Enhancement, Commodification, and Human Flourishing

or The Reason Why Human Enhancement is Wrong

is Because it Leads to People Being Treated Like Pots

by

Valerye Michelle Milleson

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Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Joan McGregor, Chair
Jason Robert
Peter French

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

At present, the ideological bias in the human enhancement debate holds

that opponents to human enhancement are primarily techno-conservatives who,

lacking any reasonable, systematic account of why we ought to be so opposed,

simply resort to a sort of fear-mongering and anti-meliorism. This dissertation

means to counteract said bias by offering just such an account. Offered herein is a

heuristic explanation of how, given a thorough understanding of enhancement

both as a technology and as an attitude, we can predict a likely future of rampant

commodification and dehumanization of man, and a veritable assault on human

flourishing.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND AN ETHICS FOR THE FUTURE

Introduction

"Why worry about enhancement?" Hasting Center senior research scholar Erik

Parens (1998) asks us, "Why not worry instead about apple pie?" (p. 1) He says,

"Enhancement, after all, is something we seek for ourselves and think others

should too." For example, "[w]e praise individuals who exercise so that they will

live longer"; "[w]e applaud individuals who seek excellent schools to enhance

their intellectual development"; and "[w]e praise parents who do everything they

can to enhance their children's moral development." And, given all this praise and

applause, Parens wonders, "why would anyone worry about a new cosmetic

surgery technique that promised to make us thinner," or "a new

psychopharmacological agent that promised to enhance concentration and

performance in school," or "a new psychopharmacological or genetic technology

that promised to make us kinder and gentler?" (Parens, 1998, p. 1) The

implication, it seems, is that our natural, default position with respect to human

enhancement is, and should be, a positive one: we seek it for ourselves; we laud

others for seeking it for themselves; and we believe individuals should seek it for

others about whom they care. Some proponents of human enhancement will even

go so far as to say that it is an inherent part of our "human" nature – if indeed they

suppose we have one – to seek out and engage in various forms of enhancement

(see, e.g., Naam 2005; Bostrom 2007); man, they believe, is necessarily an enhancing, enhanceable being. And if this is true with exercise, schools and moral education, why should it not be so with cosmetic surgery, psychopharmacology, and genetic intervention?

The reason I will argue that we can reasonably laud the former but condemn – and indeed *abhor* – the latter is because with the latter we have more cause for concern that widespread, devastating consequences will be reaped, regardless of how seemingly innocent the initial sowing. More specifically, over the course of this dissertation I will argue the following:

1. First, I argue that as in the case of many modern technologies enhancement technologies bear the mark of being inherently political in nature and Promethean in scope. Contra the more conventional idea of technology as being a sort of "mere use" object with which our interactions are fairly limited, brief, and innocent – a view which stands as a likely carryover from our pre-modern technological age – the reality of said technologies is that they promise to be of a powerfully structuring sort that upon entering the mainstream and the market will inevitably reshape our lives and our sense of humanity in order that we cater to their domineering artifactual reality. Moreover, once having entered they cannot be dismissed – whether casually or by force; once Pandora's box has been opened its evils are permanently and perpetually reaped, and so too with enhancement technologies.

2. Second, I argue that enhancement as an ideology – whether existing *ante hoc* or *post hoc* of the technology – is fundamentally an ideology of commodification. Drawing from philosophers, anthropologists and psychologists, I present the more established theories and perspectives of commodification and then expand in greater depth on the sort of attitudes and *human* effects that surround the commodification of individuals from a number of perspectives: the individual who is subject to commodification; the individual who is commodifying others; the individual who is commodifying themselves; and the individual who is not (obviously) actively involved in commodification, but nonetheless affected by it by existing in an environment in which such commodification is actively taking place. This, in the end, will represent the bulk of this dissertation.

