



Part I

Making Money Morally



Political Consumerism as Chance and Challenge

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Introduction

Globalization affects the opportunity space, informational bases, and coordination capacities of states, multinational enterprises, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and citizens. With such changing resources come changing allocation of power and responsibilities—or so argue international NGOs and other vocal contributors to public debates. They challenge existing expectations and institutions and use terms such as “corporate citizenship,” “citizen-consumer,” and “ethical trade” to emphasize their point. The topic of these reflections is the responsibility of consumers in a global marketplace, committing acts of “political consumerism.” Traditionally, political participation has involved the relationship between citizens and their government, which in turn regulates the market. Political consumerism adds to this conception in that citizens turn directly to the market with a variety of political concerns. The phenomenon of political consumerism needs a political theory. We need a plausible account of consumer activism, which will allow us to identify and clarify its role within the political and economic global institutional order and provide criteria for its normative assessment.

The Need for Political Theory: Puzzles of Political Consumerism

Some scholars hail political consumerism as a practice within “civil society,” indeed within “global civil society.” Civil society steps up to global governance at a time when globalization threatens traditional structures of authority (Eide 1998, 631-32). The need for systematic reflection arises in part from what appears to be valid criticisms of political consumerism, especially as committed by individuals. Political consumer actions often seem counterproductive. Consider cases of objectionable company practices that worsen the

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situation for a local population, or that exploit and violate workers' basic rights. Sometimes when political consumerism targets such a company, the action "works" in the sense that the company pulls out. But several unfortunate effects of company exit have been reported. Other, less sensitive, companies move in and continue the abuse. Sometimes, if no other employer moves in, the workers may be left even worse off in unemployment or prostitution. Exploitation such as child labor, while an evil, may, thus, be the least foul alternative. Other critics denounce political consumerism as illegitimate insofar as the loose networks or organizations behind such protests should be democratic, transparent, and accountable, which some of them patently are not. Yet other criticisms charge that consumer action, on the basis of Western consumers' own values, amounts to blatant disregard for the local culture and values: Political consumerism is cultural imperialism through market means.

These criticisms fail against several plausible conceptions of political consumerism. This response does not amount to denying the empirical claims, but instead draws on what we may think of as the political theory of political consumerism. At first glance, this label may seem inappropriate. Political theory is typically concerned with questions such as by what authority, and within what limits, political power may impose laws and practices with threats of sanction. Acts of political consumerism are not exercises of political power in this strict sense. It does not appear to be a collectively enforced, social arrangement, and hence does not restrict the legally regulated opportunity space of others. Yet, insofar as political consumerism is widely followed, it can effectively restrict the feasible options of companies, employees, and other consumers for better or worse. As with a wide range of practices that affect others, we may require that such practices be *normatively justifiable*. Moreover, through political consumerism citizens sometimes seek to build, reform, or improve institutions that have influence over our common well-being, regardless of whether these acts are part of the political order in the strict sense. Therefore, the phenomenon of political consumerism encourages scholars to rethink the function and meaning of political participation and authority.

The effectiveness of political consumerism can only be assessed on the basis of a clear understanding of its ends. In the next section, I identify and discuss five different conceptions of political consumerism. Many of them are not affected by the criticisms discussed

above. However, the criticisms do challenge political consumerism, regarded as a practice aimed at institutional reform. These worries merit close attention and assessment, particularly under globalization, which is the topic of the second section of the chapter. The third section sketches a normative framework of the market that takes its point of departure in Adam Smith's discourse on the subject for domestic markets. Then I explain why shifts in capacities among governments, business, and civil society may be thought to bolster the need for political consumerism or other non-traditional measures of political action. The fifth section identifies some of the challenges facing political consumerism as a mechanism for changing institutions and business practices towards international human rights standards.

Conceptions of Political Consumerism

At least five different conceptions of the role of political consumerism can be identified. They may not be exhaustive and are not mutually exclusive. I distinguish arguments based on consideration of what I call Agency, Expression of Self, Expression of Mutual Respect, Instruments for Reforming Wrong-doers, and Instruments for Reforming Business Practices.

