

Robert Bartels and the History of Marketing Thought

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Robert Bartels was one of marketing's most prolific scholars. His research covered a broad array of marketing topics, including the marketing-as-a-science debate, theory, metatheory, the nature and scope of marketing, credit management, international marketing, comparative marketing, macromarketing, and marketing education, among others. Bartels's most significant and enduring contribution, however, was his fifty years of ongoing research, from dissertation to last publication, in the area with which his name became synonymous—The History of Marketing Thought. Although not without criticism, no other work provides such a long view of marketing's past and wide sweep of its subdisciplines. By tracing the history of marketing thought in the twentieth-century American academy, Bartels nurtured the interest in marketing's heritage and established a common knowledge base for generations of marketing students.

Robert Bartels's academic contributions to the marketing discipline are numerous and varied. He wrote books and articles on credit management, international marketing, and comparative marketing. Passionate about teaching, he wrote articles on improving marketing education. He also made frequent and significant contributions to the literature in the areas of marketing as a science, the nature and scope of marketing, marketing principles, marketing theory, and meta-theory in marketing. Bartels received many prestigious awards for his scholarship; in 1977, his article "Macromarketing" (Bartels 1977) earned the *Journal of Marketing's* Harold H. Maynard Award, named after his mentor, for its contribution to marketing thought and theory. His book *Marketing Theory and Metatheory* (Bartels 1970a) received the Paul D. Converse Award in 1981 for its contribution to the advancement of the science of marketing. The focus of the present article, because it affected Bartels's thinking during his entire academic career, influenced much of his writing in other areas, and represents his greatest intellectual contribution, is the work with which Bartels's name has become synonymous—*The History of Marketing Thought* (Bartels 1976, 1988).

PREPARATION OF A SCHOLAR

At a time when many marketing professors were schooled in other disciplines, particularly economics, Bartels was a pure student of marketing. Beginning his higher education at the Carnegie Institute of Technology (now Carnegie Mellon University) as a drama major in 1930-31, Bartels soon transferred to The Ohio State University, where he received his B.S. degree in marketing in 1935. His grades earned him a scholarship at Northwestern University, where he received an MBA in marketing one year later. In an autobiographical sketch, Bartels (1988, 308) said his mentors at Northwestern were Fred E. Clark and Horace Secrist. Clark (1922) was the author of one of the earliest textbooks on *Principles of Marketing* and is credited with "the beginnings of systemic marketing thought" (Savitt 1990, 294). Secrist taught Bartels that research findings result first from the technology used and second from the subject and methods chosen (Bartels 1988, 274).

With his MBA degree in hand, he returned to the Ohio State University in 1936 to start the Ph.D. program specializing in marketing. Two doctoral courses were particularly relevant to Bartels's education: the seminar in the Development of Marketing Thought, taught by Harold H. Maynard, and the seminar in Principles of Marketing, taught by Theodore N. Beckman. Maynard and Beckman were two of the leading scholars in marketing at the time, and each had a profound influence on Bartels's thinking and subsequent academic career. Maynard, well known for his interest in the development of marketing thought and theory, influenced Bartels's thinking about marketing history and may also have influenced his passion for teaching. Bartels taught his first course as an assistant instructor under Maynard's supervision; as the chairman of the Marketing department, Maynard would have made the assignment. Years later, following the death of his mentor, Bartels inherited the doctoral seminar in the

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Development of Marketing Thought, the course with which his name ultimately became intertwined.

The other major influence was Beckman. Because of his work in charge of the 1929 Census of Wholesale Distribution and as consulting expert for the 1933 Census of American Business, Beckman was widely recognized for his use of meticulously sharp definitions and was considered one of the leading classifiers of marketing phenomena. As a result of these two dominant influences, and even though he apparently took no courses in either the philosophy of science or in historical method, Bartels devoted his academic life to following a scientific and methodical approach to the development of marketing thought and theory.