3. Third, I offer a heuristic account of the sort of future we can expect will result from these collective images of man v commodification. I use what will by then be my previously stated philosophy of technology combined with the overall philo-anthro-psycho-logical understanding of the human consequences to active and intrepid encroachment by 'commodifying' technologies in order to project the realistic (and to my mind *likely*) consequences of our (post)enhancement – and, to some post*human* – future. While admittedly speculative in nature, what I will proffer is based on a series of eminently reasonable steps; hence any apparent *un*reasonableness of my conclusions viz a viz man's final destination of

depredation and degradation – his deterioration, debasement and demise –
is reflective simply of horror's last port of call before accepting this as
reality.

Thus, from the socially transformative, self-perpetuating power of enhancement technologies and the underlying attitude inherent with the current enhancement program (that is, its estimation of man as essentially an enhancing, enhanceable being), I maintain that we can plausibly predict just what sort of social transformation will occur as a result of our powers, and I will ultimately motivate the conclusion that this particular coupling of technology and attitude – when actively acted upon and extended to its future consequences – results in a diminished conception of humanity and human flourishing.

More concisely – if perhaps more opaquely – what I will argue in the following pages is little more than an expansion on my own intuition that the root problem of whole-heartedly endorsing enhancement (both as technology and as attitude) is that it results in people being treated like pots. This is an intuition I have, and it seems have had for some time; but I have only recently begun to find words to articulate it. The articulation began during my comprehensive exams, where one of the posed questions asked, among other things, what I took to be "the main objectionable effect of manipulating the genetic makeup of a person before birth." My response was a brief, but (to my mind) eloquent, discussion of Adam's lamentation – "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mold me man, did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me…?" (Book X lines 743-745) – in *Paradise Lost*, echoed equally mournfully by Shelley's Monster, and the proposed

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"correct" answer (*a la* Milton, and drawn biblically from Isaiah 45:9): "Woe to you who strive with your Maker, earthen vessels with the potter! Does the clay say to the one who fashions it, "What are you making"? or "Your work has no handles"?" (NRSV) It was – and *is* – my contention that this seemingly callous response – namely, "Who are *you* (the pot) to question *me* (the potter)?" – coupled with its associated beliefs and attitudes (e.g., the inherent righteousness of the potter and the inherent unrighteousness of the pot (Job 4:17); the inherent fear and trembling entailed by a pot in face of the potter's "rod of iron" (Psalm 2:9-11); the inherent beholdenness and openness of the pot to the potter (Wisdom 15:7, Sirach 33:13); and the inherent right of the potter over the pot (Romans 9:20-22); and so on) are not reflective of the sort of humanity and human flourishing we should choose for ourselves and for our future descendents. And, the attitude underpinning this unsentimental sentiment is precisely what follows from active, widespread adoption of the enhancement mentality.

With this more general account of my overall argument in mind, the final breakdown of chapters in this dissertation will be the following: In this first chapter, I will explain the theoretical underpinnings and general design structure for what philosopher Hans Jonas called an "ethics for the future." I will not offer expansive description of his original arguments based upon ontology – the assumed metaphysics of man – and its related grounding of a binding theory of human responsibility (for a more thorough account, see Jonas 1984, Jonas 1996). I will, however, endeavor to provide an adequate sketch of the main aspects of his theory as they pertain to the project at hand. I begin with a discussion of how an

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ethics for the future functions as a sort of futurology – primarily of a dystopian sort. I then describe how one goes about an ethics for the future by explaining the kinds of knowledge that are necessary to adequately engage in such an ethics (namely, "objective" and "subjective"), as well as their corresponding "tasks" or "duties" (which are, in brief, to visualize the long-term consequences of our current actions and to elicit the appropriate emotional response to said visualization). I furthermore explain the basic methodology of an ethics for the future and for much of this dissertation – heuristic casuistry – distinguishing our version from Jonas' original proposal and motivating its adequacy as a theoretical approach to technology assessment. I then end with a brief account of the "image" or "idea" of man, how we derive it, and I suggest how it might be action-guiding once we reach chapter 6.

