" and not merely financial metrics, with the assumption that both are ultimately tied together, as the phrase "doing well by doing good" cleverly expresses, since both terms are interchangeable across moral and economic contexts.²²⁶ If integrated into a business strategy, such efforts are inevitably highlighted in the corollary marketing strategies, as we shall soon see.

Not only has there been a trend toward presenting corporate and brand identities as "caring" about the world, but there has also been corresponding movements to hold those corporations and brands accountable. For instance, in 1989, the popular non-profit magazine *ethical consumer* was founded in the UK, and since 2009 continues as a multi-stakeholder co-operative publishing both in print and on the web with the mission of making "global business more sustainable through consumer pressure."²²⁷ It publishes information on the social and

environmental behavior of corporations and brands, including a version of the increasingly popular ratings systems so prominent in consumer culture today that assesses the ethical behavior of companies along nineteen criteria. The webpage that explains that rating system opens with the following heading in bold: “Ethics made easy - a simple way to find the products that reflect your principles.”²²⁸ It proclaims: “You are unique, so are your ethics. Everybody has their own unique set of ethics and beliefs, so we've developed cutting-edge website tools which make for the world's most sophisticated and convenient ethical rating system. In just a few simple steps you can personalise our product guides to produce a shopping list that accurately reflects the issues that are most important to you - be that animal testing, climate change, sweatshop labour, GM crops, nuclear power or whatever.” “Whatever,” indeed.

This particular example highlights quite a few of the dynamics we have been analyzing so far and adds a few more important elements for our current analysis. First, it offers us “personalized” tools for analyzing the business practices of the companies with which we’re interested in shopping, but that necessarily also locate ourselves and our consumption practices along a morally valiative spectrum. Thus, it reinforces the idea that moral concern for how we behave in the world is intimately connected to our consumer activity. It reminds and reassures us that we are “unique,” which is good (if also somewhat complicating), but nonetheless configures us along an attenuated spectrum of “issues” that are both already reified into concrete moral categories, if not also moral commodities, and that further entrenches those particular categories along with the idea that morality consists of such sets of a few select “issues.” It offers us simplicity and ease, noting that they have done the work for us (developing “cutting-edge” analytic tools), since we are presumably quite busy otherwise occupied with more pressing demands, and that participation in their process (through buying and using their magazine) is all

that is needed to be the responsible moral people we obviously would like to be, if only it weren't so darned complicated and time-consuming. It is "ethics made easy."

It is also ethics made consumerist. It assures us that not only can its process help us find the products that "reflect our principles," but, more importantly, it assumes without question, and asks us to assume, that products *can reflect* principles, that each thing we buy has at least a symbolic, if not even more concrete, moral character. We are offered help at preparing shopping lists that go beyond identifying our consumer needs to select items that will meet and fulfill our moral needs. Indeed, those are configured as the same. Both it and all the examples we've discussed locate morality and social activism firmly within economic registers. Doing good doesn't just require money; it is *about* spending and buying, whether directly (buying a particular product because its brand identity "cares" about what we "care" about or promises to make a difference in the world through our consumption) or indirectly (buying as leverage, exerting the only force that can make businesses accountable to our priorities). Such consumerist ethics may not even strike us as odd in any way, since charity, as it is most commonly understood, is about giving money to "causes," about helping others, usually at a distance, through economic and consumer activity. Given this economic character, it is not difficult to see how and why efforts to incorporate "charity" and activism into the more general consumer process would occur, and be expected to have seductive power in our moral consciousness.

Making a Difference: Feeling Good (About Yourself)

People want to make a difference. As much social science research makes clear, we are in some important ways commonly driven by sympathy and an impulse to altruism in our behavior and actions. Those same impulses to "care," however, are also experienced as self-interest, and sometimes the impulses and opportunities for egoism and altruism clash. When

presented with the choice between fulfilling some desire and deferring that desire in order to further the interests of others or some larger community, frequently the choice to defer is deferred. As *ethical consumer* recognizes, people at least feel quite busy. Many of us feel that we are stretched thin, over-committed, or at least heavily engaged in daily routines and practices with precious little time to spend specifically aimed at helping others or "making a difference" in the ways typically conjured by that term. We also live in an age in which opportunities for spending our time, largely in ways that are self-gratifying, have exploded. Almost all marketing, as is obvious, affirms and feeds the impulses to gratify ourselves. This clash may create cognitive tension. We are bombarded with messages urging us to give in to our impulses to make ourselves happy and yet we also feel a moral responsibility, if not even natural impulse, to do something good, to improve ourselves and our communities, our world.

I would argue that this tension is not as sharply drawn as it might at first appear. The impulse to do something good is not so neatly differentiated from the impulse to gratify ourselves. I'm not talking about the case of those occasional individuals whom we believe derive a great deal of pleasure from helping others such that they choose "selfless" activities over many other possibilities for self-gratification. I'm talking about how the impulse to do good is itself an impulse of self-interest, at least according to a range of social science theories.²²⁹ The emotions we feel which prompt us to make a difference or do something good are either gratifying in themselves (sympathy, love, pride, gratitude) or create a discomfort that begs for resolution through some specific act (guilt, pity, shame, disgust, embarrassment, blame). If evolutionary theories or even just much contemporary psychological research about our emotions are at all correct, then it is not really possible to draw a clear line between our impulses to gratify ourselves and our moral impulses to help others or do good.

The impulse to make a difference and the relation of that impulse to our own sense of well-being and impulses for self-gratification is not lost on Madison Avenue. Recently, a particular kind of marketing has spread that offers to resolve any last remaining vestige of this tension. No longer are we to choose between making ourselves happy or doing good for the world. Our lack of time or opportunity is no deterrent. We are told that making a difference *is* what makes us feel good; and we can do good in the world *by* making ourselves happy, through buying things we already want. In this new message, one hears echoes of Chernyshevsky's formulation of and challenge to rational egoism: "Yes, I will always do what I want. I will never sacrifice anything, not even a whim, for the sake of something I do not desire. What I want, with all my heart, is to make people happy. In this lies my happiness."²³⁰ It is the marriage of egoism and altruism. In this marriage, charity has been further commoditized and fully integrated into straightforward consumer activity. It has become something marketed and sold. Therefore, both it and ourselves as difference-makers, as doing good in the world, are something we can purchase; and that purchase is a "deal," because we get something we like and want in the bargain. We love deals. There is a new kind of cause marketing that invites us to become a new kind of moral being, activist consumers, who, *through our consumption*, make the world better.

I want to look in detail at several examples of this kind of marketing, TOMS "One for One" campaign and Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty," in particular. But before turning to those, let's take a look at some other, perhaps less complex, instances of this type of marketing to get a clearer sense of how it works. An illustrative example can be found in a 2008 press release from Trevelino-Keller (the "country's fourth fastest growing PR firm") which announced that a shopping center in Atlanta, The Corner – Virginia Highland, had become the first "Carbon Neutral Zone" in the US, a status it achieved by purchasing "carbon offsets."²³¹ The press

release begins with this contextual introduction: “Climate change is one of the most daunting challenges of the 21st century, but the recent growth and popularity of American eco-consciousness has created a new sense of urgency to address this problem. Today the green movement took a significant step forward as the first ‘Carbon Neutral Zone’ in the United States was announced in Atlanta.”

The title “Carbon Neutral Zone” certainly sounds impressive, and although the further discussion (one cannot really call them “details”) provided in the press release of the process of procuring “carbon offsets” is certainly confusing, we are assured by it that this “first-of-its-kind” ecological initiative will “set the standard for American companies looking to adopt sustainable business practices and reduce their carbon footprints,” and allow all those participating in and patronizing the “zone” to express their care for the environment together. Should the reader be curious to learn more, though, a little research into the Chicago Climate Exchange and the details of this “zone” will reveal that the retail shops participating did not alter their practices or energy-use patterns in any way, but merely paid money through the Chicago Climate Exchange to other energy users who weren’t polluting as much. These other companies also weren’t required to alter their energy-use in any way. They were merely already more energy-efficient and leveraged that efficiency as a kind of trading share in a pollution exchange market (that closed at the end of 2010). As a result, these shops were able to present themselves as ecologically conscious and as leading the fight for a more “sustainable” system without doing anything other than spending a little money, thus providing a paradigm of the “activism” envisioned by this kind of marketing. The green movement’s “significant step forward” seems, in this case, to have been rather a new kind of walking in place, a new guise for the same old consumer activity.

Sometimes the marriage of consumerism and helping the world is serendipitous for a particular brand. In early 2010, Proctor & Gamble began running commercials for its dish detergent brand, Dawn, which highlighted the fact that it seems to be the soap of choice among non-profit groups that work to repair the damage caused to wildlife from oil spills. It did not originate this environmental connection. Indeed, according to a *NYTimes* article, it rejected all requests to donate Dawn detergent to such groups until 1989.²³² Eventually, however, someone in the company must have realized that there was some benefit to be gained from the connection and commercials highlighting Dawn's unintentional environmentalism were produced. One such commercial showed oily ducks, otters, and penguins being washed with numerous bottles of Dawn detergent in the background, accompanied by the caption: "Thousands of animals caught in oil spills have been saved using Dawn. Now your purchase can help."²³³ We are then shown a bottle of Dawn with a new label element which reads, "1 Bottle = \$1 to save wildlife." The commercial ends by reminding us that Dawn is "Tough on grease, yet gentle," with some fine print about a \$500,000 cap on donations and the requirement to visit dawnsaveswildlife.com, where we will learn that "the little things we do can make a big difference."

<Figure 7.1 near here>

When we visit the website, as we must for our purchase to "help," we are shown an idealized natural world featuring adorable ducklings (see figure 7.1) and are told: "Everyone has the power to change the world — even by doing something as simple as washing the dishes." On the main Dawn website, one can watch another commercial about the rescue effort connection in which we see more images of oily wildlife and lots of bottles of Dawn over which a narrator tells us: "To help save wildlife affected by oil spills, rescue workers have opened up a lot of Dawn. They rely on it because it's tough on grease, yet gentle. But even they'll tell you,

Dawn helps open something even bigger.”²³⁴ We then see lots of cleaned wildlife released from cages, presumably freed back to the wild. Another version shows a number of animal parents and offspring in various adorable scenes with the caption: “Even a mother can’t protect them from oil spills. That’s why rescue experts turn to Dawn. It’s tough on grease, yet gentle.”²³⁵ The ad ends by urging us to “Do more than dishes.”