THE HISTORY OF MARKETING THOUGHT

From his dissertation to his last publication, if his writing provides a guide, Bartels's thinking seldom strayed far from the development of marketing thought. Bartels's (1941) dissertation traced the evolution of the marketing literature, as expressed in marketing textbooks, from its origins as an academic discipline in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century through four decades of its development. The dissertation matured into his *magna opus: The Development* (or in later editions, *The History*) of *Marketing Thought*. He continuously tinkered with this work, updating it through three editions (Bartels 1962, 1976, 1988). Each revision extended his marketing history in time and expanded it in scope by incorporating the most recent developments in the evolving subdisciplines of marketing.

Marketing Literature— Development and Appraisal, 1941

After completing his Ph.D. course work in 1938, for unexplained reasons (perhaps financial difficulties, perhaps the intensity of working with two powerful personalities), Bartels left The Ohio State University—"All But Dissertation"—to take an assistant professorship at the University of Washington. It took him three years "in absentia" to complete his dissertation. When submitted and "Approved by H. M. Maynard and Theo N. Beckman," it was the masterpiece a dissertation is intended to be. The dissertation, *Marketing Literature—Development and Appraisal* (Bartels 1941), covered 525 pages, four hundred of text organized into sixteen chapters and four appendixes of 125 pages. This work systematized what he had learned from his two major advisers. Bartels (1941, 136) clearly used Maynard's work on the development of marketing thought as his content area and Beckman's work in classification and organization as his methodology. He drew on Maynard and Beckman's (1939) joint work, *Principles of Marketing*, for his chapters on marketing theory and principles.

The dissertation is divided into three sections—"History of Marketing Literature," "Methodology," and "Marketing

Theory"—and includes several important appendixes. In the History section, Bartels considered the changing economic conditions that encouraged writers to think about marketing problems, such as the price spread in farm products from producers to consumers and the increasing quantity of manufactured goods available in urban markets. The Methodology section is qualitative and deals with the motivation of various authors to write marketing books, such as providing a practical guide or how-to book, to justify the high costs of marketing, and "to prepare texts for educational purposes" (Bartels 1941, 49). Given the length of discussion for each of the half dozen motives, one gets the distinct impression that Bartels regards the latter as most important. This motive is in keeping with his high regard for teaching and also bears on his subsequent decision to write a book about marketing thought. The section also includes chapters on various viewpoints of marketing, sources of marketing information and materials, disciplines related to marketing, and various methods of presenting marketing knowledge.

Chapters in the Marketing Theory section describe what is now termed the *traditional approaches to marketing*: functions, institutions, and commodities. At the time, however, these approaches, particularly the functional approach, were widely regarded as the corpus of marketing theory and "each of these subjects is analyzed . . . to reveal the depth and diversity of thought . . . [and] the evolutionary tendencies characterizing the development of that thought" (Bartels 1941, 151). In the chapter on "Marketing Principles," Bartels cited several principles common at the time, such as "wholesale prices fluctuate more frequently but less violently than do retail prices," and "technical products of high unit value usually have a short channel of distribution" (p. 380). Bartels lamented the "relatively few principles of Marketing" developed to date, because most "emphasis has been placed on . . . descriptive material" (p. 385). Consequently, the difficulty of developing them "has been underestimated," and he stated, "The body of these principles would constitute a theory of marketing" (p. 386). Today, this view of theory would be considered naive, if not simplistic. However, it is not surprising that theory is regarded in simpler terms, given the time frame in which Bartels was writing, rather than with the rigor expressed by more modern writers schooled in the philosophy of science.

Eleven conclusions are stated in his dissertation. Three in particular guided Bartels's thinking throughout his career: a need for better methodology (Bartels 1941, 395); too little theory in marketing (p. 399); and the most fundamental concern: "The literature has been characterized by confusion of terminology," particularly the term "marketing" (p. 393). These core ideas, formed so early in his career, provide the foundation for much of his later work on developing marketing principles (Bartels 1944), viewing marketing as a science (Bartels 1951a), proposing a general theory of marketing (Bartels 1968), developing a metatheory for marketing

(Bartels 1970b), identifying the nature and scope of marketing (Bartels 1974), and clarifying the concept of marketing (Bartels 1983). His overwhelming concern with science and theory became a recurring theme in the *History of Marketing Thought*.