Argument of Agency: Clean Hands

Boycott has long been regarded as a way to disassociate oneself from what are viewed as evil acts. The element of self-purification in Gandhian Satyagraha is an example. Boycott avoids complicity by seeking non-cooperation with evil, thus reducing the causal chain between one's own acts and the immoral outcomes by avoiding personal participation and responsibility. Of course, negative consequences are important, but what also matters is whether evil comes about through one's own agency. Such concerns have been defended and discussed among moral philosophers including Kant (Kant 1964), and more recently under the heading of "integrity" or "agent-relative reasons" (cf. Williams in Smart & Williams 1973; Hill 1979; Sen 1982; Mills 1996). Criticisms against such views include insistence that this is a case of moral self-indulgence, that considerations of responsibility matter little or as nothing as compared to the goodness or badness of outcomes in the world, and observations that it is impossible to extricate oneself completely from patterns of interaction anyway, which makes participation in corrupt trade practices

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unavoidable. Such criticisms notwithstanding, political consumer actions on this basis avoid some of the problems. Firstly, while morally is relevant, whether the suffering abates is not decisive. Secondly, the grounds for action may arise from one's personal moral view with no claim to be properly part of the common normative basis of society. Thirdly, such political consumerism need not be considered as an institutionalized practice, needing organizations, publicly defensible criteria, and the like.

Arguments of Identity: Expressing Self

Other conceptions of political consumerism regard it as a more active expression of one's values. Such self-expressive conceptions may typically be part of what is often termed post-materialist values (Inglehart 2000). In societies where economic survival is taken for granted, younger generations give more priority to non-material values, such as making autonomous choices, spontaneous participation in political life, and environmental and gender issues, as discussed by Stolle and Hooghe in this book (see also Putnam 2000). Consider lifestyle preferences in general or Expressions of Self, where participants do not claim that all other citizens should so react, or that businesses should change their policies—except insofar as others happen to share these morally neutral values. An example may be political consumerism on the basis of aesthetic considerations, for instance, avoiding chain stores whose storefront ruins the small-town neighborhood image. For our purposes, we may note that such reactions need not be institutionalized, especially since they are volatile in several senses. Individuals' values may shift rapidly, and post-materialists are also said to be wary of hierarchy and long-term organizations, preferring fluent networks.

Arguments of Identity: Expression of Mutual Respect

Other self-expressive actions may best be regarded as Expressions of Mutual Respect. They are undertaken on the basis of beliefs that certain companies violate fundamental normative constraints. In these cases, the values are thought to be not only optional preferences but legitimate standards for company behavior. Such cases may well arise for post-materialists, for even although their values tend to favor individualistic responses rather than collective, they are not egoistic or unduly self-interested. The high value given au-

tonomy for oneself is often combined with respecting the autonomy of others, prizing individual liberties and social tolerance, and fostering civic participation—but in new social movements rather than in established organizations (Welzel, Inglehart, & Klingeman 2002). Spontaneous political consumerism may thus be a natural response to perceived abuse of workers or environmental degradation. Kant seems to have held such a view regarding disentangling oneself from immoral actors (Kant 1964; Hill 1979, 1991; Mills 1996). Political consumerism may express and foster a shared public understanding of what it means to be a responsible and fully human person (cf. Galston 1991).

Some features of these views may be noted. The central aim is not to change a practice or even to stop a particular case of abuse; “merely symbolic” action with no impact on the abuse still serves the expressive purpose. Coordination dilemmas of the kind, “if our company stops, the suffering will not stop,” do not affect expressive arguments. One’s self-image and values are important, but the general trustworthiness of any coordinating organization is not an issue, as long as the protester has trust in them. While detrimental effects by other companies may play a role in the decision, such effects are not part of the agent’s responsibility or expressive of identity in the same sense. Still, for Expressions of Mutual Respect, some such considerations of effects on the suffering may matter, for instance, insofar as the values include what John Rawls calls the natural duty of justice to “support and to comply with just institutions that exist and apply to us. It also constrains us to further just arrangements not yet established, at least when this can be done without too much cost to ourselves” (Rawls 1971, 115).