The “power” or opportunity to “change the world” just by doing the dishes is perhaps a new, and undoubtedly incredible, bit of news for most readers. We are supposed to be surprised (given the tone of the narrator) that opening a bottle of Dawn to wash our dishes actually opens up “something even bigger.” Proctor & Gamble was apparently surprised as well. But once they realized that, through no particular environmental intentionality of their own, their particular combination of surfactants and detergents is actually, well, tough on grease yet gentle in ways that give it value in rescue efforts, those efforts immediately became something Dawn “cares” about and remain an integral part of their marketing campaign still. This marketing makes a specific point of informing us that not only can consumer products have unintended or hidden moral value, but that our own consumption of those products, simply by virtue of keeping them in business through our patronage, shares that moral value, even without intentionality on our part as well. Certainly we are invited to “care” about the poor oily animals, or at least invited to think better of Dawn if we already do so; but the key point of this example is the way in which our regular consumer activity is configured as “good” for the world even if we don’t particularly care, or don’t know that we do or should. We can do good and do the dishes at the same time, because, in some directly economic sense, those are the same thing, even if we remain unaware of what the “good” is or how it is accomplished.

Another interesting example of “doing well by doing good” is found in Clorox Company’s “Filter for Good” campaign featuring the Brita brand. As Jack Neff, at *AdAge* reports, the Oakland based Brita company was approached by the city of San Francisco with a request to develop a filtered water bottle that could replace the usual plastic water bottles.²³⁶ When the green movement was gaining momentum in the mid-1970s, Perrier began a \$5 million marketing campaign initially aimed at making imported bottled water a status symbol. The idea of pure, bottled water struck a chord, however, in the environmental movement and production and sales of bottled water has grown dramatically worldwide in the intervening years, now generating more than \$100 billion in annual revenue. According to typical PR material on the subject, the global consumption of bottled water has increased by a factor of five since 1990, and enough plastic water bottles are produced each year to encircle the planet 190 times.²³⁷ That’s a lot of bottles, and that many bottles headed for landfills or littered around the environment has generated a “green” backlash (not to mention the significant controversy over the actual quality or production methods of many bottled water brands). Hence the request from San Francisco.

In 2009, Brita joined with Nalgene, a prominent maker of BPA-free reusable water bottles, and created the “Filter for Good” PR campaign under the guidance of Suzanne Sengleemann, who was charged with increasing the company’s profitability while improving its environmental impact by focusing more on the health and environmental benefits of their products rather than the taste.²³⁸ They created a website, filterforgood.com, where, as Sengleemann puts it, people can go “to go get information on where to purchase the products or, more important, what they can do to make a difference.” This website is featured on both Brita’s and Nalgene’s home websites as well. Nalgene’s page dedicated to the campaign is low-key, but urges browsers to buy the product to make a difference:

Want to reduce the amount of waste you produce? Want to help reduce global warming? Purchase this commemorative FilterForGood bottle. Brita and Nalgene are teaming up to promote the importance of clean water and show how small changes can make a big difference for people and the environment. Nalgene & Brita have teamed up to create the FilterForGood pledge. It's a simple commitment to reduce your personal waste by giving up bottled water, even if it's just a few days each week. Together, filtered water and a reusable bottle are an ideal solution for going green at home and on the go. It's an easy change that can make a big difference.²³⁹

The promotional website, filterforgood.com, redirects to Brita's dedicated page, which is quite a bit splashier. This page has a number of prominent graphical elements inviting the viewer to "join the movement" which it reports has over 430,000 "members," and tallying the number of water bottles "saved" from ending in landfills (almost 430,000,000 at the time I last accessed the site). As is typical of many marketing and PR campaigns, the website highlights celebrity involvement and endorsements. Early in the campaign, Bono, of U2, worked out an arrangement to replace all water backstage at their concerts with Brita filtered water, an example soon followed by the Sundance Film Festival and a paid arrangement with NBC's "Biggest Loser" series.²⁴⁰ Its website prominently displays the "involvement" of many other celebrities and celebrity venues, such as Dave Matthews, Jason Mraz, and the popular South-by-Southwest music festival.

Early in the campaign, Brita produced a series of PR videos. One such video, in 2009, documented a PR event, the "Brita Climate Ride," in which over 150 "activists, experts, and everyday people" rode bicycles from New York City to Washington, D.C. to "raise awareness

about climate change and renewable energy.”²⁴¹ The video, entitled “My Hope for the Future,” features a number of people in bike-riding gear “sharing” their hopes for the future, which all turn out to involve one or several of the now familiar concerns of these movements: a greener, more local, more sustainable, and/or more communal world working together for change. One young woman then tells us that her hope for the future is that “everyone realizes they can make a difference in small ways, something as simple as using a Brita pitcher and reusable bottle at home.”

What is most interesting for me in these campaigns is shown clearly in the video’s “branding” of “hope for the future.” Brita is following wide-spread PR and marketing practices in its campaign, offering to help us “make a difference” by doing something “small” and not too demanding on our time, energy, or pocketbook. It ties into long-standing “concerns,” even using magical words borrowed from the movements themselves, such as the notion of “saving” bottles (albeit from landfills) which echoes the now nostalgic refrains to “save the dolphins” or “save the whales.” It cleverly insinuates its own marketing into the larger ethical consumerist movement, equating a “hope” for more reusable water consumption with all the other “hopes” of the green movement. But it does more than this as well. It offers a particular formulation of “care,” in this case the very importantly personalized “*My hope for the future.*” As we will see when we look at TOMS, part of what is at work in these campaigns is an effort to “brand” the very act of caring. When Brita gathers a group of people for a PR event and invites them to share their hopes, and then offers those to us through brand marketing, the hopes themselves take on, in at least some small way, the character and imprimatur of the brand.

Making the World a Better Place, One Purchase at a Time

This is certainly what TOMS or the FEED Projects + Target's new "FEED USA" campaigns hope to accomplish. The FEED USA campaign title echoes the name of the United States' largest domestic hunger-relief (and celebrity darling) charity organization, Feeding America, which operates a national network of food banks, and with whom FEED is partnering.²⁴² FEED Projects is a retail outlet founded on the popular new idea that consumer products can be vehicles for social change. The company was formed in 2006 by Lauren Bush, granddaughter to President George H. W. Bush, and Ellen Gustafson, one-time "spokesperson" for the UN World Food Programme, with a new business model often labeled "social entrepreneurship" which claims to balance the usual business priority on profit with social responsibility.²⁴³ It sells bags (many in burlap), and now accessories (mostly woven bracelets) and apparel (mostly T-shirts), and a portion of each sale is donated to the UN World Food Programme, UNICEF, and other partner programs, through which the company claims to have provided over 75,000,000 "meals" by mid-2014. There is an "impact" and a "story" as product description categories on the website for every item. The "impact" informs the consumer how many meals his or her purchase will provide. The "story" for the FEED 5 woven bracelet, for instance, reads: "Making a difference, one weave at a time."²⁴⁴ Its mission statement proclaims that "FEED is proud to help FEED the world, one bag at a time." The company also formed a non-profit wing in 2008, called the FEED Foundation, "dedicated to ending world hunger – one child at a time."²⁴⁵

This emphasis on "one at a time" seems to be both a nod to the conventional wisdom that change comes in "small steps," and perhaps also a built-in apology for continuing the "crusade" indefinitely. The effort to eradicate any given social problem in one fell swoop would not make for a very sustainable business model. Instead, this model and its marketing focuses upon the

“good” each individual purchase can accomplish, helping us to feel better about ourselves even under the circumstance where we face the same social problems over the course of time without apparent reduction in severity. We have done our part, we can say, perhaps several times over, having purchased the bottle of Dawn, or the Nalgene bottle, or the clothing or accessory item again and again, each purchase a separate “act of charity.” As FEED Projects explains on their “Mission” webpage, “the impact of each product, signified by a stenciled number, is understandable, tangible, and meaningful.”²⁴⁶ Thus, FEED makes a huge and complex problem easy to understand and to address, one purchase at a time. Social activism made easy, and consumerist.

Such an approach is tailored to an awareness of the world that is itself episodic. As we discussed in Chapter 2, journalistic narratives about the world focus on the anecdotal and dramatic, on images of individual hungry children or oil-covered animals from the latest environmental or social crisis. It cannot and so does not address itself to larger social structures or systems that are ultimately the root causes for these crises. Therefore, “social entrepreneurs” are relieved of the burden of doing so as well. They may offer rhetorical gestures toward the *idea* of systemic or structural dynamics, but the business model itself, “one for one” as TOMS so accurately labels it, is the idea that a single purchase will provide a single “good” to address some localized and concrete rather than systemic and structural “need.” If the need strikes us as dauntingly large, so much the better, since that means many purchases will be required to address it.

FEED Projects also highlights the country of origin of some of its products, such as its bracelets, simultaneously presenting itself as engaged in “fair-trade” and “fair-labor” relationships and also providing the exotic appeal of having an object made by hands one has

also in some small way “helped” by means of one’s purchase. Through the object, one is able to “touch” or feel more directly connected to the beneficiary of one’s “help.” The object bought is the symbolic surrogate for the “other” in need whom one “cares” about, and its use is a constant reminder of the other, but more importantly, of the “care” one experiences and the “good” one has done, something no mere donation to a “worthy cause” can hope to provide. It is, of course, a fetishized “other” and a fetishized “care.” It is interesting that FEED Projects, as is also the case with TOMS, focuses upon children. Blake Mycoskie is on the Board of Advisors for FEED Projects. The humanitarian pull on our emotions that children in particular exert has long been recognized in philanthropic and humanitarian organizations. Almost all the PR material for FEED, including numerous videos of Ms. Bush Lauren touring the US or the world, feature shots of her with children, and the marketing focuses upon providing “school meals.”