The focus of the second chapter is to explore in greater depth what is meant by the notion of 'enhancement technologies'. I begin by setting up some basic background information about enhancement, including: how the term 'enhancement' is used by individuals within the enhancement debate (hint: my findings are that it is used rather poorly); what the main technologies of enhancement are (nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, and cognitive science); and what the main human targets of enhancement are (choosing our bodies; choosing our minds; choosing our life spans; improving performance; choosing our children; and choosing our species). I then present the key findings we get from philosophy of technology from political theorist Langdon Winner that relate to enhancement technologies, including: the

limitations of the "default" or "conventional" view of technology as being of "mere use" – occasional, limited, innocuous, and nonstructuring; the, in reality, powerful structuring power inherent in modern technologies, such as enhancement technologies and the consequences of said structuring; and the necessity of incorporating a deeply political perspective into the philosophy of technology, especially when what we are faced with are not merely "inventively" political technologies but rather "inherently" political technologies. I then continue with the key findings we get from philosophy of technology from bioethicist and philosopher of technology Hans Jonas that relate to enhancement technologies, including: the pivotal distinction between "new" or "modern" technologies and "old" or "traditional" technologies with respect to their respective formal dynamics (namely the tendency towards ever-increasing expansion and improvement; the quick spreading speed of technological knowledge and practice; the circular, rather than unilinear, relationship between means and ends; and the inherent idolization of technological "progress"; and the inherent Prometheanism we find with modern technology, both for the technology itself and for the actors using it. I conclude with a brief discussion of the overall perspective of enhancement technologies that results from these collective understandings of both enhancement and technology.

The third chapter functions somewhat as a bridge between the second and fourth chapters. Since it is my contention that part of the ethically problematic nature of the image of man as put forth by the proponents of human enhancement writ large is its view of man as a commodifying, commodifiable being, I believe

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that it is therefore necessary to present a more detailed analysis on commodification generally. Hence, in this chapter I will offer what is essentially a primer in commodification, based on key analyses of commodification available in both anthropology and bioethics. I will also illustrate how the characteristics that reflect the image of man held by human enhancement advocates as explored in chapter 2 are the same characteristics we find in commodification.

In the fourth chapter I offer a more detailed analysis – based on previous observations in analogous areas – of what is arguably the effect of being a commodified individual. I begin with the classical analysis by Joel Feinberg on a child's right to an open future. Next, I present Habermas' extension of this analysis and his arguments about the felt invasion for the individual subject to enhancement. Following that, I offer in turn illustrations for the following felt traits of man commodified: fragmentation, alienation, and objectification. I conclude the chapter with general remarks on what I take to be the defining feature of man commodified – that he is, for all intensive purposes, a pot subject to the whims of a potter.

The fifth chapter goes into detail as to what I believe are the more likely attitudes and features of an individual engaging in human commodification. Here, I explore both the attitudes of someone engaging in the commodification of another individual, as well as of someone engaging in the commodification of himself or herself. In particular, I explain how the man commodifying acts as manufacturer, master, and sadist (or masochist).

While the previous two chapters describe what happens to those individuals directly involved in the act of commodification, whether by commodifying or by being commodified, in the sixth chapter I take on what logical repercussions would follow from human commodification even for those individuals who are *not* directly involved. Partly speculative – since there do not exist actual empirical studies on its potential plausibility – I offer theoretical rationale for presuming a sort of "commodification effect" on those individuals not involved in human commodification, as well as on a society at large that is aware of – even peripherally – the existence of a sub-population who engages in such commodification. I then offer a synthesized account of all these varying forms of man v commodification and explain the potential impact on human flourishing.