The chronologies found in the appendixes to the dissertation provide some of the most historically useful reference material. In Appendix A (Bartels 1941, 402-20), "Bibliography of Research Literature Classified by Source and Date," Bartels rummaged through a stack of sources to list virtually every piece of marketing-related research he could find in the United States. The categories of sources include "U.S. Government" periodicals (e.g., *U.S. Statistical Abstract*, various years, *U.S. Census of the Population*), "University Research" studies (e.g., Harvard University study on "Expenses in Operating Retail Grocery Stores," 1914), "Private Organization" publications (e.g., J. Walter Thompson study on "Purchasing Power and the Consumer," 1926), "Chambers of Commerce" materials (e.g., U. S. Chamber of Commerce study on "Retailers' Expenses," 1924), "Business Services" literature (e.g., Audit Bureau of Circulation study on "Circulation Figures of Member Newspapers," various years), "Trade Services" publications (e.g., National Chain Store Association study on the "Impact of the NRA Act," 1933), and "Foundations" literature (e.g., Twentieth Century Fund study on "Does Distribution Cost Too Much?" 1939). This list is illustrative, not exhaustive, of his search for "research literature."

Appendix B (Bartels 1941, 421) lists "The Number of Books on Marketing Which Were Published Annually, 1903-1941." This one-page table demonstrates the proliferation of published textbooks on marketing and its subdisciplines. The appendix shows a total of 377 marketing books published in the United States and provides tallies of books subdivided into fourteen categories, although these categories are somewhat different from those found in Appendix C. The counts reveal that the academic literature was blossoming over the decades. Figures from the table show one marketing textbook published in 1906, ten books in 1916, seventeen in 1926, and thirty-one in 1936. Based on Bartels's figures, calculations across the thirty-seven-year period from 1903 to 1940 indicate the number of marketing textbooks growing at a compound rate of almost 18 percent per year.

In Appendix C (Bartels 1941, 423-47), titled "Bibliography of Marketing Literature," Bartels categorized virtually all American academic textbooks on marketing by subdividing the literature into topical areas, including "General Marketing," "Retailing," "Advertising," "Selling and Sales Management," "Credit," and "Miscellaneous." The "Miscellaneous" category contains "Wholesaling," "Legislation," "Industrial Marketing," "Market Research," "Consumers," and "Marketing Costs." Although the identification of categories was fairly common in the literature by this time, no one had previously organized textbooks to create a ready source of bibliographic references for marketing in general and for

each of marketing's subdisciplines. Interestingly, Bartels distinguished between the "marketing literature" (Appendix C), which he regarded largely as academic marketing textbooks, and the "research literature" (Appendix A), which includes most other useful information related to marketing. Most but not all. Conspicuously absent is the academic and trade periodical literature (e.g., *Journal of Marketing*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Printer's Ink*). Yet, these sources were regarded as important as textbooks to marketing thought based on a contemporaneous empirical survey. The survey found that most marketing professors thought "periodicals and textbooks made a . . . relatively large . . . contribution to our fund of knowledge" (Converse 1945, 22). Why Bartels neglected these periodicals in favor of including such a wide variety of other sources is unclear.

An invaluable reference source, Appendix D (Bartels 1941, 448-523) provides autobiographical sketches of the academic founding fathers of American marketing from the dawn of the twentieth century. This appendix provides unique historical sources of reference that cannot be found anywhere else in the marketing literature, and some of this material was not even duplicated in Bartels's subsequent versions of this work. After Maynard's death in 1957, Bartels inherited the Ph.D. seminar in the Development of Marketing Thought. Because he always linked his teaching and research, writing articles and books in other areas he taught, such as credit and international business, Bartels likely organized his class notes into a book.