Instrumental Arguments: Re-Socializing Wrong-Doers

Some actions aim to re-socialize those who do wrong by shunning them, thus impressing on them the need to change their values. With such a change of heart, the unacceptable behavior should cease—for moral, rather than economic reasons, as pointed out in Friedman’s chapter. While such protests may often work, they can also backfire, causing hostility and suspicion rather than transformation, as Gandhi was well aware (Gandhi 1918).

Instrumental Arguments: Changing Business Practices

Other acts of political consumerism seek to reform business practices. Such social action at the domestic level has been somewhat

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successful in the case of labor, civil rights, and women's rights. Again, a variety of ends can be distinguished. Political consumerism may be part of a concern to replace parliaments and national governments as sites of political power. This may draw on a radical denial of the need for centralized power for maintaining the political order (cf. Burnheim 1986; cf. Held & McGrew 2000, 412; Goodin 1992). Or actions can be regarded as supplementary to government action in several ways, as a permanent supplement to government's coercive power or using extra-parliamentary means to get stricter government and intergovernmental regulation of business. Political consumerism can also be a stopgap measure until global structures are in place with sufficient enforcement power. The aim would be changes in domestic and global regulation, which should be restricted to such issues, properly regulated by state power rather than more contested issues. Among proper aims would then be fair trade, human rights, and human security. Protests may be directed against governments or against companies, that may pressure host governments to implement human rights and monitor compliance to avoid future boycotts (Spar 1998). Several features of these instrumental arguments are important. Their effect on desired change is highly relevant, although single cases of success or failure are not decisive when assessing the practice of political consumerism. The central issue is instead whether the practice of boycotting secures stable shifts in the values or expectations of businesses, and hence affects practices—recognizing that mishaps will still occur. Dilemmas may arise due to the need to reward good behavior by lifting the boycott, when the business' values may remain unchanged (Mills 1996). When political consumerism aims to change governments' regulations or the practices of businesses, a number of issues of institutional design and assessment must be addressed. The most important of these are accountability of the organizations involved and their value basis. The remainder of this chapter addresses these institutional issues.

Of particular concern is political consumerism, interpreted narrowly as a practice involving consumers as a collective agent participating in *the global governance of markets*, supplementing states, intergovernmental bodies as the UN, NGOs, and multinational enterprises. One central aim of such political consumerism is to provide added incentives for compliance with, and the creation of, legitimate conditions on global trade, in circumstances of globalization with weak enforcement mechanisms. In this view, political con-

sumerism is also a collective expression of mutual respect, of our individual and collective responsibility to protect the interests of those whom we can affect, and particularly of those who are dependent on our actions through international trade. Important issues concern “whose standards” to use, when assessing business behavior. For reasons of space, I submit that some vital human needs may be regarded as such common factors, and that they are best secured by domestic legal orders that respect *human rights*—including political, civil, social, and economic rights. Such a normative basis for human rights is compatible with a broad range of religious and philosophical traditions, and these rights are part of international law, subscribed by a large majority of states and endorsed in documents as The European Monitoring Platform, OECD guidelines, and the UN Committee on Transnational Corporations under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Such norms can be defended across a broad range of normative theories. While these premises are contested and contestable, I take them for granted for our purposes. Among the issues targeted are workers’ rights, the human rights’ violations of their sub-contractors, the plight of local communities affected by corporations, and the lax enforcement of human rights by host governments.

In the absence of global instruments of formal governance, citizens have come to use political consumerism to demand enforcement of existing international human rights norms. In this view, appropriate political consumerism must actually improve the plight of those suffering from the injustice, if not in this particular case, then at least by improving the practice in general, for instance by securing agreement among companies or if the host government enforces stricter standards or better options for workers.

In summary, this account of political consumerism would appear to fall clearly within the *métier* of normative political theory. Political consumerism forms part of *governance*—arrangements by which agents regulate some issue area by means of extra-institutional authority, involving non-public actors and without secure enforcement (Rosenau 1992; Commission on Global Governance 1995; Banchoff & Smith 1999, 15). We must ask similar questions of such forms of governance as of governments’ use of power: What are the grounds of such authority, what should be its institutionally circumscribed limits, and how should it be exercised within such limits when we seek to treat all affected individuals as moral equals? A legitimate

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conception of political consumerism must be consistent with—or even be required by—the proper role of individuals in the market in a globalized world order. We turn first to consider why globalization matters for these normative arguments.

