
Vocation, Liberal Education, and Vocationalism

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The argument that educational “progressivism” is unknowingly anti-democratic has become commonplace since it was first presented by Robert Hutchins and Arthur Bestor.¹ The argument runs something like this: A democratic society requires an enlightened electorate and cultivated leaders. Merit, not heredity or wealth, should determine one’s opportunities and status, and liberal education provides the means to these ends. Yet progressive educators have asserted that the ideal of a rigorous liberal education is unattainable and that the more modest aims of “life adjustment” and preparation for work are more appropriate for the majority of students. Like nineteenth-century aristocratic opponents of public education, progressives have maintained that ennobling education is beyond the reach of the “common man” and that schools should seek to furnish elementary skills in academic subjects, preparation for a trade, and a working knowledge of household maintenance and hygiene. Such an approach has been implemented successfully in the primary and secondary schools, the argument continues, and new, crude forms of vocationalism are now even part of higher education.

This argument is hardly less true for having become commonplace. Typically, though, something very important is neglected in this argu-

¹ Robert Hutchins, *The Higher Learning in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1936), especially 34-58; Arthur Bestor, *Educational Wasteland* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953), especially 25-100.

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ment as well as in more elaborate arguments concerning the merits of liberal education and the dangers of vocationalism. Whether from blindness caused by excessive rhetoric or from a view of the good life as one limited to leisure, these arguments often fail to discuss the workplace and the importance of a sense of vocation for both the individual and the commonweal. This omission is significant because liberal education and a sense of vocation are intimately related—both are animated by the same types of motives—and because vocationalism is an enemy of both. Vocationalism is dangerous not only because of its effects upon education but also because of what it is doing to the professions and to commerce in America: it is undermining a true sense of vocation.

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Although my use of terms is standard, let me eliminate possible sources of confusion. By “vocationalism” I mean training in certain skills that prepares one for work in order to earn a living. It is “learning for the sake of earning,” or what John Locke, the father of such thinking in the English-speaking world, simply called “useful” education.² By “vocation” I mean an attitude toward work that makes work self-rewarding. Work enlivened by vocation I will call “liberal work” in contrast to “servile work,” which is undertaken exclusively for the sake of external rewards, especially money. And, by “liberal education” I mean the leisurely pursuit of knowledge for its own sake.

As defined, vocationalism and servile work entail the pursuit of external goods or ends. The nature of these ends is that they can be “weighed and measured,” to use Cardinal Newman’s fine phrase.³ Accordingly, the most efficient means to external ends can be calculated, at least in principle. Efficiency is the standard by which activities aimed at external ends are evaluated; the means to these ends are rendered most effectively into step-by-step techniques. Although money is the most obvious and usually ultimate external end, many other possible external ends exist. These always entail some demonstrable and measurable change in the world, the means to which are regular, predictable, and teachable.

Vocation and liberal education, on the other hand, have internal ends—ends that are self-sufficient in the sense that they are instrumental to nothing else. Internal ends and the means to them cannot be cal-

² John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1910).

³ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1982), 115.

culated, weighed, or measured. One cannot point to an internal good and take a yardstick to it. Indeed, the very nature of internal ends or goods is that no single path leads to them, even within a particular type of activity; and previously successful paths can prove disappointing. Of course individuals have personal guidelines to such ends, but such guidelines do not insure success and they cannot be rendered into a teachable set of skills and passed to others. Internal goods are relatively ephemeral and unpredictable. Unlike external ends, they cannot be possessed and controlled. Edification, not efficiency, is their standard.

I am not the first to distinguish between activities aimed at these different ends. For example, this distinction accords well with Max Weber's modern distinction between "purpose-rational" actions and "value-rational" actions, and with the ancient Greek distinction between *techne* and *praxis*.⁴ Indeed, I believe that this distinction is perennial and is such because the pursuit of these different ends is inherent in human nature. By nature, human beings are motivated by material self-interest and by more self-contained interests such as duty, curiosity, a need for challenges, a search for excellence or beauty, and the pursuit of happiness. Human nature, though, is malleable within limits; culture can affect how these motives are channeled and what ends are deemed most worthy.