In the end, much of my aim in this current project is to provide "freedom through insight" (Guston and Sarewitz, 2002, p. 100) by presenting the reader with a hypothetical, probable future, an "if…then" scenario developed from what we know about the group of technologies collectively referred to as 'enhancement technologies', what their associated attitudes and beliefs are, and what sort of predictions and projections we can make given this knowledge. Given this focus on a heuristic approach, what follows will not be an instance of what I recognize as the oft-revered – and to my mind *fabled* – case of a "knock-down argument". There is no "necessary" or "sufficient" to my argument; but for it to succeed I need neither. My (limited) goal is to offer a reasoned, reasonable account of why a reasoning, reasonable person might be disinclined to rush head-on towards the

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transhuman technotopia; why we should not be so quick to judge that all techno-conservatism results from techno-fear or techno-ignorance; and why though the supporters of human enhancement are right that "The debate over human enhancement is at heart a debate over human freedom" (Naam 2005: 6-7), they are wrong about which freedom is fundamentally important.

Given this goal, it is possible that I have just shown what will be considered by some to be my true colors – that of bioLudditism (for more on why I deny this charge, see chapter 2). In reality, however, I am not off smashing looms in the dead of night out of some (*supposedly*) misguided fear that my skills and humanity will henceforth be outmoded by the looming technocraft; I am simply explaining how these looms – here, technological vehicles for human enhancement and their corresponding attitudes – lead to the outmoding. The fear is real, and it is not misguided. Amidst the Kurzweilian taglines and the cyborgian shibboleths and the posthuman homiletics, a moment of paused, quiet reflection is to my mind beneficial. The questions, "What future does this have in hold for me?" and "Do I really want it?" are indeed sensible ones. Our choices on the matter do not live in a vacuum, and to the extent that the consequences for our choices are foreseeable – *regardless* of whether these consequences are unintentional, "mere" side-effects, or a far way down the causal road – we are responsible for them. Our true human freedom, then, lies in *that* choice. And we owe it to ourselves, to our progeny, and to our *humanity* to make the right one.

An Ethics for the Future

This basic structure that I have outlined above is my own attempt at what

bioethicist and philosopher of technology Hans Jonas (1996) denoted as an

"ethics for the future" (or, variably, as an "ethics of the future" (Jonas 1984)),

which is defined as "a contemporary ethics concerned with a future we seek to

protect for our descendants from the consequences of our actions in the present."

(Jonas, 1996, p. 99) In practice, an ethics for the future is a sort of dystopian

futurology. It opposes "[f]uturology as *wish fulfillment*" – aka utopianism – by

acting "as *warning*…to bring our unleashed abilities under our control." (Jonas,

1996, p. 100) It is a futurology that is intended to "have a sobering effect on those

drunk with their own abilities and protect them from themselves" by virtue of

having us at present "[confront] our power with its future ramifications" (Jonas,

1996, p. 104). As we will see in chapter 2, the "quasi-utopian vision" of our

technological manifest destiny acts as a blinding force, and the dazzling

possibility to fulfill the Faustian desire for the ultimate alchemy – man's final

control over man – overwhelms otherwise rational thought. In face of this, an

ethics for the future acts as a fairly conservative safeguard (though a bit more

robust than the standard precautionary principle).

In addition to being a safeguard, an ethics for the future is fundamentally

an effort at foresight. More neutrally defined, Jonas (1996) states that futurology

is "the scientifically informed projection of what our present acts *can* causally

lead to – so that we do not face the future blindly, but with our eyes open." (pp.

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99-100) On this account, the future may be either good or bad, desirable or undesirable; beyond topolatry and topophobia, what we want is topognosis (or, rather, topoprognosis). To achieve said topoprognosis, what is necessary is a sort of twofold knowledge: "on an objective level, that of physical causes; on a subjective one, that of human goals." (Jonas, 1996, p. 99) This means that in order to adequately engage in an ethics for the future, we need to, on the "objective level," have some basic understanding of the current (technological) state of affairs; how the technologies and institutions that make up this state of affairs interact, develop, and alter the fabric of our world; and what sorts of causal connections and consequences are likely, given this state of affairs and its constituents. On the "subjective level," what we need is some basic understanding of human (individual, societal, religious, political, etc.) values; what sort of basis there is for these values, how well-founded they are, how they interrelate, and so on; and how they can arguably be affected by an underlying state of affairs (as in the objective level of knowledge).