Globalization of Market Actors: Citizens of No Country, Cosmopolitan Consumers

The effects of globalization have important normative aspects for any normative theory insisting that practices should be defensible towards all affected parties. Insofar as globalization means that actions have global implications, the impact on foreigners must also be included in the normative justification of practices, such as global trade regimes. We are often said to be living in the era of globalization. As with most slogans, such claims are vague, perhaps essentially contested, and often dubitable as general statements. In a historical vein, global perspectives on economic affairs are not new. Cosmopolitan perspectives led Diogenes (412-323 BC) to declare, “I am a citizen of the world,” in defense of his refusal to pay local taxes. Later cross-border mobility rendered such claims more plausible. Writing more than two hundred years ago, Adam Smith observed, “A merchant, it has been said very properly, is not necessarily the citizen of any particular country. It is in a great measure indifferent to him from what place he carries on his trade, and a very trifling disgust will make him remove his capital, and together with it all the industry which it supports, from one country to another” (Smith 1776, 3, 4).

Both globalization and cosmopolitan ethics have changed since Diogenes and Adam Smith. For our purposes, globalization is the fact that actions and practices systematically affect others across territorial borders. Among the results are increased living standards for many and increased access to goods and services. Unfortunately, globalization also has some highly problematic consequences. The digital economy is a contributing cause of shifting control from domestic governments to globally integrated financial markets and multinational enterprises (Strange 1986), which impacts on governments’ perceived policy options. Some of the traditional instruments of the state acting singly and sovereign—taxation, final adjudication, and regulation—have withered, leading sometimes to increased international regulations, for example, within the European Union.

Other times, governments are led to compete for mobile capital and multinationals leading, some fear, to a race to the bottom regarding wages, health, and safety standards. The acceptable limits to such variations must be addressed and enforced, for example, concerning bribery, human rights, and wage levels (Donaldson & Dunfee 1999). International business ethics has become an important topic, because transnational enterprises have effects on vulnerable individuals, both inside and outside the marketplace, who do not have decent protection (e.g., Donaldson 1989). Existing constraints are insufficiently enforced, due to lack of international regulations and bodies. There is nothing in the way of a “global government.”

Globalization affects the capacities, roles, and responsibilities of governments, business, and civil society. The increased territorial impact of international business, combined with the reduced capacities of governments and civil society, help explain why international business may stand in need of justification in ways that domestic business need not. We must rethink the distribution of responsibilities that traditionally have justified business and consumer practices in the domestic setting. To explain how globalization changes the normative assessment of the responsibilities of businesses and of consumers, we can draw on Adam Smith’s defense of the market within state borders.

Moral Framework of the Market

Many have been struck by the apparent differences in behavior between citizens in society in general and the behavior of business people. Among ordinary individuals, equality, sympathy, honesty, and concern for the common good are maintained as high ideals. In contrast, many business practices appear to distribute benefits according to the bargaining power and the starting positions of players acting on the basis of self-interested choice. Behavior, elsewhere condemned, might well be rewarded in business. So the role and rules of business seem different than for other parts of society. This raises the fundamental question of whether they can be reconciled.

Business’ reliance on immoral motives was a topic of central concern to Adam Smith (Muller 1992; Werhane 1991). In *Wealth of Nations*, the great economist and moral philosopher argued most famously that, under certain conditions, even self-motivated market agents will freely exchange goods in such ways that some will be

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better off without rendering anyone else worse off. Thus, market behavior serves the common good in the utilitarian way he defined it, at least when embedded in an elaborate distribution of social responsibility between what we may re-label business, government, NGOs, and civil society. Markets can be morally legitimate, but preferably when the state maintains just rules of the game, only as long as it ensures a “fair” distribution of the benefits over time. Bargaining power must not be skewed inappropriately but leave all parties with acceptable ranges of options. Proponents of free markets have hailed Adam Smith, while critics say that the preconditions he assumed are seldom found in real life, indeed that those with nothing to sell may be left worse off. Proponents of market freedom often forget that Smith argued for severe constraints on the market, and critics often ignore that Smith himself insisted that governments must not only regulate the market and correct market failures, but that they must be supplemented. Markets do not ensure that all individuals develop their talents and a benevolent moral character required in society. And Smith recognized that the market does not secure distribution of goods to those without money, thus the need for private benevolence and re-distributive luxury tax to subsidize basic goods to the poor.