In late 2012, the company launched “FEED USA,” a joint venture with Target, offering more than “50 lifestyle products” whose purchase includes the opportunity to “help fight hunger.”²⁴⁷ The campaign webpage and press releases speak of FEED’s history of fighting global hunger, but then coming to recognize that even in the US people “do not have dependable access to enough food.” The page offers us information about the problem, “hunger by the numbers,” which informs us that “1 in 6 Americans” (by which, I assume, they primarily mean people in the US) are “affected by hunger,” and that 17 million children are living in “food-insecure households.” The explanation offered for the “lack of dependable access” to enough food is “limited money and resources,” which is, frankly, a laughable attempt to “explain” the dynamics behind the broad and pervasive structural problems of poverty and hunger anywhere, but particularly in a wealthy industrial country such as the US. As already noted, there is no

attempt to communicate any real analysis of the socio-economic systems and structures underlying this phenomenon.

It is, of course, impossible to say whether the company newly became aware of the phenomenon of hunger in the US, or simply recognized a new marketing opportunity. It is not clear how the association with Target came about, at least not from either's PR releases.²⁴⁸

Target appears to consider the collaboration to be one of its "designer" partnerships, in which Target markets a particular product label for a limited time. Target claims to have longstanding interest in the issue of hunger, however, and has donated food and produce from its grocery sections to Feeding America for over a decade.²⁴⁹ As Target's president of community relations says in a *USA Today* article written as part of its PR rollout: "This for us isn't a cause of the moment. It's something we believe in and have stood for since the beginning of time." Perhaps not quite that longstanding, but Target certainly recognizes the popularity of "cause" marketing. As Ward also says, "People are time starved and they're looking for easy solutions and they certainly want to make a difference." That about sums up the central assumption of cause marketing.

As should be clear by now, cause marketing is both a bit of a gold mine and a liability for business. The much cited 2010 study by Cone Communications, a PR firm that specializes in cause marketing, reported findings that would be very hard for any marketing agency to ignore:

Americans' enthusiasm for cause marketing...continues to strongly influence their purchase decisions:

- 88% say it is acceptable for companies to involve a cause or issue in their marketing;

- 83% want more of the products, services and retailers they use to benefit causes;
- 85% have a more positive image of a product or company when it supports a cause they care about; and,
- 80% are likely to switch brands, similar in price and quality, to one that supports a cause.

Not only are consumers willing to switch among similar brands, they are also willing to step outside their comfort zones. When it supports a cause:

- 61% of Americans say they would be willing to try a new brand or one unfamiliar to them;
- 46% would try a generic or private-label brand; and,
- Nearly one-in-five consumers (19%) would be willing to purchase a more expensive brand.

The data signal a ripe opportunity for companies to engage consumers on a new level – one that fulfills both their needs for goods and to do good.²⁵⁰

More than 8 out of 10 people surveyed want the things they buy to perform a kind of double duty, making a difference in the world in addition to providing consumer satisfaction. Of course, less than half are willing to forego a designer label to do so, and slightly less than 2 out of 10 are willing to spend more in the process.

This means, for all practical purposes, that some effort at social responsibility is simply the cost of doing business in this new consumer environment; but it is also an opportunity, and can be made the core business model, as is the case with FEED Projects and TOMS. The most coveted consumer segment is known as Millennials, those 18-24 year old consumers who grew

up with “community service” as either an educational requirement or a necessary element of their resumes. It is a group that is not only socially conscious, but has been trained, in a sense, to express that consciousness as an element of their normal life practice, even if the time and energy dedicated to it is miniscule relative to their other desires and activities. In a rather direct sense, they have been trained to expect social activism of themselves, but for it not to cost too much.²⁵¹

Target speaks directly to this consumer segment explicitly in this new language of social activism. In mid-2013, once the “collection” became available in stores, Target produced a series of commercials to highlight the products. One commercial tells us about one such Millennial named Kate. We see her engaged in a range of activities, but the point of the images is clearly just to present an attractive young woman doing things we are supposed to find appealing and fun. It is the “story” the narrator tells us that is the primary argument of the ad:

Kate needs plates, and a cute tote-bag, and a shirt for her date. So, Kate comes to Target, who’s making products with FEED, to give meals across America. Kate’s plates give Mike a treat [we will meet Mike in other commercials]; her bag gets her mentioned; and her shirt gets Mike’s attention. But her shirt *also* gives 16 meals, her bag gives 28 meals, and her plates give 50. So now, Sean gets lunch [we see a picture of an appealing young Asian boy], a family gets dinner [we see a family at the dinner table passing food], and lots of people smile [Kate and her friends laugh together]. Kate did a great thing; and the people she feeds will too. Well done, Kate. Enjoy the plates.

The clear argument of this ad is that we can get the things we desire to create the idealized world we desire and *also* do good without doing anything more than simply shopping.

The pleasure is at least doubled – there are more “smiles” generated – because we get both the attention for which we long and to feel good about ourselves for making a difference and doing a good thing; and we get to enjoy the plates! We do not have to spend one second or one bit of energy or money we weren’t going to spend anyway on ourselves in order to do something “great” and make a difference in the world. It is particularly interesting to note the specific choice of words used to talk of Kate’s philanthropy – “the people *she* feeds” – as if Kate is directly giving them food or even personally spooning it into their hungry mouths. As long as the products we buy and the businesses we patronize “donate” some nebulous amount (however “clearly stenciled” on the products) to some ambiguous “cause,” then it is precisely the same as if we were doing it ourselves. Consumption *as* activism. Well done, Target. Enjoy the profits.

One For One

As Žižek has noted, there is perhaps no clearer example of this business model and the idea of consumption as social activism than TOMS shoes. TOMS was also founded in 2006, by Blake Mycoskie, whom the company refers to as the “Chief Shoe Giver,” a celebrity of sorts from his appearance on the second season of *The Amazing Race*. Blake’s “story,” as told on the company’s website at every conceivable opportunity and in many biographies, explains that it was during a vacation to Argentina in 2006 that Blake became aware of the “need” for shoes for children in the rural areas of the country, and founded his shoe company in order to “help.”²⁵² As Blake says, he was “struck with the desire – the responsibility – to do more.”

The company was founded on a business model like that of FEED Projects, in which a portion of the profit from every sale is set aside as a donation to some humanitarian organization. An earlier webpage for the company puts it succinctly: “One person buys. One person is helped.”²⁵³ TOMS, however, personalizes that model more fully. The consumer is offered a

more direct “relation” to the person in need by means of a simple one for one correspondence between product bought and product given. The company promised to give a pair of shoes to some child for every pair bought, and so each shoe purchase offers the consumer the opportunity to feel as if he or she has given a pair of shoes to some specific (if unknown) child in need. The CSR page on their website explains the overarching idea: “At TOMS[®], we believe we can improve people's lives through business.” As the 2013 “Giving Report” explains, TOMS is founded in the idea that it is possible to transform “everyday purchases into a force for good around the world.”²⁵⁴

A promotional video from 2011 lays out the central argument this business model hopes will persuade consumers to shop with them.²⁵⁵ In it, we are told that we make, on average, 612 decisions every day, some big and life-changing, but most of them pretty small. We are asked “what if” one of the small decisions could be a big one as well? We are then told that in 2006, Blake Mycoskie made a decision that “changed everyday purchases into a force for good.” The video ends with the question, both graphically and narrated: “Would you change one daily decision to help change a life?” That is a seductive hypothetical: the idea that we could just change one small decision, buy this brand of whatever rather than another and the world could become a better place. This business model hopes all of us would do that if given the chance, and why wouldn’t we?

That basic idea of “One for One” became a “movement,” to use the company’s own term for it, that now drives everything the company does. Its webpage dedicated to the trademarked phrase explains: “We’re in business to help improve lives. With every product you purchase, TOMS will help a person in need. One for One.”²⁵⁶ That “movement” situates itself firmly within the larger green and ethical consumerist movements, expressing concern for and

adherence to practices that focus on the environmental and social impacts of their products and operations, including fair labor, sustainable and environmentally-friendly (even vegan) materials, and “giving back to the community.” Their CSR page presents the obligatory promise for this business model: “Our efforts are focused on making sure that we operate in a manner that’s consistent with our brand values.” These values are not explicitly articulated at any point, but the overall ethos of the marketing and frequently repeated origin narratives lead the consumer to understand, however vaguely, that they are the same general values of the larger movements, i.e., the desire to make the world a better place.

It is a business model and “movement” that has generated significant attention and praise. The company has worked to formulate its “movement” with the usual signposts of social activism, including annual events to “raise awareness” about issues, such as “Day Without Shoes” or “World Sight Day.” There are a number of “TOMS Campus Clubs” at universities and high schools in the US and Canada.²⁵⁷ Blake’s bio page on the company website attests to some of his accolades:

In 2009, Blake and TOMS received the Secretary of State's 2009 Award of Corporate Excellence (ACE). At the Clinton Global Initiative University plenary session, former President Clinton introduced Blake to the audience as "one of the most interesting entrepreneurs (I've) ever met." *People Magazine* featured Blake in its "Heroes Among Us" section, and TOMS Shoes was featured in the Bill Gates *Time Magazine* article "How to Fix Capitalism." In 2011, Blake was named on *Fortune Magazine's* "40 Under 40" list, recognizing him as one of the top young businessmen in the world.²⁵⁸

In 2011, Blake published *Start Something That Matters*, a #1 *New York Times* bestseller, which offers, as his website tells us, “his own amazing story of inspiration, and the power of incorporating giving in business.”

Yet even while his particular model of social entrepreneurship has garnered attention and praise, there have been questions about labor practices and manufacturing locations, as the company’s CSR page also acknowledges:

As we've disclosed previously in our Giving Report, our shoes are made in China, Ethiopia and Argentina. We are aware of the challenges associated with overseeing a global supply chain and our global staff actively manages and oversees our suppliers and vendors to ensure that our corporate responsibility standards are upheld. On an annual basis, we require our direct suppliers to certify that the materials incorporated into our products are procured in accordance with all applicable laws in the countries they do business in, including laws regarding slavery and human trafficking. We also clearly define appropriate business practices for our employees and hold them accountable for complying with our policies, including the prevention of slavery and human trafficking within our supply chain.

The fact that the company feels the need to reassure its consumers (twice in the same paragraph, and twice more further down the page) that they are paying careful attention to the issue of “slavery and human trafficking” says something significant about the locations chosen to produce the shoes, which now includes a new plant in Haiti.