Development of Marketing Thought, 1962

In the 1962 Irwin edition, *The Development of Marketing Thought*, Bartels stated that one of the main purposes of the book is "to trace the development of marketing thought from 1900 until 1960, . . . [because] in the development of a scientific discipline [it is important] to consider the character of what [has been] done" (p. vii). Bartels organized the book around the topic areas found in Appendix C of his dissertation, which is also the week-by-week organization of his Ph.D. seminar (Bartels n.d.). The book includes chapters describing the evolution of academic developments in marketing's subdisciplines, notably advertising, credit, salesmanship and sales management, marketing research, retailing, wholesaling, and general marketing. The chapter titled "Concepts from Related Disciplines" attempts to capture, in a very general way, influences from economics, psychology, sociology, and management on the development of marketing. Another chapter on "The Maturing of Marketing Thought" discusses the nature of marketing thought, including assumptions, practical and scientific approaches to marketing, and some terms recently discussed in the literature, such as the *marketing mix* and the *marketing concept*. Bartels (1962, 218) also forecast future marketing developments, such as increasing conceptualization, more comparative

study, more interdisciplinary research, and a “new concept of ‘macro-marketing.’”

A new chapter on the “Beginnings of Marketing Thought” describes early academic courses, marketing scholars, and a network of teacher-student relationships showing who influenced whom. The chapter follows Bartels’s (1951b) *Journal of Marketing* article “Influences on the Development of Marketing Thought, 1900-1923.” Tracing the lineage of marketing influence provides a particularly useful reference source for understanding the history of marketing thought. Regrettably, it does not go back far enough. Bartels never asked the question, Who trained the professors who developed marketing courses and textbooks in the United States? Consequently, a more complete genealogy of the influences on early academic thought in marketing has been developed by others (Jones and Monieson 1990).

Bartels (1962, 4) believed he found the origins of marketing thought, placing it in the United States “between 1906-1911” with his best approximation “about 1910.” His argument is based on when the term *marketing* was first used as a noun and where academic thought about marketing began. This proved a misstatement, however, on both counts—time and place. Regarding time, Bartels erred on the year the term *marketing* entered the language as a noun, indicating marketing thought, rather than its longtime use as a verb, indicating marketing practice. Another study of the historical literature found the “academic use of the term *marketing*—in a way compatible with current use—in 1897” (Bussière 2000, 142). Still another search for the origin of the term found marketing listed in *Webster’s American Dictionary* as early as 1856 and probably in previous editions as well (Lazer 1979, 654). Yet another exploration of the term *marketing* traced it back to 1561 (Shaw 1995, 16).

Regarding place, Bartels believed that marketing thought originated in university courses taught in the United States. Some evidence indicates “that marketing courses may actually have been offered in Germany before those offered at American institutions” (Jones and Monieson 1990, 111). Thinking about marketing, however, is not confined to the twentieth century. Academic discussions of marketing are found in the forerunners of universities, the academy and the lyceum, and expressed in the literature (e.g., *The Republic* by Plato, *Politics* by Aristotle) as far back as the Socratic philosophers of Greece during the fifth century B.C. (Dixon 1979). Although he did not find the origin of marketing thought, what Bartels really did identify and describe was the origin of marketing as an academic discipline in the early-twentieth-century United States.

The wide-ranging dissertation appendix, “Bibliography of Research Literature,” was eliminated in the book, as was the appendix on the number of textbooks published each year, probably because this literature was proliferating so rapidly it became too large to handle. The remaining two appendixes were carried over from his dissertation. Particularly

disappointing, in the appendix of autobiographies, was the reduction in the number of pioneers in marketing from forty to only eighteen. Notables left out of this and later editions are Wroe Alderson, Paul T. Cherington, E. T. Grether, Paul W. Ivey, Edmund Learned, and Harry R. Tosdal, to name a few. Bartels did not disclose his basis for choosing who to keep and who to delete, or why any were eliminated at all.

