

**Modern Marketing Theory: Critical Issues in the Philosophy of Marketing Science**

**By Shelby D. Hunt (Cincinnati: South-Western Publishing, 1991, 499 pages, \$35.00)**

Like his two previous marketing theory books, *Marketing Theory: Conceptual Foundations of Research in Marketing* (1976) and *Marketing Theory: The Philosophy of Marketing Science* (1983), Shelby Hunt's latest effort in the marketing theory area, entitled *Modern Marketing Theory: Critical Issues in the Philosophy of Marketing Science*, will undoubtedly provide an important benchmark perspective in the discipline. In the seven-year period since his last theory book, the debate over various philosophical perspectives within the marketing discipline has greatly intensified (in the preface he refers to the "crisis literature"), and Hunt has appropriately incorporated the newer issues into his latest work.

*Modern Marketing Thought* is ostensibly two books. Part I, "Philosophy of Marketing Science," comprises the main body of the chapters from his 1983 book without the after-the-chapter readings. Part II, "Philosophy of Science: Historical Perspectives and Current Status," is a chronicling of various philosophical orientations in science, with the stated purpose of showing readers the origin, development, and at times demise of several important philosophical traditions. Because the first part is mostly redundant with his prior work (reviewed in the Fall 1983 *Journal of Marketing*), the comments in this review focus primarily on the second part of the book.

In an effort to couch his eventual discussion and analysis of the dominant philosophical perspectives within the discipline, Professor Hunt has, in a very detailed and methodical way, provided a historical analysis of the major philosophical traditions that have influenced various scientific endeavors over time. Early in the second part of the text he provides a useful time chart that tracks (both in time and by authors) the growth of numerous major philosophical traditions such as Platonism, Classical Empiricism, Classical Rationalism, Idealism, Classical Positivism, Classical Realism, Pragmatism, Logical Positivism, Logical Empiricism, Falsification, Historical Relativism, Historical Empiricism, and Scientific Realism. The four chapters of this second part of the book explore each of these philosophical viewpoints.

Each of Part II's four chapters represents a logical grouping of these philosophical schools on a unit-of-analysis basis. Hunt initially addresses Platonism, Classical Empiricism, Classical Rationalism, Idealism, and Classical Positivism in an effort to show the early connectedness between science and philosophy, pointing out that some of the same issues now being debated by marketers were being argued more than 2500 years ago. In the next chapter, beginning with the advent of Realism, Hunt goes on to show the growing "estrangement" between philosophy and science, which ultimately led to widespread criticism of Classical Realism and the growth and proliferation of the Logical Empiricist and Logical Positivist perspectives that over time brought about a reunification of science and philosophy.

The third chapter in this section addresses the rise and fall of Historical Relativism. The chapter is well-written and presents an even further embellishment of the marketing discipline's understanding and knowledge of the relativistic perspective, somewhat similar in approach to Muncy and Fisk's (1987) article. At this point the reader becomes increasingly aware of an overall logic behind Hunt's presentation, that being to demonstrate to the reader how and why the various forms of relativism emerged (and in some cases perished) and where they are headed.

Consistent with this theme, the book's final chapter is devoted to an enlightening discussion of Post-Relativism, as embodied by Historical Empiricism and Scientific Realism. Here Hunt ostensibly argues that, as a combination of various types of Realism, Scientific Realism occupies and represents an important "middle ground" among philosophical systems. Hunt argues that Scientific Realism provides an important alternative philosophical system that essentially represents elements of both positivistic/empirical and relativistic/constructionist viewpoints. Though several established philosophical systems share common elements, no established "school" of Scientific Realism exists *per se*. Consequently, the reader is left with only a semantic distinction between Scientific Realism and other philosophical systems. For example, would Cialdini's notion of "full-cycle social psychology" typify Scientific Realism? Because the parameters of Scientific Realism are relatively loose, much interpretation is left to the reader.

In one of the last sections of the book, the reader is confronted with the question, "What Philosophy Dominates Marketing?" In a relatively new tack that will surprise some readers, Hunt eventually argues that no single philosophy dominates marketing. Furthermore, he also seems to imply (though he is not entirely clear on this point) that no single perspective *ought* to dominate the discipline. Hunt's previous theory books and articles such as the 1984 piece, "Should Marketing Adopt Relativism?" (included as Appendix A in the new text), have embodied the antithesis to the relativistic perspective. Several of the works found in the appendices to the text (all written by Hunt) are increasingly tolerant of the relativistic perspective, though throughout the book his seemingly selective (at times) use of certain authors to the exclusion of others may raise a few questions.

By devoting considerable time, effort, and space in this new book to a better understanding of the history behind relativism and its predecessors, Hunt has recognized the important role of this "alternative" perspective to the further growth and development of marketing as a science. Throughout the second part of the book, Hunt seems to be attempting to (1) further illuminate this discussion within the discipline and (2) build consensus around his notion that marketing scholars should all be pursuing "truth" in their research, no matter what their philosophical orientation (and in part succeeds through his offering to the reader and the discipline the notion of Scientific Realism).