The shoes consumers buy are produced in China. The “giving shoes” are produced in the other countries, and the company promotes that fact as its way of providing jobs in the locations

their philanthropy targets. Fair enough, I suppose; but it is also fair to ask how any company would go about holding a particular plant accountable to the “applicable” laws and local labor practices, much less the company’s own “brand values,” in a country such as Ethiopia. Present PR material merely identifies “outside experts” and “respected third parties” as agents for assuring conformity to standards, including a “respected international inspection and consulting firm” to audit the manufacturers on a periodic basis through visits, both announced and unannounced. Previous versions of their website, however, have mentioned the international auditing firm, Intertek, who claims to be the “global leader in the testing, inspection, and auditing of consumer goods,”²⁵⁹

I am not raising these concerns to call TOMS’ practices or integrity into question. I am not particularly interested in the possibility of hypocrisy or bad faith.²⁶⁰ There is a more important point which this juxtaposition of praise and concern brings to the fore for us than just the perhaps inevitable complications arising from the combination of a large for-profit business, with its “global supply chain,” and the moral impulse to do good and make a difference. It is not the moral character of this or any company that is at question in our analysis, but the nature of morality itself as inflected by both their rhetoric and practices and our adoption of their model of “caring.”

We can *both* admire Blake and his company for the “good” they do, hold it and others like it out as a model for a more morally and socially conscious way of doing business, *and also* be suspicious of their motives and actual accomplishments *because* there is practically no way to measure either their sincerity or the degree and quality of “difference” our participation in their consumerist model of philanthropy accomplishes. Such a juxtaposition is made possible by virtue of the way philanthropy is configured now, not only by these new business models, but by

our larger “cultural capitalist” understanding of charity, wherein the sheer distance of those in “need” and the global manufacturing chain or humanitarian organizational network intercalated between their need and our “giving” makes it virtually impossible to hold either claims or activity “accountable.”

We buy things. That’s what we experience directly: the goods we desire and the normal consumer exchange. There is no difference for us, as activity, in buying TOMS shoes or FEED bags than in buying any other pair of shoes or clothing accessory. We do not see children fed or shod. We do not know how many are “helped,” or where they are, or how; not really, not even when the “numbers” are helpfully stenciled on the product we buy. The TOMS website offers helpful “Where We Give” maps on most pages with the countries in which the “giving partners” operate color coded by the kind of “giving” that happens there. It is a map of the whole world, though, and roughly half of it is colored in some fashion; so it doesn’t narrow down the location of the beneficiary of one’s individual consumer philanthropy very much. The casual consumer of the product doesn’t even really know if TOMS or FEED does the “giving” themselves, or sub-contracts it through other humanitarian providers; and they don’t need to know, either for whatever giving process occurs to happen, or to feel good about themselves. We are simply sold things, with this single but all important difference, things with a story attached. That’s why Blake’s “story” is plastered all over the website, all marketing and PR materials, and his book, and is the centerpiece of every speaking engagement. It’s the story we are being sold and asked to buy. It is the story that is the sole conveyor and site of the “morality” that we purchase and exercise in our consumer activity.

That is also why TOMS has branched out to tell new stories of new possibilities for “giving.” On the website, the menu at the top lists the usual product categories where the

consumer can directly shop for the products which interest them, but also the new “Marketplace,” which we are told is “a new destination for making a difference,” TOMS’ new “platform” for partner social entrepreneurs where one can “Shop by Cause” or by the region of the world they’d like to “help,” or at least from which they’d like to obtain exotic goods.²⁶¹ The menu also lists two additional categories, however, “Stories,” and “One for One.” These categories and pages represent the primary marketing effort and are where the central moral persona of the business is presented and sold. That stories are the most important element of TOMS is made clear by the presence of a dedicated page (a kind of blog about the company’s persona and philanthropic activities) on the same level as any of the retail pages.

On these pages, the consumer will learn about the new initiatives TOMS has developed under its “one for one” model, first, in 2011, eyewear that offers the “gift of sight,” and just this year, coffee that offers the “gift of water.” As I am writing this chapter, TOMS has just announced a new animal initiative, started by TOMS’ “Chief Animal Lover,” Heather Mycoskie, in which funds from the sales of special shoes will be earmarked for the Virunga National Park to support a population of mountain gorillas.²⁶² Every page on TOMS’ website highlights the stories. The Giving Report is replete with stories. The Marketplace page depends upon them. Even the regular online retail pages for shoes, with the usual selection of styles and options accompanied by descriptions and reviews, features a large “One for One” image and link for “learning more,” where, if we click, we will be told the stories. The new retail page for coffee highlights them even more prominently. The main One for One page links to separate pages for “The Gift of Shoes,” “The Gift of Sight,” and “The Gift of Water” where the TOMS story is front and center.

Each of these pages spells out the idea of the “movement,” tells the consumer what is given and where, and how it all works and what the purchase “supports.” The top element of every page, however, is a selection of “giving in action” stories, including videos, where the consumer can participate, even if vicariously, in the “good” their purchase is about to accomplish. On the “Gift of Water” page, dedicated to the latest market initiative from TOMS, giving, for each bag of coffee bought, “a week of clean water to a person in need” in each of the five countries from which TOMS sources its coffee beans, we are invited to read “Josephine’s Story.” The quick 3-slide presentation introduces us to a 10 year-old girl from Rwanda who “treks” up a mountainside four hours every day for water. The second slide vaguely references violence which can occur in a struggle for the water available and shows a picture of an unidentified person with blood on her hands and legs filling a 5-gallon container from a spigot. The final slide shows Josephine again, and tells us that “Water For People,” TOMS’ partner humanitarian organization in this initiative, worked with the “local government” to bring access to improved water closer to home, changing Josephine’s life for the better, and concludes by assuring us that “it’s a story [TOMS] can recreate in communities all over the world - thanks to people like you.”²⁶³

This is a “story” only in the loosest sense of the term. We “meet” Josephine only in the sense that we see a picture and read her name. Other than her difficulties with getting water, we know nothing about her, and learn nothing from her “story.” The story is really about TOMS and the consumer, and tells the same story all the TOMS stories tell: a story of TOMS and us together making a difference in the world through our consumption. On this page we are invited to learn more about “Direct Trade,” which is the name TOMS gives to its supply and manufacturing process. In the story we find on the linked page, “Follow the Bean,” we again

meet a Josephine from Rwanda, although we do not know if it is the same person, and in this instance she is a mother of eight and the owner of one of the few female-owned and “best-running” farms in the region. We are shown a clearly staged picture of Blake with someone we must assume is Josephine, and are told that “it’s important for us [meaning, presumably, both TOMS and the consumer] to get to know our farmers personally and learn their amazing stories.”²⁶⁴ The “amazing story” that follows (with the exception of learning that Josephine lost her husband in the genocide in Rwanda) is just the usual marketing hype surrounding the artisan-like crafting of any connoisseur or gourmet item, but it is noted that “the women who sort the beans take pride in knowing that their work will be appreciated all over the world.”

<Figure 7.2 near here>

TOMS eyewear features a distinctive stripe on the frame, and we are told that “every stripe tells a story” (see Figure 7.2). The stripe that is most obvious, because white, is discreetly located on the part of the frame usually covered by the wearer’s ear or hair, but the point of it, of course, is to announce to everyone that one’s eyewear is more than just eyewear, that it is a kind of social activism, and that one is a kind of social activist for buying the sunglasses. It is interesting that the glasses tell this “story” most obviously when they are not actually in use. John Whitley, Creative Director for TOMS Eyewear, says: “When I design something, I always start with a story.”²⁶⁵ The story, we are told on the ad image, is this: “The hand-painted stripes symbolize the three elements of One for One. The first stripe on the temples represents you [the consumer]. The stripe on the tips represents the person you are helping give sight to. And the middle stripe is TOMS, bringing the two together.” This “story” presents TOMS as essential to connecting with those in need. Without TOMS, how would the two ever come together, at least in today’s busy world? As Blake tells us on one of his promotional videos,

TOMS is “able to give someone the opportunity to wear a pair of shades, knowing that there is a greater purpose...When they see the stripes, and those colors, it will be a reminder that they have impacted someone’s life in a One for One way.”²⁶⁶

In the 2011 promotional video released to announce the eyewear initiative, entitled “Next Chapter” (quite intentionally continuing the story metaphor), Blake makes the central claim his marketing is advancing in direct and clear terms.²⁶⁷ One for One, he tells us, is not just about TOMS; it’s about us. “One for One is much bigger...than TOMS. It’s what *you* think we can do to make the world a better place, using the One for One model.” We are then shown a bunch of people cutting out words and images from magazines or individual artwork and gluing them to cardboard tubes while they tell us, much like the PR video for Brita, what they care about and hope for, many using the phrase, “my One for One....” In case we didn’t get the message clearly, the final few people simply say, “*this is my* One for One,” and Blake asks us: “What is *your* One for One? Show us at [Facebook.com/TOMS](https://www.facebook.com/TOMS).”

One of the most interesting PR videos features Ben Affleck telling us about *his* “One for One.”²⁶⁸ He informs us that his One for One is the Eastern Congo Initiative, “because everyone has the right to be healthy and safe.” He tells us about the organization he founded (without mentioning that he founded it) and the many things it seeks to accomplish in the region as well as his hopes for the future. The video ends with him reminding us who he is and that “this is [his] One for One.” The central feature of all of these videos, and the One for One “movement” itself, is the attempt to “brand” the very act of caring about something under the TOMS aegis. We don’t merely care about this or that, hope for something or another, we are informed; we “have” a “One for One.” What is yours? Caring is proprietary, and belongs to, or is at least “sponsored” by TOMS, or FEED, or they would like for us to think so at any rate.

This is an incredibly subtle and important shift in thinking to which we would do well to critically attend. It is, essentially, the “story” we are asked to listen to and inhabit, and it is *about us*: *we* are the story. The concrete details don’t matter, and so we aren’t really ever told them. The story is not about them, not really, not about those in “need” except as an opportunity to motivate our consumption. The story is simply a large and nebulous narrative of caring, and what is important in it is the overarching brand identity of our caring, and the idea that we can accomplish it, primarily, through purchasing a particular brand of consumer good. That is what we are buying and buying into when we “decide” to make a difference in the world by buying something from TOMS or FEED, by buying Dawn or Brita rather than some other brand.