Let me give two initial examples of how culture can affect these basic motives. First, the ancient Athenians could not conceive of what I have called liberal work. They had no concept of vocation. Work, they believed, was servile drudgery which in no way could edify the soul. They believed, on the other hand, that leisure provided the opportunity to pursue self-rewarding or noble activities, especially contemplation. The Greek term encompassing such activities was *paideia*, sometimes translated simply as "education." Second, Puritan culture deemed leisure a source of evil and work an end in itself. Man was called to a vocation, the Puritans believed, and through work he could discharge his duties and responsibilities. One did not work because of material self-interest but rather to limit and restrain oneself while performing one's duty and adding to God's glory. As Max Weber states, work was regarded in the Puritan view "so purely as an end in itself that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irratio-

Culture affects motives for work.

⁴ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1: 24-26.

nal.”⁵ To work for wealth, power, or social recognition, the Puritans believed, was a sin.

No doubt there were Puritan sinners and Athenians who enjoyed their work. Nonetheless, culture has its effects, and institutions channel motives. Indeed, our own culture may represent the extreme possibility in this regard. The ancient Athenians and the Puritans viewed work and leisure very differently, but like other ancient or premodern cultures they conceived worldly activity as having some type of final and self-contained end. Accordingly, material self-interest was subordinated to other, higher interests. Modernity, however, or at least a hyper-modern society such as contemporary America, has arguably upset what may well be a natural order in human motives and aspirations. Now, again, since they are aspects of human nature, these two types of motives cannot be extinguished. Nonetheless, many people in our culture at least speak as though material self-interest is the only legitimate form of interest. They apparently find it difficult to conceive of the existence of internal goods, and in any event do not subordinate their material self-interest to any more noble interest or cause. In short, they have no vision of a higher purpose in life. These people may actually believe the bumper sticker message that the one who dies with the most toys wins.

Of course, it is difficult to believe that anyone is as utterly vacuous or as profoundly nihilistic as this message suggests. Even so, the glorification of material self-interest has real and corrosive effects. I will describe some of these effects below, but for now let me note a great irony in this point of view: the glorification of material self-interest has occurred largely in the name of capitalism, but both the origins of capitalism and its healthy forms reside with and depend on a subordination of material self-interest to more noble ends. The bourgeois ethic does not aspire to the heights of the ancients’ ideals, but it remains an ethic, one that sponsors the mundane virtues of self-reliance, frugality, temperance, loyalty, patience, and above all the capacity to see work as an occasion for duty and self-restraint.

This vocational ethic, whether in Puritan New England, in Brigham Young’s Utah, or in East Asia today, is the driving force of a healthy capitalism, a fact that Weber said should be taught in the kindergarten of cultural history.⁶ In saying this, however, Weber merely

Vocational ethic is driving force of healthy capitalism.

⁵ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Scribner’s, 1958), 53.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

stated in different terms what Hobbes had said long before him: that the pursuit of arbitrary self-interest leads to the war of all against all. Hobbes also saw only one solution to a lack of self-restraint: a sovereign capable of invoking fear and terror. If we acted in fact as the glorifiers of narrow self-interest that we often profess ourselves to be, we would have to live in a police state.

The restraint bound up with the bourgeois ethic has ensured various freedoms, including those of a free citizenry and a free market. Although my remaining comments will focus on the relationship between this restraint and liberal education, it is clear that religion and a sense of duty to one's family and community have played very significant roles in forming the vocational ethic of both the Western and the Eastern bourgeoisie. This point should be kept in mind as I discuss the relationship of work and liberal education, because the historical evidence shows that religion, communal duty, or a combination of the two must be present as sources of support in order for education to contribute effectively to a vocational ethic.