Elaborating on this defense, we may say that businesses are permitted to focus on value creation within constraints set by governments and as long as other agents secure other important societal functions such as redistribution, socialization to concern for others, and scrutiny of governments and business. Problems arise when this distribution of responsibilities fails: when third parties are affected, when re-distributive tasks are not performed, or when some firms abuse the rules. In such cases, business—and consumers—may have to take on responsibilities beyond value creation, or exercise more self-restraint.

The Role of Political Consumers in a Just Global Market

Globalization has caused a mismatch between global economic effects and global political regulation. States may have their formal sovereignty intact, but they lose options and face eroding general trust in their ability or willingness to regulate markets domestically and beyond their borders. In particular, they appear unable or unwilling to secure a high economic floor and safe working environ-

ments for workers in the global economy. While such claims are often excuses, globalization does appear to affect governments who have been accustomed to being policymakers rather than policy-takers. The changes in options and capacities of business and domestic governments weaken Adam Smith's justification of business' license to pursue profits. There is no global government in the sense of an institutional body with enforcement and re-distributive authority, and there is little in the way of a global civil society ensuring inculcation of mutual respect across borders. So the constraints on business must be rethought. If global markets are to be normatively justified, the responsibilities for re-distribution and prevention of harm must be borne by agents other than the state—namely corporations and consumers. I submit that political consumerism may be interpreted in this light.

Corporations are not only accountable to shareholders but are also subject to domestic and international law, and they are dependent on consumers. Political consumerism may bolster shifts in corporate responsibilities by providing incentives for some firms to engage in more fair business practices. The minimum requirements of business under globalization merits careful attention. I here lay out only a few considerations. What may be required of business need not be charitable work in general. It is not obvious that corporations can be trusted to plan and act for the common good rather than for the good of their shareholders. Yet businesses may be required to avoid wage slavery and certain forms of child labor and—not least—comply with legislation enacted by host governments and not block proposed human rights legislation. Constraints may include respecting ILO regulations, refraining from bribing government officials, and the requirements of the UN's Global Compact.

Some argue that multinational corporations should abide by further moral considerations. Thomas Donaldson (1991) proposes ten human rights, said to protect interests of extreme importance without imposing undue burdens on business. These rights include freedom of physical movement, ownership of property, freedom from torture, fair trial, non-discrimination, physical security, freedom of speech and association, minimal education, political participation, and subsistence. A fundamental objection to such lists must be addressed. There are situations where unilateral self-constraint by one company does no good. For example, consider that many violations of human rights and basic needs are perpetrated with the express or

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tacit permission of domestic governments to serve business interest. Firms may face hard dilemmas where self-constraint on their part may do no good. One upright corporation cannot prevent others corporations from abusing workers. Thus, oppression may happen regardless of what one single corporation does. Unless all competing corporations are regulated and all governments agree to high standards, oppressed workers of the world cannot avoid being mistreated. While such coordination traps no doubt exist, firms should not be allowed to excuse themselves from all compliance with such norms as Donaldson's by such arguments. Instead, work must be done—or at least not prevented—on three fronts by businesses and others. Realistic rules must be available that would allow companies to make a profit and secure basic needs. For this, international standard setting, even without sanctions, plays a crucial role. Secondly, in certain cases industry-wide agreements are required. Thirdly, partial compliance by some companies is often better than none, but this can be difficult to achieve. Political consumerism may contribute to all three tasks.

