

LUDWIG VON MISES INSTITUTE MEMORIAL LECTURE

LIBERTARIANISM(S) VERSUS POSTMODERNISM AND ‘SOCIAL JUSTICE’ IDEOLOGY

MICHAEL RECTENWALD*

A peculiar phrase recently introduced into the political lexicon by media cognoscenti describes a new corporate philosophy: “woke capitalism.” Coined by Ross Douthat of the *New York Times* (2018), woke capitalism refers to a burgeoning wave of companies that apparently have become advocates of social justice. Some major corporations now intervene in social and political issues and controversies, partaking in a new corporate activism. The newly “woke” corporations support activist groups and social movements, while adding their voices to political debates. Woke capitalism has endorsed Black Lives Matter, the #MeToo Movement, contemporary feminism, LGBTQ rights, and immigration activism, among other leftist causes.

How can we understand woke capitalism, is it effective, and if so, why? Meanwhile, what is now meant by “social justice” and is

* Dr. Michael Rectenwald is a former professor at New York University and author of nine books, most recently *Google Archipelago*.

This Ludwig von Mises Memorial Lecture, sponsored by Yousif Almoayyed, was given at the Austrian Economics Research Conference at the Mises Institute on March 22, 2019.



it a good thing? As it turns out, analyzing woke capitalism tells us a great deal about contemporary corporate capitalism, the contemporary political left, and the relationship between the two. It also recalls an earlier corporate leftism, as I'll discuss later.

As for social justice, some will recall twentieth-century social justice movements. The Civil Rights movement comes to mind. But due to the influence of postmodern theoretical ideas and Soviet and Sino-communist disciplinary techniques, social justice has taken on new, distinct features. Whereas the campus free speech movement was a hallmark of social justice in the 1960s, violent skirmishes waged *against* free speech and academic freedom are now associated with the term. Events that have unfolded on college campuses, including at Yale, New York University, UC Berkeley, Middlebury College, Evergreen State College, and many others, bear the social justice insignia.

Among other postmodern theoretical notions, the contemporary social justice creed draws on "social and linguistic constructivism," an epistemological premise derived from postmodern theory holding that language constitutes social (and often all) reality, rather than merely attempting to represent it. Under social and linguistic constructivism, language is considered a material agent—its uses, as tantamount to physical acts. This belief explains the term "discursive violence." For the social justice believer, language can enact violence by itself, without any attendant actions.

Today's social justice creed is marked by preoccupations with new identities and their politics. It entails a broad palette of beliefs and practices, represented by new concerns and shibboleths, including "privilege," "white privilege," "privilege-checking," "self-criticism" or "autocritique," "cultural appropriation," "intersectionality," "discursive violence," "rape culture," "microaggressions," "mansplaining," "manspreading," and many others. The terms proliferate almost as rapidly as the gender identities.

Self-criticism and privilege-checking are the vestiges of "autocritique" and "struggle sessions," purification methods of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966–76). In the late 1960s, as word from the communist revival spread to the West through the student and feminist movements of Europe, especially France, the birthplace of postmodern theory, they became part of the

Western left's vocabulary and toolkit. In struggle sessions, the guilty party—accused of selfishness, ignorance, and the embrace of bourgeois ideology—was pilloried with verbal and often physical assaults by her comrades, until she broke down and confessed her characterological and ideological flaws. Today, the confessions involve privilege, or the unearned advantage enjoyed by members of a dominant group based on appearance. Usually on demand, checking one's privilege means to acknowledge unearned advantage and to atone for it publicly. Meanwhile, in the Chinese Cultural Revolution, autocritique began with the guilty party, who subjected herself to brutal verbal self-inspection and denigration before the jury of her comrades. Autocritique and struggle sessions could lead to imprisonment or death as the comrade was often found to be insufficiently pure. In self-criticism (self-crit) and "callout" routines, soft forms of autocritique and struggle sessions became prevalent on the Internet sometime after 2009. They then infiltrated universities and other social spaces.