The relationship between liberal education and a sense of vocation, though, is far from incidental, and secular ideas of vocation have existed in the West for centuries. It is interesting to note that the term "liberal arts" (*artes liberales*) was taken from Cicero by the Renaissance humanists, but Cicero also spoke of liberal (*liberales*) occupations. These are types of work that require prudence and temperance and that enjoy public relevance. He cited medicine, architecture, and teaching as examples; and he distinguished liberal occupations from vulgar occupations, forms of labor undertaken merely for money. Labor performed exclusively for compensation, Cicero believed, was never suitable for a gentleman. Nonetheless, he also believed that, although there might be careers more noble than one's own career, one should choose a vocation (*genus vitae*) in consideration of one's natural talents or capacities, and of the needs of one's *civitas* or community.⁷

Cicero influenced all the great Renaissance humanists, including Erasmus who reiterated his views on vocation. This point is of some interest because both Luther and the young humanistic Calvin read Erasmus's work and may have been influenced by him in developing their own views of vocation.⁸ Perhaps, though, of all the humanists,

Liberal education and vocation intimately related.

⁷ Cicero, *De Officiis* (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1921), Bk I, 153-155.

⁸ See Richard Douglas, "Talent and Vocation in Humanist and Protestant Thought," in *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Theodore Rabb and Jerrold Seigal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

Hegel, a leading figure in German neohumanism, most clearly described the relationship between liberal education and vocation. For him, these are two sides of the same coin. His term for liberal education was theoretical *Bildung*, and his view of vocation (*Beruf*) is presented under the heading of practical *Bildung*. The German term *Bildung* can be translated in several ways, including “edification,” “self-formation,” and “education.” For Hegel, the term implied the process by which one gains distance from one’s self in order to form oneself.

Hegel defined theoretical *Bildung* as the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Pursuits of this sort, he believed, free us from our interests; and true freedom, he said, begins where interest ends. Without considerations of gain, we can treat objects of knowledge as they are in and of themselves. Education implies comprehending reality as it is. The uneducated man, on the other hand, “remains in a state of simple sensuous intuition, his eyes not open, and he does not see what lies at his feet.”⁹ Natural self-interest, according to Hegel, leads to rash and imprudent judgment, whereas education “implies the forming of an opinion regarding relations and objects of the actual world.”¹⁰

Hegel: Work is “desire held in check.”
As such work contributes to self-formation. In Hegel’s words, “In forming a thing, an object of work, one forms oneself.” This, moreover, is especially true when one gives oneself wholly to a vocation. In a vocation, one has a limited sphere in which to develop universally recognizable aptitudes, but one also enters into participation and cooperation with the whole. Hegel believed that this sense of vocation was possible whatever the external conditions in which fate had placed a person. Fate might limit our opportunities, he said, but we can still “freely endure and pursue” a vocation by making it wholly ours, thus robbing external conditions of their power.¹²

Hegel may have been too optimistic about the chances of creating a vocation in circumstances militating against it. Nonetheless, he described convincingly the contexts in which self-formation occurs. These contexts are those in which we have distance from our immedi-

⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 42.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 118.

¹² Hegel, *Propaedeutic*, 44.

ate needs and interests. Activities that free us from our conscious needs form the self. In the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, for example, one is not tempted to cheat, lie, or perform other vicious acts because to do so would rob one of the internal goods being sought. It makes no sense for the properly motivated student or scholar to do fraudulent work. As Alasdair MacIntyre reminds us, however, it makes perfect sense to cheat if we are motivated exclusively by external goods.¹³ The pursuit of self-rewarding ends encourages the formation of virtues such as honesty, reliability, and trustworthiness; the pursuit of material interest, on the other hand, encourages vicious acts, at least outside a police state.

Again, the irony of all of this is that, although virtue is its own reward, it can also quite literally pay in the long run. People who are motivated to attain internal rewards are more likely than those who pursue only their material self-interest to persist in an activity and to excel at it. Such people also develop the sort of reputation that is important in the marketplace. The old saying about Quakers coming to this country to do good but doing well expresses a general truth.