This two-fold knowledge corresponds with what Jonas calls the two "tasks" (1996) or "duties" (1984) of an ethics for the future, the first of which is to "[visualize] the long-range effects of technological enterprise" (1984, p. 27) by "maximize[ing] our *knowledge* of the consequences of our actions in view of the way they are able to determine and imperil the future lot of mankind." (1996, pp. 103-4) According to Jonas (1984), the goal here is to "seek…out by an effort of reason and imagination" a potential future "where that which is to be feared has

never yet happened and has perhaps no analogies in past or present experience" in order that "it can instill in us the fear whose guidance we need" (p. 27).

While clearly Jonas has a 'negative' interpretation of how an ethics for the future ought to function, as stated in the previous paragraph I do not take this negative outlook to be an inherent feature of an ethics for the future. I suspect that that what motivates Jonas' position is an underlying assumption that man's default vision of the future with respect to technology and technological 'advance' is fundamentally utopian (see e.g. chapter 2). As such, he sees man as, in a sense, blinded to the possible 'worst-case scenarios' – or even the likely but pessimistic scenarios – of how this 'advance' will be played out. I am less convinced of the supposed lack of pessimism in the technological debate (indeed, even in enhancement discussion dystopian visions abound). I do, however, sympathize with a more modest (re)interpretation of Jonas' claim, namely that the presence of "imagined *malum*" in futurology is perhaps less potent than we (ought to) desire, so we are duty bound to engage in more systematic efforts on this front. Such is the primary task set for the project at hand.

Here, my wish is to paint a picture – contra the eager transhumanist's wet dream (or fantasy) – of our possible, indeed *probable*, future should we pursue this fantasy as our own. To paint this picture, we will essentially be engaging in what Jonas calls heuristic casuistry, here utilizing an understanding of casuistry as a resolution of our duty or duties in a given instance through understanding and interpretation of some ethical principle or principles, rather than the less fortunate (for our purposes, at least) interpretation of casuistry as sophistry via specious

reasoning or fallacious principle application. On Jonas' account, heuristic casuistry is a sort of experimental problem solving aimed at discovering our ethical principles and corresponding moral duties. In heuristic casuistry we primarily use thought experiments with hypothetical premises and conjectural inferences (Jonas, 1984, p. 29). For Jonas (1984), the degree of probability of these premises and inferences is of much less concern than the content of the conclusions; what we want is a possible (even if highly unlikely) future with strong visceral and emotional impact, so that in face of this "perceived possibility" we can gain "access to new moral truth" (p. 29). Such moral truth, Jonas (1984) claims, will not have its certainty be "dependent upon the degree of certainty of the factual, scientific projections which provided paradigmatic material for it" since "its pronouncements are apodictic" rather than merely probabilistic (pp. 29-30).

While I mean neither to carp nor harp on the theoretical limitations of Jonas' view, I personally do not wish to suppose (or require) logical or demonstrable *certainty* in the case of our heuristic conclusions. Moreover, I suspect that Jonas adopts such a position less because it seems the most reasonable and more so out of an exceedingly (or, perhaps in his case, warranted) pessimistic view of political motivation in face of "mere possibility." (Jonas, 1984, p. 30) Perhaps I am more (foolishly?) sanguine that a strong and thoroughgoing combination of probability and horror will be sufficient to act as a moral and political guide; but regardless, I am unwilling to stake my claim on apodicticity.