"Intersectionality" is the axiomatic oppression-ranking framework that establishes a new social justice hierarchy based on the multiplicities of oppression as they may intersect and affect subjects in multiple, supposedly subordinated social categories. It is no less than a scale for weighing oppression. It then inverts the supposedly existing hierarchy on the basis of this intersectional oppression ranking, moving those on the bottom to the top, and vice versa. This is not a temporary feature of social justice but represents a hierarchical inversion that must be maintained to engender the animus and *ressentiment* necessary to continue fueling the movement.

This ranking system began with the work of the Hungarian and Soviet literary critic and Marxist philosopher György Lukács. In his book, *History and Class Consciousness* ([1923] 1971), Lukács introduced a form of epistemology that has had an outsized impact ever since, serving as a source for postmodern theory and social justice. The social justice notion that each person has their own truth based on their particular type of subordination can be traced to Lukács. He argued that the unique position of the working class within the social order and the relations of production provide the proletariat with a privileged vantage-point for discerning objective truth and called the theory "proletarian standpoint epistemology." Lukács argued that reality under capitalism is a single objective reality. But the proletarian

has a peculiar relationship to objective reality. The objective world strikes the proletariat differently than it does the capitalist. Like the capitalist, the proletariat is a self-conscious subject. However, unlike the capitalist, the proletariat is also a commodity, an object for sale on the market. The proletariat's consciousness of the commodification of his selfhood contradicts his experience as living subject, a person with a subjective existence. The proletariat's "self-consciousness of the commodity" (that is himself) explains the working class's antagonism toward capitalism as Lukács saw it. While the proletariat fully grasps the contradiction of its self-conscious commodification, the class can only come to terms with the contradiction by upending and abolishing existing conditions.

Feminists and postmodern theorists later appropriated standpoint epistemology and siphoned it through various identity filters. It is the root of the contemporary social justice belief in the connection between identity and knowledge. Social justice holds that membership in a subordinated identity group grants members exclusive access to particular knowledge, their own knowledge. Members of dominant identity groups cannot access or understand the knowledge of subordinated others. For example, a white "cishetero" male (a white straight man who accepts the gender that he was "assigned at birth") cannot have a black lesbian's experience and therefore can't access or understand her knowledge. Individuals within subordinated identity groups also have their own *individual* knowledge. For social justice believers, knowledge is personal, individual, and impenetrable to others. It is "my knowledge." I call this notion of knowledge "epistemological solipsism." Under the social justice worldview, everyone is locked in an impenetrable identity chrysalis with access to a personal knowledge that no one else can reach.

Therefore, social justice ideology does not foster egalitarianism. Rank is maintained, only the bottom becomes the top when the totem pole of identity is inevitably flipped upside-down and stood on its head. Is it any wonder then that social justice warriors compete valiantly for the status of "most subordinated" in the games derogatorily referred to as "the Oppression Olympics?" The race to the bottom is really a race to the top—although the race runs downhill.

Both its epistemology and ontology—its assumptions about how one acquires knowledge, who can know, and the nature of the objects of knowledge—are enforced with authoritarianism. Claims made on behalf of correct beliefs, correct wording, and proper naming—that is, *language* itself—trump empirical evidence and nullify scientific findings and methods in advance. Thus, social justice represents an entirely new understanding, quite distinct from previous versions. It also involves entirely different practices and methods for implementing it. The social and linguistic constructivist claims of social justice ideologues amount to a form of philosophical and social idealism that is enforced with a moral absolutism. Once beliefs are unconstrained by the object world and people can believe anything they like with impunity, the possibility for assuming a pretense of infallibility becomes almost irresistible, especially when the requisite power is available to support such a pretense. In fact, given its willy-nilly determination of truth and reality on the basis of beliefs alone, philosophical and social idealism necessarily becomes dogmatic, authoritarian, anti-rational, and effectively religious. Since it sanctions no push-back from the object world and regards it with indifference or disdain, it necessarily encounters push-back from the object world and must double-down. Because it usually contains so much nonsense, the social and philosophical idealism of the social justice creed must be established by force, or the threat of force.