Lest my rhetoric get the best of me, let me acknowledge once again that the pursuit of material self-interest is a basic human motive. It is a motive, though, that leads to its ends most successfully when it is tempered by reason. Enlightened self-interest implies virtue, albeit mundane virtue. This is not the sort of self-interest typically described by contemporary economists, sociobiologists, or behavioral psychologists. It is, however, exactly the sort of self-interest described by Enlightenment thinkers, America's founding fathers among them; and the rehabilitation of "self-interest" by these thinkers was a singularly important step in human thought and practice. By acknowledging self-interest and by recognizing the relatively egalitarian capacity for mundane virtue, Enlightenment thinkers prudently turned away from the lofty but impractical horizons of the ancients. They sought to build institutions on "low but solid ground," to use one of Leo Strauss's favorite phrases. Nonetheless, this low ground cannot be a swamp, to take a phrase from one of my colleagues.

I believe that the ground is becoming saturated in many places. With regard to education, this observation goes beyond vocationalism as such. Education's foundations are sinking because of a variety of

¹³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press, 1981), 175-176.

techniques aimed at external ends. Some of these techniques do not serve money directly but still contribute to the “cult of efficiency” that is undermining our schools and universities. They range from the pedestrian to the profoundly wrong-headed, and include the use of multiple-choice questions, the use of recipe-knowledge textbooks in the humanities and the social sciences, the evaluation of professors through publication counts and multiple-choice evaluation sheets, the pursuit of grants by professor-entrepreneurs, management by objective, and the evaluation of educational programs in terms of their cash value, not their educational value.

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As for vocationalism as such, in the English-speaking world it dates back to Locke, as I have noted, and it was extensive enough in nineteenth-century Britain that both Cardinal Newman and Matthew Arnold deemed it a worthy adversary.¹⁴ In our country, though the most practical of nations, vocationalism did not begin to overcome education until this century. In 1893 the so called “Committee of Ten,” chaired by Harvard’s Charles Eliot, reaffirmed that all American secondary students should be educated liberally. By 1918, however, a new group, composed mostly of professors of education and educational bureaucrats, issued a set of “cardinal principles” that facilitated the refashioning of the high school curriculum. This group, The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, redefined this curriculum, to quote Diane Ravitch, “along functional lines and conferred respectability upon vocational, technical, socio-personal and other sorts of new courses—at first in addition to, and later instead of academic subject.”¹⁵

Actions of this nature created such a momentum that by the late 1960s and early 1970s, when I was in high school, the curriculum was structured by the principles of “utility, relevance and free-choice.”¹⁶ In my California high school, several of my middle-class friends spent half their day studying “auto body and fender.” Several other friends spent ten to fifteen hours a week in cash-register school. As Robert Hutchins once said, “If you set out to prepare a boy for a trade there are and can be no limits to the triviality to which you will descend ex-

¹⁴ Newman, *University*; Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

¹⁵ Diane Ravitch, “The Continuing Crisis: Fashions in Education,” *American Scholar* (Spring, 1984), 184.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 183.

cept those imposed by the limitations on the time at your disposal.”¹⁷ It would not be surprising to find contemporary high schools offering a course entitled “Holograms and You: Wrist Techniques to a Better Future.”

Hutchins, however, was not talking about high school. He was speaking of colleges and universities, where, indeed, the spirit of vocationalism is much more pervasive today than in Hutchins’s time. Identifying this spirit is not as simple as separating the liberal arts from fields that prepare people for specific jobs. It is entirely possible to seek external ends in the liberal arts, and certain professional undergraduate majors provide bountiful internal rewards and a strong sense of vocation. I believe the latter are often typical of fields such as engineering and accounting, both of which have well-defined, demanding content. Both of these fields are also applied extensions of traditional liberal arts fields: physics and mathematics in the case of engineering, and mathematics in the case of accounting. Yet no such clear-cut content or ties to traditional liberal arts fields exist for two other professional or vocational majors which I would like to discuss briefly: the education major and the business administration major.

Together, these two majors account for about forty percent of American undergraduates. It is no coincidence that schools of education and business, like vocationalism in the high schools, date from the late nineteenth century or early twentieth century. Besides their dates of birth the business and education majors also have another obvious trait in common: they appeal to weak students, or at least those who have low average Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores. In 1994-1995, business majors ranked ninth (884) and education majors ranked tenth (855) among persons intending to major in ten areas of study. Both types of majors score lower than those intending to major in any of the liberal arts and sciences. In fact, students intending to major in business and education had average scores over 200 points lower than students intending to major in the physical sciences (1080) and mathematics (1099).¹⁸

Needless to say, both education and business are eminently noble endeavors. It should also go without saying, though, that no one has a sense of vocation for something as generic as education or business.