Besides, in my opinion (and the apparent opinion of others), this heuristic casuistry is a far cry from mere sophism and indeed quite capable of being action-guiding. When understood as a sort of anticipatory ethics, Jonas' ethics for the future is perhaps best viewed as an abridged or antecedent version of what is now referred to as "real-time technology assessment". Proposed by political scholars Dave Guston and Daniel Sarewitz (2002) as a way of integrating social science and public policy outcomes into research and development programs for science and technology from the outset, real-time technology assessment uses in large part the same sort of basic methods that make up Jonas' heuristic casuistry. For example, according to Guston and Sarewitz (2002), real-time technology assessment "makes use of more reflexive measures such as public opinion polling, focus groups, and scenario development to elicit values and explore alternative potential outcomes"; "uses content analysis, social judgment research, and survey research to investigate how knowledge, perceptions, and values are evolving over time, to enhance communication, and to identify emerging problems"; and "integrates socio-technical mapping and dialogue with retrospective (historical) as well as prospective (scenario) analysis" in an effort "to situate the innovation of concern in a historical context that will render it more amenable to understanding and, if necessary, to modification." (p. 98) All of these features are meant to "inform and support natural science and engineering research, and…provide an explicit mechanism for observing, critiquing, and influencing social values as they become embedded in innovations." (Guston and Sarewitz, 2002, p. 93)

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While admittedly more complicated than the previous paragraph might let on - indeed, Guston and Sarewitz (2002) explicitly divide these methods of real-time technology assessment into four separate, but linked components which are then expanded on in depth (pp. 100-101) – they do confess that their proposal can alternatively (and much more simplistically) be seen as version of ""muddling through", "adaptive management", and "sophisticated trial-and-error"" (p. 100), which are meant to achieve "not prediction with precision, [but] freedom through insight" (p. 100). This is the same achievement intended with Jonas' heuristic casuistry (once we drop the apodictic component), where "the mere knowledge of *possibilities*, though certainly insufficient for cogent prediction, is fully adequate for [its] purposes" (1984, p. 29). Moreover, without dragging it out into an extended discussion, it is worth noting that efforts towards more "deliberative" (Leib, 2005), "discursive" (Dryzek, 1990), "inclusive" (Brown, 2002), "participatory" (Pellizzoni, 2001), "pluralistic" (Bohmann, 1996), "reflexive" (Voss, et al, 2006), etc., approaches in technology assessment are becoming increasingly popular, each of which advocate in one relative form or another something similar to the heuristic prognostics that are to be found in an ethics for the future. By association, if there is thought to be something inherently flawed in our approach herein, it would seem to implicate many other theoretical attempts at analyzing potential futures resulting from current and emerging technologies. Thus, our goal should not so much be to proclaim causal certainty, but instead to present a thoroughly reasonable account of what the future may indeed hold given our respective knowledge – "objective" and "subjective"; motivate strongly the

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future that best fits with known human goals and human values; and in the end allow a more fully informed mankind to freely choose the future that, as a whole, best fits their desires.

In order to motivate the best fitting future, we will need to have a better understanding of the second duty of an ethics for the future (which for Jonas follows directly from the first duty). This second duty consists in "summonizing (sic) up a feeling appropriate to what has been visualized" as a result of the projections made from the first duty (Jonas, 1984, p. 28). According to Jonas (1984), after having determined some knowledgeable projection of the future consequences of our contemporary actions, the second task or duty is "in light of this knowledge of something unprecedentedly new that *might* come about, to develop a new knowledge of what is permissible and not permissible, of what to allow and what to avoid" (p. 28). Thus, while the first task was "an understanding of facts," this second task is "an understanding of values": "a knowledge of *the Good*, of what man ought to be." (Jonas, 1996, p. 104)

This understanding of values is grounded in what Jonas calls the "image" or "idea" of man. For Jonas (1996), our "[k]nowledge of the human Good must be derived from the essence of what is human" (p. 105): "a concept of the *human being*…what human beings should be, what we are all about, and what is advantageous for us" and also "what we must *not* be, what diminishes and distorts us" (p. 104). For him, this requires a sort of "ontological grounding" – much like an account of human nature – which according to his argument has specific metaphysical properties (see e.g. Jonas 1996). For our purposes here, this

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ontology of man will be left fairly neutral, since arguing about ontology and metaphysics takes us decidedly outside the desired scope of this dissertation.