Political consumerism may contribute to convergence between good ethics and a healthy bottom line by shifting companies' payoffs. Organized consumers can stimulate the creation of norms, foster compliance by industry sectors, and promote compliance by individual companies, all of which are more difficult under globalization. Consumer pressure may counteract coordination problems by creating a market for companies that can credibly claim to honor good standards in areas such as child labor, sustainable forest harvesting, or animal rights. If consumers succeed, they create a demand among companies for sufficiently clear rules. One response by some firms is to develop or subscribe to voluntary, industry-wide standards such as Social Accountability 8000, the principles of the Caux Round Table, the UN's Global Compact, or the work of Amnesty International's Business Group. While voluntary standards may not always be enough, political consumerism can add pressure for compliance, supervision, and global regulation—sometimes even enticing companies to lobby host governments into establishing, monitoring, and sanctioning industry-wide standards to block less scrupulous competitors and avoid consumer actions (Spar 1998).

Globalization may increase the need for political consumerism but may also facilitate it for two reasons. Firstly, information gathering is eased by information technology, for instance between activ-

ists in southern NGOs about labor problems or environmental issues and consumers in other countries. Secondly, globalization lowers the cost of political consumerism when the market offers alternative, nearly equivalent products at only slightly higher prices. Then normative considerations become less costly.

I have explored an institutional role of political consumerism, understood as the coordinated use of purchasing power that serves the role of promoting certain changes in global business practices—including business behavior in particular cases as well as business regulation. As an instrument aimed at stricter governmental regulation, political consumerism exerts leverage on business and indirectly on governments. It may boost the formulation of voluntary and legal codes, pressure companies to sign voluntary codes, and sanction businesses, all of which take on particular urgency under globalization.

Challenges for Political Consumerism: Earning and Keeping Trust

Political consumerism promises to alleviate some of the problems created by globalization. With such influence come responsibility and the need for scrutiny of organizations that coordinate political consumerism. I suggest that at least five issues must be addressed, if political consumerism is to establish and maintain legitimacy and trustworthiness.

While identity arguments need not be concerned about effectiveness, it is a central question for political consumerism regarded as an instrument for reforming business practices. It is not at all clear that political consumerism always improves the plight of the worst off, as shown in Friedman's chapter in this volume. Nor is it clear that such protests are more effective than "constructive engagement" by companies remaining in problem areas (Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink 1999). Thus, Unocal claims that by remaining in Burma it has a more positive effect than isolating the country (Greenhouse 2000). The examples presented in Part II of this volume suggest that political consumerist actions are more likely to be effective if they combine credible threats and promises by addressing a target with clear and achievable demands. Research is needed to render such actions more effective. For instance, we need to know whether actions against child labor typically improve their plight or rather force the children

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into prostitution. Do environmental boycotts tend to improve the environment or merely scare away those companies most vulnerable to bad press, leaving the field open to less scrupulous players? As discussed in the chapter by Cashore et al., important issues include how to set standards that are realistic yet do not “sell out.”

Whose Values? What Standards?

The goals of political consumerist organizations must be assessed carefully. The Economist asks rhetorically, “Are citizens’ groups, as many of their supporters claim, the first steps towards an ‘international civil society’ (whatever that might be)? Or do they represent a dangerous shift of power to unelected and unaccountable special-interest groups?” (Economist 1999). I think it a mistake to regard these two options as mutually exclusive. There is no guarantee that civil society is particularly civil. Unfortunately, we have no guarantee that “transnational civil society networks—the emerging third force in global politics—tend to aim for broader goals based on their conceptions of what constitutes the public good. They are bound together more by shared values than by self-interest” (Florini 2000, 7). Indeed, the history of political consumerism includes illegitimate shared values (Halliday 2000): in the 1930s against goods produced by Jews (Encyclopædia Judaica Jerusalem 1971), by blacks in New York against Italian-Americans as shown in Greenberg’s chapter in Part II.

The public should be able to determine whether the organizations want to improve global business practices or whether they would rather see global business abolished, whether the anti-globalization movement is against globalization in general or whether it is just against globalization on the present terms. We can also expect more conflict regarding the content of standards. Even good faith NGOs may lay down incompatible standards for determining unacceptable business practices (see Cashore et al., Jordan et al. in this volume for details). We can also expect a market for lax standards by businesses eager to avoid criticism, as has been a worry concerning the UN Global Compact that allegedly requires little in the way of real action by the signatories. Much work is done, but more remains concerning how standards should accommodate the very different powers and roles of governments and businesses. Within a system of coordinated, yet largely sovereign states, the international commu-

nity can hold governments responsible for fulfilling the range of political, civil, economic, and social rights. However, even if one company respects all such rights of individuals, other agents may violate them if enforcement is lax. Thus, the satisfaction of individuals' vital interests seems clearly beyond the reach of any single company. The relevant standards for companies must therefore be specially drafted, as indeed is the case.