¹⁷ Hutchins, *Higher Learning*, 39.

¹⁸ Department of Education, “Scholastic Assessment Test, Score Averages by Intended Area of Study: 1977-1978 to 1994-1995.” Table 128.[n.pag.] Online. Nov. 12, 1997. Available:<http://www.ed.gov/NCES/pubs/d96/D96T128.html>.

That would be as if in matters of breathing one had a preference for air. People may have a sense of vocation for chemistry, engineering, the ministry, home building, politics, accounting, or literature, but not for business in general or education in general. In fact, despite the many exceptions, especially in education, I would suggest that most people who major in these areas do so precisely because they have no sense of vocation. Education and business are often default majors; students major in them when they lack substantial and enduring interests. Good teachers are drawn to teaching, however, not by default but by a subject they find intrinsically rewarding, and if their characters are formed properly—if they are hard working, judicious, intellectually honest, etc.—they will be good teachers. Similarly, good business people typically are drawn to a particular type of production or work, but even if circumstances have forced them into a type of work that may not have been their first choice, they are likely to prosper if they have developed the proper habits, dispositions, and motives.

Lacking specific content, education and business curricula are designed to impart generic skills. Education departments have the task of teaching how to teach, but, again, high-quality teaching is a matter of character and of knowing and loving one's subject. These qualities cannot be taught directly. Consequently, educationists or professors of pedagogy teach what can be taught: tedious methods of organizing a class and content-free procedures for distilling and dispensing information.¹⁹ Of course there are many intelligent professors and students of education, but their task is misconceived, and the consequences of remaining with this task are well known. Although perhaps there is no endeavor more obviously laden with internal rewards than teaching, many of our best students would, given a choice, rather have their molar removed by a power drill than sit through a mind-numbing education class; meanwhile, many people who endure the education curriculum do not do a good job after graduation.

The situation is no better with regard to business education and its effects upon students and business. Indeed, I believe that business education has harmed American business. Specific problems of production cannot be addressed in this curriculum and what can be taught tends to lead business majors and MBAs to conceive of business problems as problems of management, finance, and marketing:

¹⁹ See Reginald Damerell, *Education's Smoking Gun* (New York: Freundlich Books, 1985).

the stuff of “paper entrepreneurialism.”²⁰ By contrast, in Sweden, West Germany, and Japan, fewer than three percent of college graduates have business degrees, and workers are more likely to regard business problems as problems of science, engineering, and production.²¹

Workers in these other countries also are likely to be loyal to their companies, whereas in this country one out of every three MBAs changes his or her company every year.²² In the words of Peter Baida, a Wharton MBA, “I went to business school to acquire marketable skills, and what I chiefly acquired was the ability to market myself.”²³ Baida discovered in business school that intellectual activity can be difficult without being interesting and that, although their skills might be shaky, graduates of our best business schools “know how to prepare a résumé, how to dress, how to shine their shoes, how to comb their hair and handle themselves on job interviews.”²⁴ Apparently these talents are useful because MBAs certainly do a lot of job interviewing.

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Thorstein Veblen underestimated the then-fledgling business schools when he claimed eighty years ago that they were little more than secondary schools for bank tellers and traveling salesmen.²⁵ Graduates of business schools, especially MBAs, have attained influential positions, and their short-term perspective, their disloyalty, and their dogged application of generic skills to specific problems have maimed many American businesses, according to a growing number of commentators. As a professor at Chicago’s School of Business has stated, “We have created a monster . . . the business schools have done more to insure the success of the Japanese and West German invasion of America than any one thing I can think of.”²⁶

Perhaps the good professor simply failed to think of schools of education. In any event, schools of education and business have done more than their share to contribute to America’s problems. Unfortunately, reversing our direction will be very difficult, if not impossible. I say this for one general reason and for several specific reasons. The

²⁰ Robert Reich, *The Next American Frontier* (New York: Times Books, 1983), 140-172.