Today, I will discuss some contemporary manifestations of “social justice,” but not as it plays out in the academy, a topic I have treated in my most recent book, *Springtime for Snowflakes: ‘Social Justice’ and Its Postmodern Parentage* (2018). Instead, my topic today is the “social justice” of U.S. for-profit corporations. Although regarded as new, I will show that “woke capitalism” is but a subset and recent type of a broader and longer-standing corporate ethos that I call “corporate leftism.” Woke capitalism also helps to make sense of the topic of my next book, *Google Archipelago*, a study of Big Digital—the mega-data services; media, cable, and Internet services; social media platforms; Artificial Intelligence (AI) agents; apps; and the developing Internet of Things. The Google Archipelago is not merely an amalgam of digital business interests. It operates and will increasingly operate as what the only redeemable postmodern theorist, Michel Foucault, called a “governmentality,” a means of

governing the conduct of populations but also the *technologies* of governance and the rationality that underpins the technologies.¹)

Despite the initial backlash, Nike's "Believe in Something" ad campaign featuring Colin Kaepernick—whose national anthem kneel-downs brought #BlackLivesMatter protest to the NFL—dramatically boosted Nike's sales. The ad's success supported *Business Insider* columnist Josh Barro's (2018) theory that woke capitalism provides a form of parapolitical representation for corporate consumers. Given their perceived political disenfranchisement in the political sphere, woke capitalism offers representation in the public sphere.²

With wokeness, Ross Douthat (2018) of the *New York Times* argues, corporations offer workers and customers rhetorical placebos in lieu of costlier economic concessions, such as higher wages and better benefits, or lower prices. Short of a socialist revolution, New York Congressional Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal seems unlikely to materialize.³ Douthat suggests that woke capitalism works by substituting *symbolic* for *economic* value. The same gestures of wokeness may also appease the liberal political elite, promoting their agendas of identity politics, gender pluralism, transgenderism, lax immigration standards, sanctuary cities, and so on. In return, the woke corporations hope to be spared higher taxes, increased regulations, and antitrust legislation aimed at monopolies.⁴

Meanwhile, at least one woke corporation appears intent on scolding its customers. I refer to Gillette (2019) and its "We Believe" ad. Like Nike, Gillette is a subsidiary of Proctor & Gamble. First posted to its social media accounts in mid-January 2019, the ad condescendingly lectures men, presumably "cishetero" men, about "toxic masculinity." In the provocative ad, three men look into separate mirrors—not to shave but to examine themselves for

¹ Michel Foucault introduced the term "governmentality" in a series of lectures from 1977 to 1979. By the rationality underpinning technologies of governance, Foucault meant the way that power rationalizes the relations of power to itself and to the governed.

² See Martinez (2018).

³ See Levitz (2018).

⁴ See Douthat (2018).

traces of the dreaded condition. Voice-overs admonish men “to say the right thing, to act the right way.” Dramatizations of bullying, mansplaining, misogyny, and sexual predation shame bad men and enjoin a woke minority of men to “hold other men accountable,” or else face shame as well.

For Gillette, “shaving” now apparently means shearing away the characteristics associated with manhood now deemed pathological by the American Psychological Association.⁵ To prevent the sudden onset or relapse of man-disease, self-groomers must exercise vigilance, scathing self-scrutiny, and unwavering determination. Even though their gender malignance has been “socially constructed,” men are responsible for immediately discerning and excising its outgrowths. The Gillette ad thus prescribes a new gender hygienics by which such brutes can “move upward, working out the beast,”⁶ becoming “The Best a Man Can Get,” a newly-shorn animal, or rather a new kind of man shorn of animality.