However, it is entirely within our desired scope to consider, at least in broad strokes, what this notion of the "image of man" is and how it pertains to our argument. At its most rudimentary level, the image of man is the "core phenomenon of our humanity, which is to be preserved in its integrity at all costs" (Jonas, 1984, p. 34). According to Jonas (1984), "the *idea* of Man…is such that it demands the presence of its embodiment in the world [and] by telling us *why* there should be men, it tells us also *how* they should be" (p. 43). The idea here is that from our image of man we can derive certain conditions that must necessarily obtain in all future conditions in which "man" is to be present, and, moreover, for which no potential "good" warrants its sacrifice. For example, if we hold to an image of man in which man is necessarily mortal (as in the classic statement from Logic class: All men are mortal), then any potential future in which man is no longer mortal is barred from our choosing, because the image of man must be maintained; or, if we hold to a more Aristotelian notion, then a future in which men are no longer bipedal and/or featherless is also off limits; and so on.

For Jonas, it seems to be the case that, up front, we are unaware of the image of man we are obligated to protect, and we cannot in fact know this true image until having engaged in the two tasks of an ethics for the future. He says, "it is an anticipated *distortion* of man that helps us to detect that in the normative conception of man which is to be preserved from it" (Jonas, 1984, p. 26). Also, he claims that "we need the *threat* to the image of man – and rather specific kinds of

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threat – to assure ourselves of his true image by the very recoil from these threats"

(Jonas, 1984, pp. 26-7). Much like Kass' (1997) notion of the wisdom of

repugnance, it is the presence of this recoil that indicates to us that something

important is at stake. On this account, then, we may suspect that the final image of

man we will want to protect from encroaching enhancement technologies will not

be made clear to us until we have completed the task at hand and seen, in the final

count, what image of human flourishing – or *lack* thereof – crops up.

From this resultant image of man comes an "imperative of responsibility"

that for Jonas is absolute, but for us may only be suggestive (there is, after all, that

old world proverb about horses and water). However, having in mind the image or

idea of man acting as an account of "genuine human life", we can strongly advise

the following maxims: negatively, "Act so that the effects of your action are not

destructive of the future possibility of such life"; or, positively, "Act so that the

effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life"

(Jonas, 1984, p. 11). For our purposes, these maxims basically boil down to

"Don't undermine human flourishing by flying on the wings of posthuman (or

post-enhancement) dreams." It is my hope that this maxim may become action-

guiding – or at least desirably so – by the end of this dissertation.

Chapter 2

ENHANCEMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

The present chapter is essentially an exploration into the nature of 'enhancement'

technologies. I will begin by briefly outlining the general concept of

'enhancement' to which I will be responding throughout this dissertation, as well

as the key relevant beliefs of enhancement proponents as they relate to my overall

argument. My primary goal for that section is, by necessity of conciseness and

overall project relevance, not a thorough exploration into the explicit

methodologies of human enhancement (i.e. those means that are to be used in the

quest for human enhancement) or the specific target or targets of human

enhancement (i.e. that human feature at which enhancement is directed). I do not

question the (eventual) efficacy of biology, neurotechnology, nanotechnology and

so on to enable the sorts of enhancements that are being sought; nor do I

challenge the potential 'rightness' or 'wrongness' of any of the variable human

features – e.g. mind, body, performance, life span, and so on – that are said to be

the primary areas of human enhancement. I do not even engage in the, albeit,

meaningful discussion of whether allowing for human enhancement would

fundamentally dissolve or enable a more just world citizenship. For the most part,

