

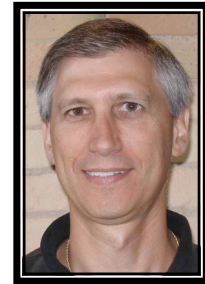


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### **A Case For The Virtue of Advertising**

In this book (*In Defense of Advertising: Arguments From Reason, Ethical Egoism, and Laissez-Faire Capitalism*, TLJ Books), business professor Jerry Kirkpatrick argues that advertising is an effective and necessary method of salesmanship, and that the principles of salesmanship should define the standards and principles of effective advertising. For this reason, advertising is a valid and beneficial tool of entrepreneurs that must be informative and persuasive to be effective. Advertising communications is an important mechanism through which consumers gain information about ways to satisfy and achieve the values they seek, and therefore serves a positive and beneficial role in society.

Kirkpatrick's arguments are not directed towards those who dislike any particular ad for its low-brow qualities, but rather aimed high to refute those who stand against advertising per se, on principle.

The book addresses important key questions such as:

- What is the nature of advertising?
- Is persuasive advertising wasteful or harmful?
- Does advertising benefit consumer interests or is it anti-consumer?
- Should some people determine which products are beneficial to advertise and which are not?
- Does advertising create unnecessary market instability and unwarranted competitive pressures, or are these attributes inherent benefits of market competition?
- Does advertising unnecessarily increase prices thereby 'exploiting' workers and consumers, or does it ultimately lower prices by increasing sales and reducing per unit costs, thereby benefiting workers and consumers?

The arguments presented by Kirkpatrick form a basic and fundamental philosophic and economic defense of advertising aimed at refuting those who argue that advertising per se is wasteful, coercive, and generally pernicious. This book is not directed towards practitioners who seek advice on how to improve their advertising. It doesn't provide advice on how to create more effective marketing communications beyond defining the purpose of advertising.

It is unfortunate that it may be difficult for many practitioners of advertising and marketing to understand Kirkpatrick's devastating critique of the various arguments put forth by advertising's enemies. That's because the refutation of such criticisms requires the application of higher level philosophic and economic concepts that are outside of most people's general context of knowledge. Kirkpatrick does a great job explaining the essence of these concepts, but by their nature, they are not easy for the uninitiated to understand, especially when brevity of presentation is maintained.

Perhaps the most prominent criticism of advertising as a medium is that it is inherently coercive and must be addressed by an opposing coercive intervention of government. As such, the critics of advertising qua salesmanship tend to be critics of free-markets, free-speech, and personal freedom in general. Advertising is an outcome of freedom, and Kirpatrick argues that an attack on one is really an attack on the other.

Another major criticism of advertising is that it promotes individual values as against conformity to so-called 'higher' values. At base, this critique of advertising rests upon the dispute in ethics between the virtue of self-interest versus social-interest, or egoism versus altruism. Economically and politically, this translates to issues of free-markets versus command economies, or capitalism versus socialism.

Kirkpatrick succeeds in addressing the philosophic attacks against advertising at all levels of the philosophic hierarchy: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and politics. He does so by taking a scientific individualistic approach, appealing primarily to philosopher Ayn Rand and economist Ludwig von Mises as his guideposts, hence the subtitle of the book: Arguments from Reason, Ethical Egoism, and Laissez-Faire Capitalism.

The arguments in this book pose a major challenge to those who attack the benefits of advertising and take a liking to business-bashing in general. Those who are serious about understanding the deeper meaning of these attacks and the fallacies they are based on as a means to defend the nobility of the principle of freedom of trade, i.e., capitalism, should find a lot of ammunition in this important book.

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Barry Linetsky is a Partner with The Strategic Planning Group (T.S.P.G.), a full service consulting firm that provides executives and their organizations with a wide range of advice, business tools and solutions. At T.S.P.G. our focus is on helping our clients solve their complex issues to realize their ultimate business potential, whether we are helping to set the overall strategy for the organization or assisting in a particular functional area. Our practical-results-oriented approach to solving business problems, combined with our personal commitment and dedication to providing great value for our clients, makes us the consultants of choice to blue-chip executives across North America.

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