Like the Nike Kaepernick ad, the Gillette “We Believe” ad provoked significant backlash. But parent company Proctor & Gamble’s executive response to the ensuing furor suggested that the corporation was willing to forgo profits for virtue points, at least for now. Jon Moeller, Proctor & Gamble’s CFO, told reporters that post-ad sales were “in-line with pre-campaign levels.” In advertising terms, in other words, the ad was a failure. Yet, Moeller viewed the expenditure as an investment in the future. “It’s a part of our effort to connect more meaningfully with younger consumer groups,”⁷ he explained, perhaps referring to those too young to sport the toxic stubble.

Unsatisfied with the above explanations, I still wondered how and why corporations assumed the role of social justice arbiters and how and why social justice came to be the ideology of major U.S.

⁵ See Pappas (2019). These damaging traits include “stoicism, competitiveness, dominance and aggression.”

⁶ Tennyson (1850, 183). By “working out the beast,” Alfred Lord Tennyson meant to eradicate the moral baseness of animal nature, rather than to establish an earthly utopia, as his predecessor William Godwin had suggested, or to remove the traits associated mostly with men due to evolutionary selection.

⁷ Meyersohn (2019).

corporations.⁸ But before venturing my own theory, however, I'd like to retrace a history of corporate leftism, which will shed light on the relationship between leftism and corporatism.

Corporate leftism has a long history, dating at least to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I first recognized corporate leftism through the histories that documented the funding of the Russian and other socialist revolutions by leading U.S. capitalists and bankers. As Richard B. Spence (2017) boldly declares in *Wall Street and the Russian Revolution 1905–1925*, the term see, “socialist-capitalist” is not an oxymoron.

Spence was not referring to so-called “mixed economies” but rather to a false dichotomy, a mating of two supposed economic antinomies, socialism and capitalism. Understanding why the term is not an oxymoron does not necessarily depend upon the historical knowledge uncovered by Spence, and before him, by Antony C. Sutton (2016)—although, given that I am a historian, I found this material revealing. But the apparent contradiction in terms is based on a mischaracterization of economic opposites and a failure to detect in the original name for the field of economics, namely “political economy,” the inherent possibility of such a conjunction. The real opposites are not capitalism and socialism but rather individual freedom versus centralized political control, whether statist or corporate.

According to Sutton's *Wall Street and FDR* (1975), “corporate socialism is a system where those few who hold the legal monopolies of financial and industrial control profit at the expense of all others in society.” For Sutton, “The most lucid and frank description of corporate socialism and its mores and objectives is to be found in a 1906 booklet by Frederick Clemson Howe, *Confessions of a Monopolist*.” In attempting to validate Sutton's reference to Howe as the prototypical monopolist or even corporate socialist, I was disappointed, but ultimately found the excursion rewarding.

Beginning with Spence's *Wall Street and the Russian Revolution 1905–1925*, which had the same title as one of Sutton's major books except for an added date range, I searched feverishly for

⁸ For a summary of the relationship between corporate social activism and political activists, see Lin (2018).

“Howe” and “Confessions of a Monopolist.” (Actually, as is my wont, I searched electronic texts and the Kindle version of Spence, so my search produced nothing like a fever. But I *am* nostalgic for a past that I never knew, when in nineteenth century novels, the researches of fictional characters like Victor Frankenstein resulted in life-threatening frenzies.)

My problem was that I wanted to introduce corporate leftism and corporate socialism by referring to a television sitcom of the 1970s, namely, *Gilligan's Island*. Some of you will be old enough and will have hailed from backgrounds as plebeian as my own to recall this program. The situation for this “dumb TV show,” as Mises scholar B.K Marcus aptly put it, is a small community of seven American castaways on a deserted island. Because it aired in the '60s, *Gilligan's Island* is a collectivist Robinson Crusoe tale with a socialist pretext. Each character represents a different life station in an otherwise lost world of individualism, cast from a division of labor that is rendered absurd let alone inapplicable by the social and economic life of desertion. Since the show's creator and producer Sherwood Schwartz was at least an unconscious Marxist, the sitcom demonstrated episode after episode that “in communist society ... nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity.” Actress, professor, millionaire's wife, and “all the rest” must “hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner” (Marx [1845] 1968). They must outgrow the limited specializations imposed on them by the capitalist order. This goes for everyone on the island, except, it seems, for the monopolist, Thurston B. Howell III.