Twenty more years of textbooks on marketing and its subdisciplines are added in the “Bibliography of Marketing Literature, 1900-1960” appendix. The bibliography is also made more useful as a reference source because the literature is listed chronologically rather than alphabetically, as it was in the dissertation. At that time, there were only a few academic journals in marketing; relevant articles could have been included in the bibliographic listings, but this and subsequent editions of the book focused almost exclusively on marketing textbooks in the United States, except for one new category. This new category in the bibliography is the “Conception and Development of Marketing Thought.” Only entries from 1935 to 1960 are listed, and it is immediately obvious that this section is different. In contrast to all the other categories consisting almost exclusively of textbook listings, twenty-seven of the thirty-three entries in this section come from journal articles, mostly the *Journal of Marketing*. The half dozen book listings are mostly bibliographies. Only one entry, Cox and Alderson’s (1950) *Theory in Marketing*, an edited book of readings, could be regarded as a textbook. Many obvious books are overlooked, for example, *Milestones in Marketing* (Hotchkiss 1938), *Theory of Markets and Marketing* (Bakken 1953), and *Frontiers in Marketing Thought* (Rewoldt 1954), although some are included in the General Marketing category. The rationale for this inconsistency is elusive. One could perhaps grudgingly understand the case for limiting all categories to textbooks because of the enormous proliferation of the literature, but why have one category consisting of articles and ignoring books, while all the other categories contain books and ignore articles?

The History of Marketing Thought, 1976

With the passage of time, new concepts and approaches to marketing emerge, and Bartels updated his work in the 1976 Grid second edition, *The History of Marketing Thought*. The title is changed from “Developments” to “History.” Although he did not say what the change signifies, Bartels (1976, ix) stated he was “taking that viewpoint which sees history in marketing and history in the development of marketing thought.” This edition contains the same chapters as the previous version and adds a few new ones. One new chapter is on the emerging subdiscipline of “Marketing Management,” the area beginning to dominate introductory marketing education since the 1960s. A catchall chapter, “Newer Areas of Marketing Thought,” includes sections on “Quantitative Marketing,” “Marketing Systems,” “Marketing Channels,” “Logistics, and International Marketing.” With the emer-

gence of these subdisciplines, Bartels noted that this expansion of the literature creates an “unprecedented point of view and wider sphere of thought yet to be encompassed in a general theory of marketing” (p. 220). This is a theme to which he shall return.

In the General Marketing chapter, Bartels (1976) conceptualized the development of marketing thought as evolving through discrete time periods. These include the Period of Discovery 1900-1910, the Period of Conceptualization 1910-1920, the Period of Integration 1920-1930, the Period of Development 1930-1940, the Period of Reappraisal 1940-1950, the Period of Reconceptualization 1950-1960, the Period of Differentiation 1960-1970, and the Period of Socialization from 1970. It is not clear why Bartels uses eleven-year decades. It obviously results in overlapping time periods when each period starts and ends in a zero. More important, this decade-by-decade periodization of marketing developments is something of a historical anomaly. Although useful for counts and quantitative analysis, fixed time periods are less well suited for description and qualitative investigation. Rather than using fixed time periods to define events, most historians would let important events define the time periods. Again, it should be remembered that Bartels did not have formal training in historical method, and he used time periods as a pedagogical tool for conveniently, if not oversimplistically, organizing conceptual developments.