What all of this adds up to is the complete collapse of “making a difference” into consumption and the consumer experience, offering the opportunity to “feel good” to the consumer without placing any demand on him or her outside the normal consumer exchange transaction. This story, its allied business model, and its concomitant marketing depends upon and requires the prior existence of the “cultural capitalist” model of philanthropy. Doing good and making a difference is *already* almost exclusively constructed as an economic transaction, as about giving money to “causes” or the organizations who champion them, anonymous donations to anonymous recipients, without any real knowledge of those in need or their problems, or any real understanding of the social or economic dynamics that are the causes of those needs. Raising “awareness,” under this rubric, is *always* merely about bringing the “problem” to people’s attention, never about the complex genealogy of political and economic power systems behind them. Once we are “aware,” we are to excise any sense of guilt produced by that awareness, and exercise any “caring” excited by it, by giving some money to someone who will “help.” These new social entrepreneurs just make it easier for us to do that, since we weren’t

necessarily going to look for some specific organization to give to, even if we have been raised to be “socially conscious” and “have” something we “care” about, but we are going to buy some shoes or bags or coffee or dish soap at some point.

Joining the Good Fight

Some marketing campaigns, however, do not merely present some cause as needing our consumer attention, but as a kind of branded caring that directly (or at least vicariously) engages us in the front-line battle with some social problem. One of the most familiar examples is perhaps Unilever’s brand Dove and its “Campaign for Real Beauty.” Let me note at the start that Unilever also owns the Axe brand of body scents whose marketing ranks among the most egregiously misogynistic of any mainstream brand. Again, I am not interested in the parent company’s clear hypocrisy or what might be characterized as pandering, about which Dove may have little say. My interest is strictly the example of Dove’s moralism, positioning itself as leading the fight to “address” what it presents as a pervasive social and moral problem.

<710.3 near here>

In 2004, while trying to think of a new way to market a cream that supposedly reduces cellulite, Dove’s marketing firm, Ogilvy, came up with an idea it called “Celebrate Real Curves.” One of its first ads explains: “Firming the thighs of a size 2 supermodel is no challenge. Real Women have real bodies with real curves. And Dove wants to celebrate those curves” (See figure 7.3). The ad shows six young women in white underwear that are indeed somewhat larger than the typical professional model. The marketing apparently struck a chord with consumers since there was a rather immediate sales increase for Dove products. Soon ads with various somewhat larger sized young women in white underwear were everywhere. Realizing they had struck marketing pay dirt, Ogilvy contracted with their Irish PR subsidiary, Wilson Hartnell, to

start a PR campaign around the marketing which it called “Campaign for Real Beauty.” The current website for the campaign invites us to “imagine a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety,” and presents the history of the campaign as a leading agent in “widening the definition of beauty.”²⁶⁹

WHPR received an award for excellence from the Public Relations Consultants Association in 2005, and the document WHPR wrote detailing the campaign attached to that award is unusually informative and interesting.²⁷⁰ The campaign began in Ireland, with the “ultimate aim,” according to the document, “to generate a widespread debate on society’s attitudes toward beauty.” They admit that the important goal for them was “to position Dove as a ground-breaking brand that is leading the debate on society’s definition of beauty.” Setting aside the fact that a debate on society’s definitions of beauty has been going on for significantly longer than a decade, without any input from Dove, the firm did commission a “study” by Behavior and Attitudes, Ireland’s largest independent market research company, which surveyed 300 Irish women and discovered that only 1% were “comfortable” describing themselves as beautiful, and that almost 80% believed that “the media should do more to represent a wider definition of beauty.”²⁷¹ Olgivy had launched the initial marketing campaign after commissioning a similar global study on beauty and “well-being” by StrategyOne, another market research firm, in collaboration with Dr. Nancy Etcoff, of Harvard, and Dr. Susie Orbach, of the London School of Economics, both noted scholars and social critics who have written about the impact of beauty standards on women. This study interviewed over 3,000 women from ten countries, and found that somewhere between 1/3 to 1/2 of the women (varying by country) did not “feel comfortable” describing themselves as beautiful, that only 2% would choose the

word “beautiful” to describe how they look, and that between 60% and 90% want “the media” to do a “better job of portraying women of diverse physical attractiveness - age, shape and size.”²⁷²

These results are hardly surprising, of course. As Lauren Dye has noted, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, approximately 11.7 million surgical and nonsurgical procedures were performed in the United States alone in 2007. Of those surgeries, 91% were performed upon women.²⁷³ With these sobering statistics in hand, WHPR set about promoting the campaign, including an inaugural press “event,” with a “panel of experts,” and a series of “road show” events in which visitors to a PR/marketing trailer could “learn more about the campaign” and “cast their votes” relative to the marketing’s primary ads (see figures 7.4-7.9). The initial ads for the campaign portraying women with precisely those three parameters in play – age, shape and size – featured large “tick box” billboards showing a model and the option to choose between two ways of describing her, such as “fit” or “fat,” “grey” or “gorgeous,” and “wrinkled” or “wonderful.”

<Figures 7.4-7.9 near here>

The campaign certainly did spark a debate which continues today. Whether that debate is the one WHPR envisioned is open to question. There has been a great deal written about the campaign, including a fair number of critiques which focus on the fact that Dove sells beauty products, after all, and started the campaign to sell a “firming” cream (to treat a “problem” that only exists if we declare it to be a problem), that the women in the ads are mostly young (when not intended precisely to raise the issue of age), mostly light-skinned with good skin tone (no cellulite in sight), and are in their underwear. This last point is important, I believe, and demonstrates that no matter how much Dove wants to stretch the “definition” of beauty a size or two, they still fully participate in the mainstream cultural ideal of women as visual objects.

These women are “happy” with their bodies, as the ads takes significant pains to portray, but they all know that their bodies are what matter, that their bodies are what makes them sexy or beautiful and provides what power they enjoy, rather than what they know or can do, and the ads do not make any attempt whatsoever to portray such qualities. The women just stand there, in variously provocative poses, to be gazed at. The ads do not really offer some new “definition” of beauty; the women in them are presented as beautiful in *the same old way*, i.e., grounded in how they look to others.

The campaign raises the issue of beauty as a problem, playing off widespread female insecurity over appearance, but they raise it without challenging the larger cultural ideal in any substantive way. These ads remain thoroughly enmeshed in the traditional definitions, and, indeed, require them. At best the ads suggest that curves or being grey or having freckles can be counted as beautiful “too,” along with the normal qualifiers of beauty we have been taught. Mostly, though, the initial ads invite us to ignore the very qualities the ads shove in our face in order to “vote” for the option we know we are supposed to choose if we are “enlightened.” “Grey or gorgeous,” “fit or fat,” “wrinkled or wonderful” are exclusive binaries, not conjunctions. Most of us conform readily to the clear expectation, according to the “results” of the “voting,” because the clear implication is that one of the binaries is negative. It is a longstanding rhetorical practice to present two, and only two, options with a clear bias against one, in order to enlist the support of the audience.

What is more important for our analysis, however, is the way Dove has used the intervening decade to present the initial campaign as a moral “cause” of continuing concern both for them and for us, even if we suspect that their concern might have dissipated before now had the campaign failed to achieve its marketing goals. Dove has a website “mission” page, like

TOMS and FEED, and invites those visiting to “learn more” about the “issue” or “problem” of society’s definition of beauty, to visit the sites of their “partners,” which includes the Girl Scouts, Boys and Girls Club, and Girls Inc., and to “get involved” in their “self-esteem workshops.” Almost every page references the “research,” and the number of women who describe themselves as beautiful has apparently risen from 2% to 4% (not much to show for a decade of campaigning).²⁷⁴ The problem appears to be intractable, despite Dove’s best intentions to drive the “debate” and “help the next generation of women develop a positive relationship with the way they look,” or, indeed, despite the increased sales of their beauty products.²⁷⁵ As they admit, “there is more to be done,” and to help in that work, there are videos, lots and lots of videos.

Some of the most widely viewed have been television ads, such as the 2006 Superbowl XL commercial “Little Girls,” or the web videos produced in the hope (since realized) that they would go viral, such as “Daughters,” “Evolution,” “Onslaught,” and “Amy.”²⁷⁶ In these videos, we see that the “campaign” rather quickly shifted away from “celebrating” curves to the larger issue of self-esteem. It wasn’t until 2010 that Dove officially launched its “bold, new vision,” the “Movement for Self-Esteem;” but even in 2006, we see the shift had largely taken place. The Superbowl ad, which received, of course, a great deal of attention and went a long way toward cementing the “campaign” both as a marketing tool and in the public consciousness, was called “True Colors,” and featured a cover of the popular song by that title, whose lyrics are perfect for the ad’s central message. It showed various pre-teen and teenage girls, looking serious, or perhaps sad, with printed captions over them, such as “hates her freckles,” “thinks she’s ugly,” “afraid she’s fat,” and “wishes she were blonde.” The video fades to a branded white screen with the caption, “Let’s change their minds.” We then see happy young girls (who, not

incidentally, are slimmer, blonder, and more conventionally attractive) before the screen fades to white again with the words, “we’ve created the Dove self-esteem fund.” We then see all the original girls, now happy, even joyous, while the captions preach: “because every girl deserves to feel good about herself...and see how beautiful she really is.” The final white screen pleads: “Help us. Get involved at campaignforrealbeauty.com.”²⁷⁷

It is not easy to learn much about the “Self-Esteem Fund.” If you visit their current Mission page, there is a place to click to “Learn More” about how “Your Purchase Helps Support Self-Esteem,” but although the connected page informs us that “The Dove Self-Esteem Project invites all women to join us in creating a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety,” and that every time we buy a Dove product we help them and their charitable partners “provide inspiring self-esteem programming for girls,” that is basically all that we can “learn.”²⁷⁸ The only link on this short page is for “Where to Buy Dove.” Visiting any of the sites of the “charitable partners” will uncover many references to the “campaign,” with prominent branding visible, but most of the “activities” or “events” seem primarily to involve Dove’s promotional material. There is a Dove webpage called “Dove Self Esteem Toolkit & Resources” with “Articles for Parents” and “Resources for Teaching,” but many of these are the same as or very little different from the regular promotional material.²⁷⁹ There are promising activities offered, such as the “Why I’m Brilliant” game, but even this activity starts by asking the young girl to find a photo of herself and put it at the center of what will eventually be a collage ultimately highlighting more than her looks.