Although their names were not identical, they were near homonyms and I'd hoped to connect Frederic Howe and Thurston B. Howell. I hadn't been so sanguine as to expect that Thurston Howell had been named directly after Frederic Howe. After all their names were spelled differently. Yet, I still hoped for some reference. And they were both monopolists, or so I thought.

Uh oh. Spence did not mention Howe as the model monopolist or corporate socialist. In fact, he curiously omitted any reference to Howe's name and his “rule book.” Coming up empty in such a cognate publication, I began to feel flush and somewhat panicky. (As you know, we humanities scholars are susceptible

to hyper-emotionality.) Nor could I find any mention of Frederic Howe in connection with Thurston B. Howell at all. And, while a few early reviews of *Confessions* took the book at face value and came to the same conclusion as Sutton, that it represented the autobiography of a real monopolist giving away his secrets, even the most cursory assessment of *Doctor* Frederic Howe's life and other works would have quickly disabused anyone but the most tendentious polemicist of the idea that Howe's *Confessions* was a rule book or how-to manual for monopolists. Howe was nothing like the corporate magnate or mega-banker that Sutton suggested he was, and so he could not possibly have helped bankroll the creation of "a captive market and a technical colony to be exploited by a few high-powered American financiers and the corporations under their control," that is, the Soviet Union. First of all, Howe had earned a Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University. A real monopolist would wait for an honorary degree. Furthermore, *Confessions of a Monopolist* was not even an autobiography; it was a biting satire, a criticism of monopolies and monopolists, written by a progressive reformer and later FDR statesman. As it turned out, both Howe and Howell had been fictional monopolists.

Yet the Thurston Howell on Gilligan's island was certainly something like the stereotypical monopolist described in Frederic Howe's book. Like the character in *Confessions*, Howell's number one rule was to "make Society work for you." Thurston Howell certainly managed to command the labor and deference of his fellow islanders. As Marcus (2004) notes in "The Monetary Economics of Thurston Howell III," Howell was able to commandeer labor and goods by virtue of his off-island status, to procure goods and services by writing checks drawn on U.S. banks. The fact that this fiat currency functioned in the absence of the government that backed it suggests that money operates according to a cultural, Lamarckian evolutionary process. Money's governmentally-enforced fiat characteristic is an acquired characteristic that is passed along through future generational transactions and retains these characteristics even after its basis in force disappears—at least until it is replaced, and sometimes even after that. As Mises showed, the value of a currency is historical and the study of currencies must be historicist.

Howell's expression of monopolistic *desiderata*, however, is best expressed in episode 9, "The Big Gold Strike," (Warner Bros.

Entertainment [1964] 2013) when Gilligan, acting as Howell's golf caddie, falls into a giant hole where he notices something golden embedded in the walls of the cave. Naturally Howell recognizes gold and assumes that it is his property. After all, Gilligan was in his employ, albeit fooled by a faux fiat currency. Howell swears Gilligan to secrecy to secure his ownership against the islanders' agreement that all property on the island would be communal. But soon the mine is discovered by the rest of the community. The unreliability of the state appears to account for Howell's problem in securing exclusive gold mining rights. Gilligan is the nominal and ineffectual President of the island and a buffoon who has no power. But Howell's failure as a monopolist is more fundamental. While he is perfectly capable to "let others work for you," he does not know the language or ways of corporate socialism, and does not understand how to establish monopoly within such a state. Rather than continually yielding expressions of blatant self-interest, a corporate socialist would couch his monopolistic ambitions in the language of equality.