Bartels (1976, 233) expanded the chapter on “The Maturing of Marketing Thought” to include developments since 1960. This section reflects on three issues of particular importance to Bartels: marketing as a science, a general theory of marketing, and a central integrating definition of marketing. The issue of science ends with the application of Kuhn’s (1962) “normal v. crisis science” paradigm to marketing. Several anomalies in marketing are discussed, but the most important from the standpoint of marketing becoming a science is “an inability to define the field and its boundaries” (Bartels 1976, 236). The fundamental issue in the state of theory is the lack of “integration of subtheories into the general theory” (p. 241). The status of science and theory ultimately hinges on the issue of definition, “Whether marketing is a science, and what kinds of theories comprise it, depends upon how marketing is defined” (p. 241). This is the same conclusion Bartels reached back in his dissertation, found in the previous edition of this work, and will soon revisit in a subsequent edition, indicating the influence of these reoccurring concerns on the development of Bartels’s thought.

The appendix on “The Bibliography of Marketing Literature” is extended to 1975 and expanded from the now traditional categories, discussed in the previous edition, to include emerging areas of thought: “Marketing Management,” “Social and Behavioral Aspects of Marketing,” “Quantitative Aspects of Marketing,” “Marketing Systems,” “Environmentalism” and “Comparative Marketing,” “International Marketing,” “Logistics,” and “Marketing and Society.” Listing

academic textbooks in so many subdisciplines of marketing is a remarkable achievement. Yet a problem arises.

The category, from the earlier edition, “Conception and Development of Marketing Thought” is split into two sections: “The Beginnings of Marketing Thought” and the “Conceptual Development of Marketing Theory.” This separation proves problematic. The listings in each of the two new categories point out the difficulty of delineating marketing thought and marketing theory, because the beginning of theory is rooted in conceptual developments from marketing thought. The problem is compounded because these two categories overlap with the old General Marketing category. Consequently, there is an eerie inconsistency creeping into the bibliography as the categories start overlapping and listings across and within categories become increasingly chaotic. For example, McCarthy’s (1960) *Basic Marketing: A Managerial Approach* is listed in both the Marketing Management and the General Marketing sections, while Alderson’s (1957) *Marketing Behavior and Executive Action* is listed only in the Marketing Management section, yet the latter is certainly more conceptual, theoretical, and general than the former. Fisk and Dixon’s (1967) *Theories for Marketing System Analysis* is found in the Marketing Systems category but not in the Marketing Theory section, which includes almost all marketing books and journal articles with the word *theory* in the title. For apparently no other reason than the title, Howard and Sheth’s (1969) *The Theory of Buyer Behavior* is included in the Marketing Theory section, while the equally theoretical Engle, Kollat, and Blackwell’s (1968) *Consumer Behavior* is not. The most obvious omission, however, is Wroe Alderson’s (1965) *Dynamic Marketing Behavior*. Although this work has been hailed as the seminal theoretical work in the field, it is not found in the bibliographic listings at all. Apparently, organizing and listing the explosively growing literature in marketing, even when limited primarily to academic books of the United States, is becoming ever more difficult.

The History of Marketing Thought, 1988

Bartels’ (1988) *Publishing Horizons* third edition adds no new chapters on emerging topics in marketing thought, such as consumer behavior or macromarketing. “Even more surprising is the book fails to acknowledge the growing interest in marketing history” (Tamilia 1990). Nor have the bibliographic entries been updated from the prior version. Thus, *The History of Marketing Thought* largely duplicates the last edition, except for one new chapter. With so little change from the previous book, why publish a third edition? One reason may have been to replace the second edition, which was out of print and whose publisher was out of business. A more important reason may have been that Bartels wanted to revisit an issue of historical significance and needed a chapter to do it.

The new chapter, “Influences on the Development of Marketing Thought, 1950-1987,” is plainly a tag-on because

rather than being integrated into the text, it overlaps with several earlier chapters. This chapter summarizes the evolution of marketing thought by piecing together historical developments from the autobiographical sketches of twenty recent leaders in marketing thought. Given the 1950-87 time frame in the chapter title, surprisingly the chapter starts with sketches of three early pioneers, Butler, Shaw, and Weld; continues with conceptual changes introduced by Breyer, Cox, and Alderson; and then moves to sketches of leading thinkers after the 1950s. The chapter conclusion presents what appears to be the reason for the book. Bartels's quest from the beginning of his career and view of the ultimate purpose of marketing thought is to create a single unifying general theory of marketing. Bartels regarded a general theory as a fundamental step toward marketing becoming a science. While not explicitly stated, the chapter's intent is to describe the status of marketing as a science in terms of the possibility of developing an acceptable general theory of marketing.