To learn about any of this requires some digging; whereas the “problem,” as opposed to the “solution,” is front and center in the promotional material. The viral videos such as “Daughters,” “Onslaught,” “Evolution,” and “Amy” all highlight the media or social dynamics

that Dove suggests are the cause of female insecurity about their looks, or simply note that insecurity in sharply poignant terms. The Mission tab directs to two main pages, one on Self Esteem and one on Real Beauty. The current promotional video highlighted (in the sense that it pops up to cover the rest of the page) on the Real Beauty page is called “Mirrors.”²⁸⁰ About two thirds of the video shows adult women looking in every possible reflective surface to check their appearance, presumably quite critically, judging from their expressions. We then see the branded white screen and the question: “When was the last time you smiled back?” The final segment shows very young girls looking in mirrors and giggling, being goofy, and clearly having fun seeing themselves. The video, of course, suggests that something is lost, something which allows us to feel good about ourselves, somewhere along the way from childhood to adulthood. It does not say what that is, or what is responsible, or what to do about it.

“Amy” and “Daughters” are further examples that merely highlight the problem. In “Daughters” we see young women, seemingly interviewed at random “on the street,” as it were, talking about their insecurities over their appearance and mothers talking about how hard it is to combat the powerful feelings of inadequacy without any mention of what might be responsible for them. In the more recent video “Amy,” a teenage boy rides his bike to Amy’s house and calls for her, over and over again, waiting, while the sun sets and no one ever appears. Eventually a caption tells us: “Amy can name 12 things wrong with her appearance...He can’t name one.” The final caption is: “Sent to you by someone who thinks you’re beautiful” (intentionally mimicking viral email language the company hopes will be repeated by the viewer). No one who has experienced the almost universal self-doubt and pain experienced by young women in relation to self-image, either directly or indirectly, can be unmoved by these videos. There most certainly is a problem, a very big problem. That is not in question.

Dove does make some gestures toward articulating some of the causes of the problem. Both the “Onslaught” and “Evolution” videos suggest that it is the rampant photoshopping of marketing images of women, and the subsequent bombardment of those images through mass media, which lead to impossible standards of beauty and distort young women’s expectations for themselves and society’s attitudes toward beauty as a whole. They are not wrong about this, of course. Indeed, it’s obvious, and many others have offered penetrating analysis of the causal dynamics and the often devastating consequences. Dove simply packages the most superficial elements of that analysis into an emotionally powerful narrative. The final admonition of the “Onslaught” video is: “Talk to your daughter before the beauty industry does.” Of course, Dove is part of the “beauty industry;” and it’s been talking too, for a long time, in precisely the same terms. That they can now sermonize to that industry, and to us, seemingly without any appreciation of irony, clearly demonstrates the degree of autonomous, even anonymous, authority conferred by inhabiting an explicitly moralistic voice, even when the moral lesson is spoken by, in some sense, offending parties.

The most recent viral video is “Real Beauty Sketches,” produced in 2013.²⁸¹ The video is certainly powerful and very well done. In it, we are introduced to a number of women, mostly younger, and very much mostly white, and a sketch artist formerly with the LA Police department. The women are asked to describe themselves to the sketch artist, who does not see them. He draws the face they describe, and the women leave. Then the artist asks another person who just met each woman to describe her and he draws what they describe. The main part of the video shows the women viewing both sketches and having strong emotional reactions. In each case, the sketches produced from the women’s self descriptions are clearly less conventionally attractive, and don’t, actually, represent the women very well. The sketches

produced by the descriptions of others are much more faithful to the women's actual appearance. One of the final scenes involves the sketch artist asking one of the women, "Florence," whether she thinks she's more beautiful than she says she is. Florence thinks about it a moment, nods and says, "yeah." Florence then goes on to remark that she should be more grateful of her "natural beauty," and reminds us that beauty "impacts the choices in the friends that we make, the jobs we apply for, how we treat our children...it impacts everything...it couldn't be more critical to your happiness." The final message, on branded white: "You are more beautiful than you think."

Dove selected from among what all the women said, in response to viewing the sketches of them, to let us hear Florence tell us that beauty is everything, the most critical component determining one's potential for happiness. In allowing her to tell us this, Dove tells us this. Such a claim is not in "debate" with society's definition of beauty. It accepts it fully as the most important thing about a woman. It doesn't offer a counterargument. It merely encourages us to think ourselves as closer to the ideal than we currently do. That is, in its own way, a powerful invitation, and one worth making to a group so battered by the ideal that they are, indeed, their own harshest critics. It would be perhaps better, though, to invite them to reject the ideal, to construct their own hierarchy of qualities and abilities where how one "looks" doesn't, in fact, determine everything.

However powerful the messages, though, at best, Dove just shows us the problem, not what we can do about it, at least not directly. Its invitation to buy a bar of soap or a tube of cream in order to help make the world a better place is, unlike FEED or TOMS, clearly secondary, if not even more tertiary, and it doesn't make it easy to see how its "giving" works. The "campaign" is, rather, an explicit invitation to join a moral "tribe," one that is configured almost completely on the basis of vague, if powerful, sentiments, and a general "agreement" with

their “concern.” It is basically an invitation to recognize that one is already and has long been part of the tribe of the self-image “insecure,” the “beauty industry” wounded. It’s a big tribe. Dove just wants us to know that it understands us, and our pain, and would like us to feel better, primarily by identifying ourselves with their brand as a way of “fighting back.”

Dove configures itself as “doing something” to help us feel better primarily on the ground that they mention the problem. Its campaign of mentioning it may indeed have sparked a “debate,” but it has never participated in that debate in concrete terms, nor, indeed, articulated exactly what the terms of that debate are. It gestures, vaguely, toward “cultural” or “media” causes of female insecurity, and invites us, ambiguously, to feel better about ourselves, primarily by thinking ourselves more like the ideal model it really doesn’t ever directly challenge than we might otherwise, or, at best, by stretching that model to include just a bit more territory – frizzier hair, slightly larger size or different shape, somewhat older – as long as one is still otherwise attractive by the standard measures. As the blogger, Jazzylittledrops, has noted, there are women that look like the pictures on the left in each pair in the “Real Beauty Sketches” video.²⁸² What is Dove saying about and to them?

It is important to notice that Dove doesn’t once mention any of the products it sells in these videos or the campaign in general. It doesn’t have to. It has branded this concern for self-esteem and “real” beauty. It owns it. It only has to show the Dove logo, which has become more about the campaign than the soap or cream. It has achieved what Rob Walker has called total *murketing*, the seamless connection of a social or moral concern with a brand.²⁸³ *Murketing* is possible because in important ways, moral concern has become free-floating, de-contextualized, abstract, able and ready to be attached to almost any product or brand. This has

happened, in part, because of the developing public character of activism, whose primary dynamic, or at least most familiar face, is the mass media call for attention to some problem.

This development has been driven in part by changes in communication technology that increasingly bring the conditions of distant and largely alien elements of the world to our awareness as spectacle, i.e., as something we view without a corresponding ability to interact, to learn from direct engagement, or to effect change except through hypermediated “responses.” Boltanski has noted: “It is action above all that is the problem. The spectacle of the unfortunate being conveyed to the witness, the action taken by the witness must in turned be conveyed to the unfortunate. But the instruments which can convey a representation and those which can convey an action are not the same.”²⁸⁴ Except, in the consumer process, they are. We cannot reach out to and interact with the person in need any more than we can with the “person” who makes the material goods we need and use. In our world, contact with either the supplier of our wants and desires or with the person in need of our largesse operates through a chain of intermediaries of whom we know little or nothing, and with whom we have a single relation: we pay them.

One result of these developments is the increasing centrality of emotion and “attitude” over direct activity, and concern for distant others over engagement in one’s own community. In academia, for instance, “activism” is not infrequently parsed as a kind of “solidarity” largely expressed through emotional attachment to “issues” and moral attitudes channeled through “protests” with no clear link to or effect upon those about whom we are concerned. In short, such configurations of activism are little different from the market-driven and market-oriented moral identity packages we have been analyzing.

Given this almost ubiquitous, and even totalizing, character of modern “caring,” it is worth asking if such a thing as “public action” in response to moral need (suffering, disaster,

crime, corruption, hate and hate-crimes, etc) is even possible. It is worth looking at the power and social relations structured by these new invitations to “care” – to ask who gets to care, about whom and what, and for what reasons. The key idea of conscientious consumption, of course, is to broaden awareness and re-ground consumption in a moral register, reminding all of us that all of our consumer choices have moral consequences in a variety of ways, impacting the environment, people, and the future of economic and social systems. Fair enough; but it is worth asking about the character imparted to caring in general by this emphasis on consumer morality, on taking care of ourselves, each other, and the planet as configured primarily as consumer choice.

Lilie Chouliaraki has written insightfully about this new character of caring. She invites us to reverse the assumption that the spectacle of suffering places an impossible moral demand upon us (imploing us to care in situations where we have no power to act), and instead invites us to consider whether the ubiquity of modern spectacles of suffering aren’t in fact altering our sense of moral demand itself, that the norms of morality itself are in tension rather than us as individual spectators.²⁸⁵ Rather than the good Samaritan who acts to relieve suffering in concrete and direct terms, the modern spectator Samaritan enacts moral obligation through the exercise of emotion, a feeling of pity. What Walker calls *murketing*, accomplished by means of moral care as consumer activity, seeks to fill the vacuum of actual action with its surrogate – buying things – as a way to act upon those emotions and express that pity in concrete terms, harmonious with the modern form of charity, which, as we have noted, almost exclusively occurs through monetary dynamics involving anonymous others and anonymous intermediaries.