Rather than Frederic Howe, King Camp Gillette would have provided a much better model for Thurston Howell. The founder of the American Safety Razor Company in 1901, who changed its name to the Gillette Safety Razor Company in 1902, Gillette published *The Human Drift* in 1894. While acknowledging that "[n]o reform movement can meet with success unless that movement takes into consideration the power of capital, and is based on present business methods, and conforms to the same laws" (4), Gillette's *Human Drift* railed against competition, which he believed was "the prolific source of ignorance and every form of crime, and that [which] increases the wealth of the few at the expense of the many...the present system of competition between individuals results in fraud, deception, and adulteration of almost every article we eat, drink, or wear." Competition resulted in "a waste of material and labor beyond calculation." Competition was the source of "selfishness, war between nations and individuals, murder, robbery, lying, prostitution, forgery, divorce, deception, brutality, ignorance, injustice, drunkenness, insanity, suicide, and every other crime, [which] have their base in competition and ignorance. This explains the recent Gillette ad; the company has finally discovered that the root of competition, and thus, of all evil, is toxic masculinity.

But the corporate socialist King Camp Gillette may as well have patented the disposable safety razor to prevent so many desperate people from cutting their throats—at least until they realized the answer to all of their problems, which he had introduced in *Human Drift*: a singular monopoly, which would “naturally” control all production and distribution, specializing in everything, such that “every article sold to consumer, from the package to its contents, will be the product of the United Company.” Under the United Company, the production of necessary goods, and eventually of everything, would be consolidated and centralized, eliminating the waste and hazards of the many and widely dispersed manufacturing plants and buildings of the current haphazard and chaotic system. Most cities and towns would “destroyed,” as would all competitors, as the vast majority of the population would relocate to “The Metropolis,” where, powered by Niagara Falls, all production would take place and everyone’s lives would center around the corporation, whose commercial and governmental power would be total.

Lest one think that *The Human Drift* represented the lark of a young idealist before he came to his senses and founded a company with almost unparalleled name recognition, Gillette went on to publish the *World Corporation* in 1910, a prospectus for developing a world-wide singular monopoly. But, founding his company and patenting his razor between writing these two treatises, Gillette’s biographer Russel Adams quipped, “[i]t was almost as if Karl Marx had paused between *The Communist Manifesto* and *Das Kapital* to develop a dissolving toothbrush or collapsible comb.” (Adams, 1978)

A few passages from *World Corporation* should be sufficient to establish Gillette as the prototypical corporate socialist:

CORPORATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO FORM, ABSORB, EXPAND, AND GROW, AND NO POWER OF MAN CAN PREVENT IT. Promoters [of World Corporation] are the true socialists of this generation, the actual builders of a co-operative system which is eliminating competition, and in a practical business way reaching results which socialists have vainly tried to attain through legislation and agitation for centuries (Gillette 1910, 9).

Opposition to “WORLD CORPORATION” by individuals, by states, or by governments will be of no avail. Opposition in any case can only be of temporary effect, barriers will only centralize power and cause increased momentum when they give way (Gillette 1910, 62).

The corporation will dominate material but also mental production, as Gillette praises the hive mind:

“WORLD CORPORATION” represents individual intelligence and force combined, centralized and intelligently directed. Individuals are OF the corporate mind, but are not THE corporate mind (Gillette 1910, 45).

And, as if anticipating Google’s secret mission statement, Gillette wrote:

“WORLD CORPORATION” will possess all knowledge of all men, and each individual mind will find complete expression through the great Corporate Mind.

Finally, waxing poetic in Ray Kurzweil mode, Gillette wrote:

“WORLD CORPORATION” will have life everlasting. Individual man will live his life and pass into the great beyond; but this great Corporate Mind will live on through the ages, always absorbing and perfecting, for the utilization and benefit of all the inhabitants of the earth.