²¹ Christopher Meek, Warner Woodworth and W. Gibb Dyer, Jr., *Managing by the Numbers* (Reading Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1988), 19.

²² *Ibid.*, 21.

²³ Peter Baida, “M.B.A.,” *American Scholar* (Winter, 1984), 41.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁵ Thorstein Veblen, *Higher Learning in America* (New York: Huebsch, 1918).

²⁶ Meek, Woodworth and Dyer, *Managing*, 19.

general reason is that the historical evidence supports Max Weber's assertion that modernity itself sponsors the pursuit of external ends at the expense of internal ends. This process undermines the very virtues that make capitalism and liberal democracies work. It is propelled by the allure of technical skills and means and by the illusion of greater rationality and control. Weber, something of a prophet, anticipated a last stage of civilization in which "specialists without spirit and sensu-
alists without heart" would falsely imagine that they had achieved a level of civilization never before achieved.²⁷ He also suggested that such people, lacking legitimate sources of internal rewards, could possibly come under the sway of charlatans and charismatic leaders, and it is eerie to note how many half-educated young career people are taken in by new-age gurus and pop-psychologists. The most uncanny phenomenon, though, is how neatly these things fit with the new and sometimes strange business mentality. Many young business people shift effortlessly back and forth between the crude language of material self-interest and the garbled jargon of pop-psychology.

As for the specific reasons, most of them relate to entrenched forces that prohibit change. Regarding education, many liberal arts faculty members lack the courage of their convictions; teachers' unions are committed to silly credential requirements and to protecting incompetent teachers; educationists fill the ranks of school administration; and in response to the occasional calls of crisis, politicians and citizens speak of raising teachers' salaries, while school administrators are given excuses to monitor teachers more closely and to standardize the curriculum further, thus making the internal rewards of teaching that much more difficult to achieve.

With regard to business, America's 650 business schools are not go-

²⁷ Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, 182. Joseph Schumpeter maintained a similar and compatible view. In addition to the eroding effects of "external forces," such as the hostility of intellectuals, the capitalist order, he believed, was decomposing because of "internal causes." Foremost among these was the decomposition of the "bourgeois family," a family type whose frugal and restrained head works feverishly not for himself but to "save primarily for his wife and children." As Schumpeter observes, "as soon as men and women learn the utilitarian lesson . . . they cannot fail to become aware of the heavy personal sacrifices that family ties and especially parenthood entail." These sacrifices go beyond "the items that come within the reach of the measuring rod of money." They include "the loss of comfort, of freedoms from care and the opportunity to enjoy alternatives of increasing attractiveness and variety." See Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1962), especially 157-160.

ing to close, and business people will continue shamelessly to speak a language of crude self-interest. Fortunately, this talk sometimes reflects the poverty of language more than it represents reality. Many business people have far more noble motives than their language allows them to convey. Even so, this language is not benign. It has taken its toll on the traditional sources of support for the bourgeois ethic—religion, the family, and education—which in turn has affected the course of American business.

Imprecise language about ethics undermines economy and culture.

If one chooses to take a short-term and superficial perspective, one might conclude that the American economy today is doing just fine. Such a perspective is misleading. Motives matter, especially over the long haul. When I think of American business and its future, the final chapter of *The Seven Percent Solution* comes to my mind. In this novel by Nicolas Meyer, Sherlock Holmes and Sigmund Freud team up to solve a case. Through an unfortunate set of circumstances they find themselves alone on a train without any coal, chasing a dastardly baron who is traveling ahead of them on the same track in a different train. The obsessed Holmes and Freud solve their dilemma by ripping every available piece of wood from the train to feed the engine. This is a marvelous metaphor for the self-consuming passion that drives American business. Yet there is one possible difference between this story and American business. In the novel, Freud and Holmes catch the evil baron before they run out of track and wood. American business will not run out of track, but I am not so certain about the wood.