This point needs some clarification. A pioneer in the "Can Marketing be a Science?" debate (Bartels 1951a), Bartels (1968) proposed "The General Theory of Marketing," in which he attempted to integrate seven subtheories of marketing into a single composite one. The general theory, however, was roundly criticized on scientific grounds (e.g., Hunt 1971, 68-69). Going beyond his own theoretical work, Bartels (1970b) sought to provide a stronger foundation for constructing a general theory by developing a metatheory for marketing. The first of Bartels's seven metatheoretical axioms posits that theory starts with a distinct and clearly defined concept of subject matter. In contrast to the general theory, Bartels's metatheory received high praise on philosophy of science grounds (Hunt and Hunt 1982, 56-57). In his metatheory, Bartels was able to bootstrap himself in philosophy-of-science issues in a way he could not in his general theory. But his interest in the development of a general theory of marketing never waned and seems to provide the reason for assessing the state of marketing thought in the chapter.

Although he does not explain how or why they were chosen (or little else of his methodology), Bartels surveyed modern marketing scholars in 1987 to compare their views of marketing with his 1939 survey of marketing pioneers. What had changed? The most important change is that earlier academic writers had a common framework (consisting of functions, institutions, and commodities, and each was considered a part of the whole); more recent approaches to marketing have taken on a life of their own, as writers view their specialties (e.g., consumer behavior, research methodology, marketing management) as the whole of marketing without any concern for the parts being "integrated into a cohesive general theory" (Bartels 1988, 287). Hence, given the myopia, there is little recognition of the need for a unifying theory to integrate the specialty areas of marketing thought.

What had stayed the same? Bartels (1988, 287) found there is still no general agreement among scholars in the field

about "what marketing is." Hence, given the lack of an integrating concept to provide distinct subject matter (metatheory axiom 1), there is little ability to create a general theory. Surely, disappointed Bartels did not state the obvious. Lacking recognition of the need for an integrating concept and the ability to find this central concept, one cannot escape the conclusion that after almost a century, at least in the crucial area of developing a science of marketing based on a unifying general theory, marketing thought has made little progress.

CRITIQUE

With marketing scholars and doctoral students scrutinizing three editions of Bartels's book, that there are a number of criticisms of his work is not surprising. One scholar complains that Bartels avoids critically analyzing marketing developments:

His work is historical only to the extent that it is chronological. He traced the development of concepts in a number of areas. The work is not analytical because he does not attempt to explain the circumstances that affected the topics. It is not comparative because he does not evaluate the relationships between various approaches to marketing. (Savitt 1980, 53-54)

But this is an overstatement; Bartels's work is more than the mere chronology suggested here. There is some analysis of the social and economic conditions that influenced scholars to think about marketing problems, and Bartels did make some comparisons about the state of marketing thought at different periods of time. Yet, even if Bartels described only the development of concepts and events, it is still a signal contribution because description is the foundation of explanation, the basic purpose of science. Even the bibliographies, which are pure chronologies, are still historically useful as sources of reference, and the marketing literature is richer for it.

Another criticism of Bartels's work is that his sources include only American textbooks rather than the myriad of other sources that have affected marketing thought, particularly journal articles and ideas from outside the discipline. Bartels attempted to include an array of nonacademic sources in his dissertation, albeit limited to the United States. However, the rapid proliferation of the marketing literature rendered this futile in subsequent editions, and ultimately as the bibliographic inconsistencies in his penultimate edition and lack of updated bibliographic entries in his last edition demonstrate, just keeping up with American textbooks was a daunting task.