Chouliaraki also argues that the spectatorship of suffering has altered the emotion of “pity” from a “natural sentiment,” perhaps of love and care, as she suggests, but perhaps of a

more fundamental socio-biological character, to a socially constructed disposition, or, I would argue, identity package, which locates both actors (pitier and pitied) firmly within a limited and primarily economic range of possibilities and norms.²⁸⁶ The practices of journalism (her focus), she argues, and of marketing (I would add), both in terms of discourse and image, construct both parties within a “narrow repertoire of participatory positions” which include very few options beyond indifference and a variety of vicarious “activisms” meant to concretely express the emotional reactions elicited by the spectacle. For her, the “public” engaged and aroused by these spectacles are not empirical entities, but “symbolic act[s] of cultural identity” that carve an ephemeral “we” out of a collection of spectators.²⁸⁷ They are tribes. Within this larger and new dynamic, I would add, marketing is busy (re)shaping our moral norms through a staging of possible relations to “others” in “need” that do not allow us to guide, much less control, the outcomes or experience the effects of our “activity” beyond the immediate and personal experience of consumption. Thus, consumption takes on a new and higher dynamic, whereby the usual activity is elevated to activism, and the buying and consuming of goods also counts as an act of social “good.”

The primary dynamic in most activist marketing configures moral action as primarily, if not exclusively, brand selection. We do good by choosing one brand over another, and not by any other overt action on our part, aside from the consumer activity in which we were already going to participate: buying things. Such a configuration of moral action integrates fully with brand marketing in general, since that strategy seeks to construct morally charged meaning systems as brand identities. Most brand identities aren't as explicit as TOMS or Target/FEED or Dove at presenting themselves and the consumption of their products as moral activism; but all brand identities seek to inhabit and present identity “personas” that feel good to us and strike us

as admirable, even enviable, offering to confer those very qualities upon us through participation in their brand.

We obviously and clearly recognize that on some level, such marketing is a kind of propaganda, a way of making us feel good about the brand and ourselves without making many, if any, demands upon us. Acknowledging this character offers a further perspective on the deeper dynamics whereby morality lends itself to market use. As we will argue in the final chapter, morality in consumer culture has become, if it has not in some sense always been, a kind of social propaganda, in Jacques Ellul's sense: a simplified, abstract idea propagated to satisfy our need for meaning and importance and to respond to our sense that the world is problematic (with a proposed solution involving the recovering of values or value systems largely configured as market options). In the final chapter we will focus on the question of how morality is configured in the popular consciousness, both in light of all the moralizing we have been analyzing, and as inflected by it; but we will also take up specifically the important and interesting question of how morality already works in that consciousness such that it can be put to use in the ways we have seen: to gather us into moral “tribes,” to offer us moral identities as consumer goods, and to sell things.

211. Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: Sage, 2006), 147. See also her *The Ironic Spectator* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013). Together, these works offer an illuminating analysis of the moral implications and invitations presented by mass media spectacles of suffering, particularly through broadcast journalism in her first book, but expanding to include celebrity appeals and “events” in her second. Clearly, given my analysis so far, I am rather firmly in what she would call the “pessimistic” analytical camp; and, unlike her, I will not offer

any normative prescriptions for what we could or should do about the phenomena I am analyzing.

212. Ben Affleck, accessed on May 27, 2014, toms.com/easterncongo.

213. Ellul, 209.

214. Slavoj Žižek, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce* (London: Verso, 2009) and “First as Tragedy, Then as Farce,” RSA Animate lecture, November 24, 2009, accessed on November 13, 2013, thersa.org/events/video/archive/slavoj-zizek-first-as-tragedy,-then-as-farce.

215. As explained on the webpage “Conscious Consumerism,” by *The Center for a New American Dream*, accessed on May 19, 2014, newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/rethinking-stuff/conscious-consumerism. Conscious consumerism, with its emphasis on simplification and living a life as minimally consumerist as possible, seems antithetical to marketing on its face, but the appeal has been incorporated into much marketing rather directly, as we have seen in some of the examples already analyzed. It is perhaps the least influential of the related ethical consumerist movements, but it has achieved a significant popularity among certain elements of society. Huffington Post, for instance, uses “Conscious Consumerism” as a tag and news category (see huffingtonpost.com/tag/conscious-consumerism/), and the articles so tagged on their website connect to a broad range of related topics. Huffington Post also uses “doing well by doing good” as a tag, as does Forbes.

216. However one interprets or understands *kashrut*, the Jewish dietary laws have always involved a moral component, such as the insistence on separating the meat of an animal from milk, which many rabbinical commentators regarded as having an ethical aspect, or slaughtering animals by methods that ensure respect and compassion.

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217. This “cause” made a central appearance with all the now familiar corporate dynamics in the 1978 movie *Heaven Can Wait*, demonstrating that such movements had achieved popular recognition and a kind of cultural capital by the end of the decade.
218. *Green America*, accessed May 10, 2014, greenamerica.org/about/.
219. An early and popular “guide” to participation in the movement for the consumer is Julia Hailes, *Green Consumer Guide*, published in 1987, and in a new edition, *The New Green Consumer Guide* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007). For questions as to its effectiveness and apologies in response, see the special issue dedicated to the topic in the *Journal of Marketing Management*, 14 (1998) or Toby Smith, *The Myth of Green Marketing* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).
220. See, e.g., Jaime Rivera-Camino, “Re-evaluating green marketing strategy: a stakeholder perspective,” *European Journal of Marketing* 41 (2007): 1328-1358; or J. Joseph Cronin, Jr., *et al*, “Green marketing strategies: an examination of stakeholders and the opportunities they present,” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 30 (2010).
221. The term was first coined by Jay Westerveld in a 1986 essay about the hotel industry according to Jim Motavalli, “A History of Greenwashing: How Dirty Towels Impacted the Green Movement,” *AOL Daily Finance*, accessed Feb 15, 2011, dailyfinance.com/2011/02/12/the-history-of-greenwashing-how-dirty-towels-impacted-the-green. See also Richard Dahl, “Green Washing: Do You Know What You’re Buying?”, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 118 (2010): 246-252.
222. John McMurtry, *Unequal Freedoms: The Global Market as an Ethical System* (West Hartford: Kumarian, 1998).

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223. “Ben & Jerry’s Corporate Social Responsibility,” accessed on May 19, 2014, bjsocialresponsibility.weebly.com/. See also Brad Edmondson, *Ice Cream Social: The Struggle for the Soul of Ben & Jerry’s* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2014).
224. For a critique of these practices, see David Henderson, *Misguided Virtue: False Notions of Corporate Social Responsibility* (London: Institute of Economic Affairs, 2001).
225. E.g., “Issues We Care About,” accessed May 19, 2014, benjerry.com/values/issues-we-care-about.
226. Nancy Koehn, “A Brief History of Doing Well by Doing Good,” video blog interview on *Harvard Business Review*, accessed June 25, 2012, blogs.hbr.org/2012/06/a-brief-history-of-doing-well.
227. *Ethical Consumer*, accessed May 10, 2014, ethicalconsumer.org/aboutus.aspx.
228. “Quick Guide to Using *Ethical Consumer*,” *Ethical Consumer*, accessed May 19, 2014, ethicalconsumer.org/home/quickguide.aspx.
229. Reference some of the stuff in Ch. 3 here****
230. As translated from Nikolai Chernyshevsky’s *What is to be Done?* in the introduction to Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*, trs. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), xiv.
231. Trevelino-Keller’s claim to the status of fourth fastest growing PR firm, a somewhat unfocused bit of PR itself, may be found on their website: trevelinokeller.com, accessed May 10, 2014. The press release, “First Carbon Neutral Zone Created in the United States” may be found at reuters.com/article/2008/11/14/idUS164153+14-Nov-2008+PRN20081114, accessed May 10, 2014.

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232. Leslie Kaufman, "Ad for Dish Detergent Becomes Part of a Story," *New York Times*, June 15, 2010.
233. "Dawn Animals Commercial," commercial for Dawn Dish Detergent, accessed May 20, 2014, schooltube.com/video/249f1df7bd72a1887cc8.
234. "Open," Dawn dish detergent commercial, accessed on May 20, 2014, dawn-dish.com/us/dawn/commercials. Dawn has also posted the commercial on YouTube, youtube.com/watch?v=RFStdNtTkNI.
235. "Saving Wildlife," Dawn commercial, accessed on May 20, 2014, ispot.tv/ad/7Vq3/dawn-saving-wildlife.
236. Jack Neff, "Brita's Marketing Grows from Grassroots Efforts," *AdvertisingAge*, accessed November 20, 2009, adage.com/article/cmo-interviews/brita-s-marketing-flows-grassroots-effort/140519.
237. "Facts on Water Worldwide," *AquaAccess*, accessed on May 21, 2014, aquaaccess.com/downloads/WaterStatistics.pdf.
238. Neff.
239. Nalgene "store" webpage for "Filter for Good," accessed May 21, 2014, store.nalgene.com/category-s/35.htm.
240. Neff.
241. "2009 Brita Climate Ride: My Hope for the Future," Brita PR video, accessed on May 20, 2014, dailymotion.com/BritaFilterForGood.
242. Feeding America, at feedingamerica.org/. The organization changed its name to Feeding America in 2008, after being named as an "Idol Gives Back" charity organization on *American Idol*.

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243. See, e.g., the Center For the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship at Duke's Fuqua School of Business, caseatduke.org/.
244. Feed 5 Woven Bracelet, retail web page accessed May 21, 2014, feedprojects.com/shopping_product_detail.asp?pid=49994&catID=3675. Interestingly, the "story" for the original FEED 1 bag, designed by Lauren, includes the interesting final comment, faithfully echoing the rhetorical binary of "truth-telling" narratives: "The bag is reversible, too, since we know there are two sides to every great story." Accessed May 21, 2014, feedprojects.com/shopping_product_detail.asp?pid=49368&catID=3673.
245. "About Us," FEED Foundation, accessed May 21, 2014, thefeedfoundation.org/About-Us. Lauren Bush, Jenny Johns, and Kristina Fell serve both as managing directors on the Board of Directors of FEED Foundation and as executives in FEED Projects. There are only two other members of the Board for the foundation.
246. "Our Mission," FEED Projects website, accessed May 21, 2014, feedprojects.com/our-mission.
247. "FEED USA," FEED Projects + Target campaign website, accessed May 21, 2014, feedprojects.com/target.asp.
248. See, e.g., "Target and FEED Partner to Fight Hunger in the US," or "Target and FEED Partner on Exclusive Collection to Fight Hunger in the US," Target press releases, accessed May 11, 2013, corporate.target.com/discover/article/Target-and-FEED-partner-to-fight-hunger-in-the-U-S and pressroom.target.com/news/target-and-feed-partner-on-exclusive-collection-to-fight-hunger-in-the-u-s.