Within this section, Hunt also calls for research to understand the philosophical foundations scholars rely on when conducting their work in the discipline. At face value this suggestion is intriguing, but upon further evaluation the area is problematic to explore. Readers will simply have to ask themselves, "How many researchers *a priori* make a decision about their philosophical foundation?" or "How consistent are researchers in their philosophical orientation?" An alternative way to view Hunt's recommendation would be to examine the type and nature of the research being conducted within the discipline, such as Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett (1988) have done, or to apply the validity network schema of McGrath and Brinberg (1983). Are researchers wedded more closely to a specific topical area, type of research method, or mode of analysis? What are the philosophical ramifications of those choices? Or are researchers' primary allegiances to a specific philosophical orientation in science? Factors such as research area, method, and mode of analysis seem to be primary, and it is from this vantage point that Hunt (and others) should be considering the philosophical ramifications of research in marketing.

The final section of the main text argues, under the rubric of marketing science and marketing ethics, that marketers, no matter what their philosophical loyalties, ultimately should be

seeking the naked truth in their research endeavors. Hunt argues and believes that the second part of his text is an effort to "provide the historical foundations for elevating debate to a higher, better informed plane" and to cease with the bashing of Positivism, all in an effort to deliver to our constituencies "honest, reasoned efforts." Toward this end, Hunt makes a satisfyingly appropriate "compromise" between the various popular philosophical orientations. In retrospect it becomes evident that a major purpose of the book is to demonstrate more commonalities than differences among the various philosophical camps. In using truth as a common goal for all researchers, Hunt has, throughout this book, echoed the sentiments of Einstein (1950), who once said, "Truth is what stands the test of experience."

The book has several appendices, including Professor Hunt's 1984 piece, "Should Marketing Adopt Relativism?" (including a 1989 postscript to clarify several issues), his 1989 article "Naturalistic, Humanistic, and Interpretive Inquiry: Challenges and Ultimate Potential," and another 1989 article by Hunt entitled, "Reification and Realism in Marketing: In Defense of Reason." These articles are applied to specific issues within the marketing discipline and are valuable additions to the book.

As we have come to expect and appreciate in Professor Hunt's writings, *Modern Marketing Theory* is well-conceived and written. In retrospect, one of us having reviewed Hunt's initial marketing theory text (in *JM*, January 1977, p. 122) and co-edited a related book (Brown and Fisk 1984), we find that Hunt's latest effort reflects both changes in the discipline and an evolution of the author's thinking. When assessed in comparison with the current cadre of marketing-theory-related books, Hunt's book has no direct competitor. In their most recent series of books, Sheth and Garrett (1986) and Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett (1988) also take a historical perspective, but choose to examine the specific nature of the research conducted in marketing rather than focusing, as Hunt traditionally has, on the philosophical and metatheoretical aspects of marketing science. At times, Hunt criticizes the Sheth, Gardner, and Garrett text in its interpretation and examination of research schools. However, as one of the reviewers has used a variety of sources in teaching doctoral-level marketing theory seminars, we believe that the aforementioned marketing books are designed to serve different purposes.

Clearly, Shelby Hunt's latest work represents a milestone in the development of the discipline's scholarly underpinnings. Over time it will make a significant contribution to the discipline's understanding and debate about the philosophical orientations in science.

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## ***Morality and the Market: Consumer Pressure for Corporate Accountability***

**By N. Craig Smith (London: Routledge, 1990, 351 pages, \$25.00)**

As the 1990s begin, it seems very appropriate for business scholars to be investigating how well markets can serve society without a high level of governmental interference and regulation. In the United States, after experiencing the laissez-faire approach of the Reagan Administration, with its weak antitrust and consumer protection enforcement and absence of new regulatory initiatives, concerned observers of the business community are questioning whether the marketplace can be counted on to regulate itself and avoid serious harm to the citizenry. Consumer groups, environmental groups, legislators, state attorneys general, and even numerous business leaders have been questioning whether laissez-faire economics and deregulation have gone too far. Many have been calling for stricter and more active government intervention in such areas as pollution control, resource conservation, deceptive advertising, food and drug labeling, privacy protection, airline pricing, and mergers and acquisitions. In a sense, a debate is emerging over how far the "blanket" of government control over business should be pulled back over the U.S. economy.

At the same time, political developments in Eastern Europe have raised the issue of how far the "blanket" of government control over business should be pulled off the economies of the former Communist Bloc countries. Concern is that if the blanket is removed too far or too fast, abuses will occur in the form of worker exploitation, consumer deception and fraud, consumer overpayment, resource degradation and wastage, and so forth.

The need to employ the blanket of government control over business can be reduced significantly if the consumers in a country have the ability to protect themselves from abusive business behaviors. Savvy consumers can shop carefully, complain effectively, and provide advice to other consumers, creating markets in which businesses must be on their toes and continually supply offerings that provide excellent value to