It is worth noting that Gillette’s business practices were not wholly at odds with the ideas in his books. True to his monopolistic impulses, he regularly filed patents, and in 1917 with the outbreak of World War I, the company provided every soldier with a shaving kit, paid for by the U.S. government. But did Gillette’s expressions of corporate socialism actually help his business efforts, or merely ease his guilty conscience? We can’t be sure, but speculating about the objectives of today’s corporate leftists may help make sense of the rhetoric of such corporate leftists of the past.

Today’s corporate social justice rebranding represents at least a rhetorical overthrow of Milton Friedman’s extremely narrow view of corporate responsibility. In *Capitalism and Freedom* ([1962] 2002), Friedman declared that the “one and only one ‘social responsibility’ of business” is to “increase profits.”⁹ Friedman won the Nobel Prize in

⁹ In 1962, Friedman argued against the value of “corporate responsibility” that is expressed by woke capitalism. In a section entitled, “Social Responsibility of Business and Labor,” Friedman wrote: “The view has been gaining widespread acceptance that corporate officials and labor leaders have a ‘social responsibility’

Economics in 1976 and by the mid-1980s Friedman's notion of limited corporate "social responsibility" had become widely accepted.

Yet woke capitalism may still satisfy Friedman's profit-only maxim. If all the world's a stage, then the corporate mouthing of social justice bromides may be play-acting and therefore mawkish parody. To be truly woke, then, might mean that one is awake to the woke-acting corporations, the woke-believing consumers, and maybe even the demands of wokeness altogether. This explanation is consistent with the profit requirement and allows one to make short-shrift of newly found corporate virtue. It is a cynical sham and proves more than ever that the chicanery of corporations and their billionaire owners knows no bounds. This view is similar to that held by Anand Giridharadas (2019), critic of woke billionaires and author of *Winners Take All*.¹⁰

Now, as tempting as such "post-truth" cynicism may be, it doesn't explain the *promotion* of woke or leftist views by corporations and the effects that such promotions may have in making their consumer bases more leftist, a circumstance they will have to deal with at some point. Arguably, corporations would not espouse and thereby potentially spread political views merely to assuage a consumer contingent, unless said views ultimately aligned with their own interests. One is led to wonder what politics *would* best serve the interests of corporate leftists, especially aspiring corporate socialists.

To benefit corporate leftists, corporate socialists, or any monolithic singular producer and governmentality, a political creed would likely place a heavy emphasis on equality. Such an emphasis would likely be accompanied by shaming of the privileged along with demands that they surrender their advantages. To emphasize equality, the creed benefitting the corporate leftist would recognize refugees, the disenfranchised, and at least in theory would be internationalist rather than nationalist or nativist. While declaring

that goes beyond serving the interest of their stockholders or their members. This view shows a fundamental misconception of the character and nature of a free economy. In such an economy, there is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition, without deception or fraud." Friedman ([1962] 2002).

¹⁰ See Feloni (2019).

equality, the political creed of the corporate leftist might nevertheless stress *difference*—between identity groups and even within them—and might benefit from the creation of utterly new identity types. Such a creed would consistently keep the identity groups concerned with whether or not they were losing ground to other identity groups rather than worrying about the corporate socialist. Watch words might include “equity, inclusion, and diversity.” Always on the cutting edge, the corporate leftist would welcome the promotion of the new and the disruption of the old, but always with improvement in mind. A political creed that aimed at dismantling traditional gender, the family, local customs, tradition, and even historical memory would remove the last bastions against state or major corporate power. Ultimately, the corporate leftist or corporate socialist would benefit from a singular governmental monopoly, with one set of rules. As Gillette noted, ideally this global government would be the corporation itself.

Thus, woke capitalism or corporate leftism does not consist merely of rhetorical placebos, symbolic over economic concessions, or even the mere placating of liberal political elites. Woke capitalism or corporate leftism actually represents the corporate interests of the would-be monopolist, the corporate socialist, and the corporate leftist in general.