The most astonishing, if not egregious, opinion expressed in Bartels's book are the apocalyptic references to spiritual determinism. This is the notion that events are preordained to occur when they do because of biblical references in the New Testament. Bartels (1962, 10) wrote: "The prophetic account

of spiritual determinism known as the Revelation of Saint John the Divine has particular reference to what is now called marketing . . . [because] it link[s] the fulfillment of his prophecies with the twentieth century.” He argued that according to St. John, throughout history, trade is mostly characterized by deception and fraud on the part of sellers, as exemplified in the phrase *caveat emptor*. Bartels associated a concern with satisfying buyers, however “faintly as they appeared,” as a “turn in the tides of trade” with his view of the origin of marketing in the twentieth-century United States. Here Bartels apparently reached a conclusion based on religious conviction and then sought a rationale to justify it. This evidently results from his devoutly religious upbringing. Despite the importance of religion in his life, it is regrettable that he succumbed to spiritualism in a purported objective treatise of marketing. Nevertheless, the resort to spiritual determinism is a lone flight of fantasy that does not appear to have influenced any other aspect of this work.

Despite the various criticisms: overlooking the influences on the early marketing pioneers, misstating the time and place of the origin of marketing thought, using fixed time periods to characterize marketing history, inconsistencies in the bibliography, including too much chronology and description and not enough analysis and evaluation, limiting the literature almost exclusively to marketing authors of American textbooks, and the untoward allusion to biblical prophecy, the book still has much to recommend it. Indeed, no other work in the marketing literature is quite like it. No other work provides such a longitudinal view of marketing and panoramic sweep of its subdisciplines in the twentieth-century American academy as Bartels’s *History of Marketing Thought*.

BARTELS’S LEGACY

This review of Bartels’s “*History*” is intended to encourage students of marketing to read his work. For several generations, his *History of Marketing Thought* was required reading in marketing Ph.D. programs. Today, few doctoral programs offer a seminar in the development of marketing thought. Even The Ohio State University, a bastion of marketing thought from the time of Maynard, no longer offers such a course in its doctoral program. Its demise would have been a great disappointment to Bartels.

Worse, it is dangerous for the discipline when those thinking and writing about marketing have so little remembrance of its past and so little regard for their heritage. The danger in forgetting our history, as Santayana sagely reminded us, is that we are often condemned to repeat it. In modern marketing terms, this concept is known as reinventing the wheel, as each succeeding generation invents new terms to express old concepts that were overlooked in the literature. Rather than building concepts into theories and solving problems of marketing thought, we spend too much time spinning our wheels in a semantic jungle that grows with each new generation.

At the turn of the twentieth century, one of the central problems for marketing thought was a seller finding stable and profitable sources of demand (and on the other side of a market transaction, a buyer finding predictable low-cost sources of supply). This concept generally expressed by the term *marketing* became known in the 1960s as the *marketing concept*—a business orientation of satisfying customers and thereby generating profitable sales through repeat purchases. In the 1980s, the marketing concept was replaced by the newer term *relationship marketing*, emphasizing lasting customer relationships rather than focusing on individual transactions. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, the new buzzword is *customer relationship management*, essentially a firm mining customer data with computer technology to find the most profitable long-term customer segments. During the past century, as old terms were replaced by newer terminology, the fundamental concept of a seller using the best techniques available to find stable sources of profitable sales has remained constant.

Bartels’s work provides a living legacy. He bequeathed a common body of knowledge to students of marketing by tracing the evolution of marketing thought from one generation to the next. In one accolade, Bartels is given credit for “almost single-handedly [keeping] interest in the history of marketing thought alive through his book on the subject and his doctoral seminars” (Hollander, Nevett, and Fullerton 1990, 267). Bartels’s *History of Marketing Thought* provides the novice student with the single best description of, and source of references for, some ninety years of marketing history as expressed by marketing academics in the twentieth-century United States. For the serious student, the book represents the point of departure for further study and analysis of developments in the history of marketing thought.

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