"The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.

We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized." - Edward Bernays

THE CENTURY OF THE SELF

Adam Curtis' acclaimed series examines the rise of the all-consuming self against the backdrop of the Freud dynasty.

To many in both politics and business, the triumph of the self is the ultimate expression of democracy, where power has finally moved to the people. Certainly the people may feel they are in charge, but are they really? The Century of the Self tells the untold and sometimes controversial story of the growth of the mass-consumer society
in Britain and the United States. How was the all-consuming self created, by whom, and in whose interests?

The Freud dynasty is at the heart of this compelling social history. Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis; Edward Bernays, who invented public relations; Anna Freud, Sigmund's devoted daughter; and present-day PR guru and Sigmund's great grandson, Matthew Freud.

Sigmund Freud's work into the bubbling and murky world of the subconscious changed the world. By introducing a technique to probe the unconscious mind, Freud provided useful tools for understanding the secret desires of the masses. Unwittingly, his work served as the precursor to a world full of political spin doctors, marketing moguls, and society's belief that the pursuit of satisfaction and happiness is man's ultimate goal.

_Please Note: Viewers should be sure to read Ludwig Von Mises' 'The Anti-Capitalist Mentality' to balance the socialistic elements of this film._

This film was produced by BBC which is Britain's government run news channel, therefor it downplays the evils of government and plays up the vices of business. The enemy is not capitalism or 'consumption' but government and its insidious propaganda. Mass produced goods enrich society because they reduce the amount of time a person has to work to satisfy one's essential needs. Government propaganda debases society because it is used as an excuse for everything from murderous wars of aggression to oppressive economy killing taxation and regulation. When a business sells you something voluntarily you will only buy it if you think the product is worth more than the price you have to pay for it. When the government propagandizes you they are merely giving you excuses to submit to their use of force which will be bearing down on you whether you like it or not. The two are very different and this film does a disservice by confusing them. That said, it's important to understand the propagandists who serve to justify the crimes of the state. Selling someone a product they don't truly "need" hurts no one, selling people on a war they don't need gets millions of people murdered and destroys entire societies. - Chris, InformationLiberation

**One: Happiness Machines**

The story of the relationship between Sigmund Freud and his American nephew, Edward Bernays. Bernays invented the public relations profession in the 1920s and was the first person to take Freud's ideas to manipulate the masses. He showed American corporations how they could make people want things they didn't need by systematically linking mass-produced goods to their unconscious desires.

Bernays was one of the main architects of the modern techniques of mass-consumer persuasion, using every trick in the book, from celebrity endorsement and outrageous PR stunts, to eroticising the motorcar.

His most notorious coup was breaking the taboo on women smoking by persuading them that cigarettes were a symbol of independence and freedom. But Bernays was convinced that this was more than just a way of selling consumer goods. It was a new political idea of how to control the masses. By satisfying the inner irrational desires that his uncle had identified, people could be made happy and thus docile.

It was the start of the all-consuming self which has come to dominate today's world.

**See Ludwig von Mises "The Noneconomic Objections to Capitalism" and "The Argument of Happiness" to balance the propaganda in this section.**

**Two: The Engineering of Consent**

The programme explores how those in power in post-war America used Freud's ideas about the unconscious mind to try and control the masses.

Politicians and planners came to believe Freud's underlying premise - that deep within all human beings were dangerous and irrational desires and fears. They were convinced that it was the unleashing of these instincts that had led to the barbarism of Nazi Germany. To stop it ever happening again they set out to find ways to control this hidden enemy within the human mind.

Sigmund Freud's daughter, Anna, and his nephew, Edward Bernays, provided the centrepiece philosophy. The US government, big business, and the CIA used their ideas to develop techniques to manage and control the minds of the American people. But this was not a cynical exercise in manipulation. Those in power believed that the only way to make democracy work and create a stable society was to repress the savage barbarism that lurked just
under the surface of normal American life.

**Three: There is a Policeman Inside All Our Heads: He Must Be Destroyed**

In the 1960s, a radical group of psychotherapists challenged the influence of Freudian ideas in America. They were inspired by the ideas of Wilhelm Reich, a pupil of Freud's, who had turned against him and was hated by the Freud family. He believed that the inner self did not need to be repressed and controlled. It should be encouraged to express itself.

Out of this came a political movement that sought to create new beings free of the psychological conformity that had been implanted in people's minds by business and politics.

This programme shows how this rapidly developed in America through self-help movements like Werber Erhard's Erhard Seminar Training - into the irresistible rise of the expressive self: the Me Generation.

But the American corporations soon realised that this new self was not a threat but their greatest opportunity. It was in their interest to encourage people to feel they were unique individuals and then sell them ways to express that individuality. To do this they turned to techniques developed by Freudian psychoanalysts to read the inner desires of the new self.

[InfoLib Note: The portrayal of Wilhelm Reich in this film is completely wrong, Wilhelm Reich was a great man, check out his book "Listen, Little Man!"]

**Four: Eight People Sipping Wine in Kettering**

This episode explains how politicians on the left, in both Britain and America, turned to the techniques developed by business to read and fulfil the inner desires of the self.

Both New Labour, under Tony Blair, and the Democrats, led by Bill Clinton, used the focus group, which had been invented by psychoanalysts, in order to regain power. They set out to mould their policies to people’s inner desires and feelings, just as capitalism had learnt to do with products.

Out of this grew a new culture of public relations and marketing in politics, business and journalism. One of its stars in Britain was Matthew Freud who followed in the footsteps of his relation, Edward Bernays, the inventor of public relations in the 1920s.

The politicians believed they were creating a new and better form of democracy, one that truly responded to the inner feelings of individual. But what they didn't realise was that the aim of those who had originally created these techniques had not been to liberate the people but to develop a new way of controlling them.