REFERENCES

- Adams, Russell B. 1978. *King C. Gillette: The Man and His Wonderful Shaving Device*. Boston: Little, Brown.
- Barro, Josh. 2018. “There’s a Simple Reason Companies Are Becoming More Publicly Left-Wing on Social Issues.” *Business Insider*, March 1. www.businessinsider.com/why-companies-ditching-nra-delta-selling-guns-2018-2.
- Douthat, Ross. 2018. “The Rise of Woke Capital.” *New York Times*, Feb. 28. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/28/opinion/corporate-america-activism.html>.
- Feloni, Richard. 2019. “‘We’re All Passengers in a Billionaire Hijacking’ Says the Critic Who Has the World’s Richest People Buzzing.” *Business Insider*, Feb. 1. www.businessinsider.com/anand-giridharadas-billionaires-inequality-interview-2019-1.

- Friedman, Milton. [1962] 2002. *Capitalism and Freedom: Fortieth Anniversary Edition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gillette. 2019. "We Believe: The Best Men Can Be." YouTube. Accessed March 22, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>.
- Gillette, King Camp. 1894. *The Human Drift*. Boston: New Era.
- . 1910. *World Corporation*. Boston: New England News.
- Giridharadas, Anand. 2019. *Winners Take All: The Elite Charade of Changing the World*. London: Allen Lane.
- Howe, Frederic C. 1906. *The Confessions of a Monopolist*. Chicago: Public Publishing.
- Levitz, Eric. 2018. "Is a Green New Deal Possible Without a Revolution?" *Daily Intelligencer*, Dec. 13. <http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2018/12/what-is-the-green-new-deal-explained-revolution.html>.
- Lin, Tom C.W. 2018. "Incorporating Social Activism." *Boston University Law Review* 98: 1535–1605.
- Luckas, George. [1923] 1971. *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*. Boston: MIT Press.
- Martinez, Gina. 2018. "Despite Outrage, Nike Sales Increased 31% After Kaepernick Ad." *Time*, Sept. 8. <http://time.com/5390884/nike-sales-go-up-kaepernick-a/>.
- Marx, Karl. [1845] 1968. *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Available at *Marx/Engels Internet Archive*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/ch01.htm>.
- Marcus, BK. 2004. "The Monetary Economics of Thurston Howell III." *Mises Daily Articles*. <http://mises.org/library/monetary-economics-thurston-howell-iii>.
- Meyersohn, Nathaniel. 2019. "Gillette Says It's Satisfied with Sales after Controversial Ad." *CNN*, Jan. 23. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/23/business/gillette-ad-procter-and-gamble-stock/index.html>.
- Nike. 2018. "Believe in Something." YouTube. Accessed March 22, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-grJIUWKoBA>.

- Pappas, Stephanie. 2019. "APA Issues First-Ever Guidelines for Practice with Men and Boys." *CE Corner* 50, no. 1: 34. <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/01/ce-corner.aspx>.
- Rectenwald, Michael. 2018. *Springtime for Snowflakes: "Social Justice" and Its Postmodern Parentage: A Memoir*. Nashville and London: New English Review Press.
- . 2019. *Google Archipelago: The Digital Gulag and the Simulation of Freedom*. Nashville and London: New English Review Press.
- Spence, Richard B. 2017. *Wall Street and the Russian Revolution: 1905–1925*. Kindle Ed. Waltherville, Oregon: Trine Day.
- Sutton, Antony C. 1975. *Wall Street and FDR*. Kindle Ed. Forest Row, UK: Rudolf Steiner Press.
- . 2016. *Wall Street and the Bolshevik Revolution*. West Hoathly, UK: Clairview.
- Tennyson, Alfred Lord. 1850. *In Memoriam*. 2nd ed. London: Edward Moxon.
- Warner Bros. Entertainment. [1964] 2013. "Gilligan's Island: The Big Gold Strike" YouTube. Accessed March 22, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWc055hWLn4&list=ELZPqLZtPsgto&index=10&t=1250s>.