Whose "Facts"?

Political consumers must rely for fact-finding on NGOs such as Amnesty International, Transparency International, and Consumers International. Quality control is a perennial challenge even for well-intentioned NGOs. NGO credibility is obviously even more important, when high ethical standards become a comparative advantage and competitor companies may criticize "findings" for less than honorable reasons, (cf. Cahore et al. this volume). Trustworthiness is even more problematic when organizations are established, or used intentionally, to slant information, as when multinationals use the international lobby group "The Coalition for the Right for Truth in Environmental Marketing" to influence governments and WTO in their favor (Micheletti 1999). The Internet also creates new pitfalls, since it lacks quality control and hence leaves it to users to distinguish well-founded cyber activism from unfounded "cyberterrorism." The trustworthiness of standard setting and fact-finding must be secured through a variety of institutionalized means: governmental expertise or, to the contrary, independence of government (Micheletti 1999), auditors such as Price Waterhouse Coopers, Ernst & Young, and Deloitte, or by cooperating with academics.

Who Guards These Guardians?—Is Democratic Accountability Required?

A fourth challenge is to maintain public confidence that the organizations for political consumerism reliably fulfill their role professionally and effectively. This would seem to require public scrutiny and accountability, though perhaps not that the organizations are internally democratic. Neither the Identity nor Instrumental arguments require that the organizations for political consumerism are internally democratic. Democratic accountability may not be equally important for such agents of civil society. It may suffice that organi-

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zations of political consumerism are subject to media scrutiny within civil society. Individual consumers may then choose to use these organizations and their information and possibly decide to exercise “market accountability” against the firms violating standards.

The Appropriate Roles of Governments

On the Instrumental account, political consumerism must find its role alongside governmental action. In addition to providing quality control of standards and information and scrutiny, we should recall the limits to effective political consumerism where government action alone seems useful. There are several ills that political consumerism is unlikely to combat due to the limited range of goods under consumer control, lack of sanctions of voluntary codes, and coordination problems. At best, political consumerism may prevent human rights’ violations by particular firms such as child labor, environmental damage, etc. Consumers cannot affect companies that do not sell products to individual consumers. Many requirements of social justice seem to be beyond what can be asked of individual companies—for instance, massive redistribution, public education, etc. Governments thus have several important tasks, even when political consumerism is effective. It is an important task to find and implement the institutional solutions that best divide up or share these responsibilities.

Conclusion: Consumerism with a Vengeance?

Political philosophers have long lamented the shift in public perception towards regarding the citizen as a consumer (MacIntyre 1978, 245). Citizens’ concern for the general good was replaced by concern for satisfying consumption preferences (cf. Sandel 1996, 224). The point of democracy became to secure “the widest range of economic satisfaction” more fairly distributed rather than the formation of republican citizens (Weyl 1912 in Sandel 1996, 225). The practice of political citizenship transcends this conflict.

Political consumerism is strikingly different from consumerism as an ideological basis for politics that developed in the United States in the 1920s (cf. Strasser, McGovern, & Judd 1998). Indeed it inverts the relationship between means and ends. Political consumerism does not regard poor consumer quality of goods as cause for political action but considers the poor political quality of goods as cause for

consumer action. It insists that a working market does not assume that consumers only seek self-oriented satisfaction. Consumers are also citizens and can be strongly committed to distributive justice and the decent and respectful treatment of those they affect. This commitment can find expression through purchases. Political consumerism allows individuals, living under conditions of globalization beyond control of accountable governments, to express their sense of justice as citizens of the world. A defensible role as consumer and citizen under globalization requires them to exercise their economic power responsibly when seeking to promote a legitimate global economic order that treats all as equals.

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