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249. Hadley Malcolm, "Target Partners with Lauren Bush," *USA Today*, accessed on May 11, 2013, usatoday.com/story/money/business/2013/03/11/target-lauren-bush-feed-partnership/1967139.
250. "Cause Marketing Remains Strong: 2010 Cone Cause Evolution Study," Cone Communications PR release about a 17 year study on consumer interest in cause marketing, accessed on May 11, 2013, conecomm.com/cause-marketing-remains-strong.
251. They are also accustomed to using communication technology to accomplish much of their life activity. As I was writing this chapter, I came across a bumper sticker advertising the website, howgiving.com, with the slogan, "automate your thoughtfulness." A quick visit of the website revealed its pitch to Millennials: "It's about giving. HowGiving is a desktop and mobile app designed to make us the givers we truly intend to be. By automating the process of reminding, then guiding you quickly through the purchase process of a card, flowers, or a gift, you transform from ... *well you* ... into the big giver you were meant to be! In addition, you can calculate your own Charitable Donation Percentage on each purchase to be designated for the charity or cause of your choice." This site does not present consumption as moral activism, but it does offer to "automate" one's charitable and more general "giving," offering the consumer a cheap and easy way to morally improve themselves, all through a handy app.
252. "About TOMS," accessed on May 22, 2014, toms.com/about-toms#companyInfo.
253. "Our Movement," accessed on June 22, 2011, toms.com/our-movement.
254. "Corporate Responsibility at TOMS," accessed on May 23, 2014, toms.com/about-toms#corporateResponsibility, and "2013 Giving Report," accessed May 23, 2014, toms.com/static/www/pdf/TOMS_Giving_Report_2013.pdf.

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255. “TOMS – Change One Decision to Help Change a Life,” accessed on May 27, 2014, youtube.com/watch?v=LGO1TFH1seo&list=PLvSoqFwcrRNI-Vh01q0YDfWPLILHW_rkJ.
256. “One for One,” accessed on May 22, 2014, toms.com/one-for-one-en.
257. See tomscommunity.com/TOMSCampusClubs, accessed on May 23, 2014. TOMS has also produced a video for YouTube, one of many it posts there, extolling the virtues of TOMS campus clubs in evangelistic tones through the earnest testimonials of college students who have joined: youtube.com/watch?v=G9DVVyBKlYs. They have also posted an “Employee” video, youtube.com/watch?v=Ojs2VPQlZR8&feature=kp, which presents the opportunity to work at TOMS in similarly evangelistic and earnest tones.
258. Blake was invited by my university’s former president, Jake Schrum, to give our 2011 Shilling Lecture. This lecture series has featured such speakers as Jane Goodall, Thomas Friedman, Wangari Maathai, Bill Bradley, James Baker III, Benazir Bhutto, Desmond Tutu, President Jimmy Carter, and William Sloane Coffin. Blake’s lecture was titled, ““The New Rules for Tomorrow’s Business: A Student’s Guide to Making a Difference in the World.”
259. “Auditing Services for Consumer Goods,” accessed on May 23, 2014, intertek.com/consumer/auditing/. Mention of Intertek was made on an earlier version of the company’s “Questions” page, “FAQ,” accessed on October 24, 2011, toms.com/faq. This version included the question, “How does TOMS ensure its manufacturers adhere to human rights standards?” which ended its response with the following: “For more information: intertek-labtest.com/services/auditing/intertek_compliance/?lang=en.” There is no such question or response on current versions of the website as of this writing. Intertek is a large global auditing firm which offers quality, compliance and testing services for many of the world’s transnational corporations and even many governments. The company’s services have received some

journalistic and legal attention in the past, including cases involving laboratory fraud, slave labor, and the inspection of contaminated grain. See “Regulations and You: the long arm of the lab laws,” *Today’s Chemist at Work* November (2000), accessed October 24, 2011, pubs.acs.org/subscribe/archive/tcaw/10/i11/html/11regs.html; “Fresh allegations of ‘human slavery’ emerge from the tomato fields of Immokalee,” and “Guilty! On eve of trial, farm bosses plead guilty to enslaving Immokalee workers in tomato harvest...,” *Coalition of Immokalee Workers News*, accessed on October 24, 2011, ciw-online.org/blog/2007/12/no_slave_labor/ and ciw-online.org/blog/2008/09/guilty-on-eve-of-trial-farm-bosses-plead-guilty-to-enslaving-immokalee-workers-in-tomato-harvest/; and “Insurer pays cereals board for bad grain,” *Daily Nation*, Kenya, October 24, 2011.

260. It is reasonable to ask, though, even should one accept this model of philanthropy on its face, how many children could be shod or fed if the apparently substantial profits of these companies were more directly channeled into providing the “aid” that is the central marketing element and a, if not in fact *the*, primary consumer “good” being offered. None of these companies claim, as part of their social responsibility, to have adopted business models that substantially reduce the enormous salaries usually paid to top executives, for instance,. One can fairly ask why only *one* pair of shoes for each pair bought? Or, indeed, why buy such an expensive shoe in the first place rather than sending the not insignificant sum directly to a humanitarian organization?

261. “Marketplace,” accessed on May 23, 2014, toms.com/marketplace.

262. “Introducing the TOMS Animal Initiative,” TOMS Press Release, May 13, 2014, accessed May 20, 2014, toms.com/stories/movement/introducing-the-toms-animal-initiative. See also toms.com/the-toms-animal-initiative.

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263. "The Gift of Water," accessed May 27, 2014, toms.com/gift-of-water.
264. "Direct Trade," accessed May 27, 2014, toms.com/coffee#direct-trade-coffee.
265. "Every Stripe Tells a Story," retail outlet page for TOMS eyewear, accessed on May 27, 2014, pinterest.com/tomscanada/every-stripe-tells-a-story/.
266. "TOMS Eyewear – Nepal Giving Trip," accessed on June 22, 2011, youtube.com/watch?v=sz7-iwmNkRA.
267. "TOMS What's Your Next Chapter," accessed on June 22, 2011, youtube.com/watch?v=EesOoKSbc4A.
268. "TOMS: Next Chapter – Ben Affleck's One for One," accessed on June 22, 2011, youtube.com/watch?v=OeS4S5ufI6o.
269. "The Dove Campaign for Real Beauty," accessed on May 28, 2014, dove.us/Social-Mission/campaign-for-real-beauty.aspx.
270. Award for Excellence in Public Relations, 2005, given to WHPR, accessed November 9, 2011, prca.ie/download/consumermore20k.pdf.
271. See, also, banda.ie/maket-research-company/who-we-are/company-overview.html, accessed May 28, 2014.
272. "The Real Truth About Beauty: A Global Report," accessed May 28, 2014, clubofamsterdam.com/contentarticles/52%20Beauty/dove_white_paper_final.pdf. StrategyOne is a global market research and opinion polling firm owned by Edelman, the world's largest independent public relations firm.
273. Lauren Dye, "Consuming Constructions: A Critique of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty," *Canadian Journal of Media Studies* 5 (2009): 114-128.

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274. “The Real Truth About Beauty: Revisited,” cited on Dove’s Mission webpage, accessed May 28, 2014, dove.us/Social-Mission/campaign-for-real-beauty.aspx.
275. “Our Vision,” accessed May 28, 2014, dove.us/Our-Mission/Girls-Self-Esteem/Vision/default.aspx.
276. These videos are widely available for viewing. “Little Girls” may be found at adland.tv/commercials/dove-true-colors-2006-45-usa; “Daughters” on the Vimeo channel of its director, Yael Staav, vimeo.com/15858914; “Evolution” on the YouTube channel of its director, Tim Piper, youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U&feature=kp; “Onslaught” on the Vimeo channel of its creative director, David Hayman, who also produced a video for Brita, vimeo.com/4097693; and “Amy” on Dove’s YouTube channel, youtube.com/watch?v=RWbtaj5kSUK. A less well-known video, specifically featuring older women in order to promote Dove’s “Pro-Age” lotion, can be viewed on Experimenta Design’s Vimeo page, vimeo.com/17210728.
277. If one visits campaignforrealbeauty.com today, one arrives at a website for Medifast diet products.
278. “Your Purchase Counts,” accessed May 29, 2014, dove.us/Social-Mission/Your-Purchase-Counts/default.aspx.
279. “Self Esteem Toolkit & Resources,” accessed on May 29, 2014, dove.us/Our-Mission/Girls-Self-Esteem/Get-Involved/default.aspx.
280. “Beauty is...,” accessed on May 29, 2014, dove.us/Our-Mission/Real-Beauty/default.aspx. The remainder of the page is an invitation to twitter #beautyis... with some of the submissions presented on the page, and an archive of past years’ videos and submissions.

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281. There are several versions of this video. On Dove's main site, you can view this one: realbeautysketches.dove.us. On Dove's YouTube page, you can view a longer version: youtube.com/watch?v=litXW91UauE. The longer version is the one that went viral. See Tanzina Vega, "Ad About Women's Self-Image Creates a Sensation," *New York Times*, April 18, 2013. An insightful blog analysis of this video, prompted by the "sharing" of the video by several friends, can be found here: jazzylittledrops.tumblr.com/post/48118645174/why-doves-real-beauty-sketches-video-makes-me.
282. "Little Drops," accessed on October 13, 2013, jazzylittledrops.tumblr.com/post/48118645174/why-doves-real-beauty-sketches-video-makes-me.
283. Rob Walker, *Buying In: The Secret Dialogue Between What We Buy and Who We Are* (New York: Random House, 2008).
284. Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media, and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 17.
285. Chouliaraki, 2.
286. Chouliaraki, 11, and Chapter 8.
287. Chouliaraki, 12.