I take it as a given that science and technology can ensure that the methods of

enhancement are essentially safe and effective; that ethical arguments closing off

certain human features from enhancement while at the same time promoting other

features, based solely on the virtue or the nature of the given feature itself, will

ultimately be wrought with logical peril; and that with sufficient finagling and force democracy and governance can keep human enhancement technologies from becoming simply one more means of keeping the have-nots under the golden foot of the haves (note that I am only saying that science, democracy, and so on potentially *can* ensure these things, not that they *will*.). I also concede to human enhancement proponents that, when considered by itself – that is, divorced of any particular theory of ethics, a thorough engagement with the associated methods, and a complete exploration into the myriad of potential consequences that might result from the enhancement – human enhancement may in fact be, by default, a *good* thing, something that ought to be sought for the betterment of individual humans and mankind at large. (Although I am generally suspicious of the genuine possibility of just such a complete divorce of human enhancement from some broader context, as well as skeptical that any resulting concept of 'enhancement' will be of much use. But, it is a concession nonetheless.)

I concede all of these things for three main reasons: First, in agreeing with human enhancement proponents on all these counts, I hope that I will absolve myself of the potential *ad hominem*s that I am, in point of fact, simply a "bioLuddite," "technopessimist," "bioconservative," and whatever other of the myriad of rhetorical attacks that have the habit of laying claim to anyone making arguments not entirely supportive of the enhancement program (see e.g. Hughes, 2004 and Naam, 2005 for some of the more colorful examples). Second, I concede the aforementioned because I actually *do believe* in the power of science and democracy, the logical pitfalls of certain forms of argumentation, and the

potential *prima facie* good of enhancement, at least as narrowly described above. Third, I concede all these points because my goal for the overall project is to provide an argument about the potential future consequences that may result even when we *do* concede these things to the human enhancement proponents. Herein I am not interested in what might happen should the enhancement program fail; rather, I am interested in what sort of damage might irreversibly be done to our world and to our species should the enhancement program *succeed*.

The remainder of the chapter will focus on setting up the sort of philosophy of technology that underpins my views. Drawn mainly from Langdon Winner (1986) and Hans Jonas (1979), this philosophy of technology holds that what we are faced with in the case of enhancement technologies are most arguably "inherently political", "modern" technologies that carry with them a Promethean impulse to structure the technological world and those who are in it to cater to the continued growth and expansion of said technology. I contrast this understanding of technology with the more innocuous one that I suspect probably underpins the views of many an enhancement proponent – much to their ideological detriment, and conclude the chapter with my final, overall view of enhancement technologies that will be the basis for part of my critique that will be seen in the concluding chapters.

Enhancement

With the prelude from the previous section in mind, the organization of this section is essentially as follows: First, I briefly describe – and critique – the notion of 'enhancement' as it is being used in the human enhancement debate. Next, I outline some of the main technologies and sciences utilized in the quest for human enhancement, namely nanotechnology, neuroscience, biology, and informatics. I then discuss some of the main targets of human enhancement: the human body, the human mind, the human life span, human performance, future children, and the nature of the human species. All three of these attempts at analyzing the notion of 'enhancement' with respect to human nature and human features will be fairly brief. It is my general hope (or perhaps merely *assumption*) that a number of my readers will already be sufficiently familiar with these aspects of the human enhancement debate that no more than a quick recap will be necessary; and for those readers who are not so familiar, I believe that they will be better served be reviewing the other sources I will highlight over the course of this section, since it is not my intention here to redo what others before me have already done so well. Moreover, I do not believe that extended discussion of any of these factors is necessary for the progression of my argument. In the end, the key relevant features of enhancement technologies as they pertain to my argument have little to do with the common-use definition, explicit technologies, or proposed targets; they have more to do with their political and Promethean nature, which will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. However, a brief

summary specific to the 'enhancement' part of 'enhancement technologies' may no doubt prove useful:

One way we can try to understand what is meant by the term 'enhancement' is to look at how that notion is used within the enhancement debate itself. However, this task is not as simple as it might first appear. As evidence of this disclaimer, consider the results of the Hastings Center two-year project aimed at articulating "A continuum of uses of 'enhancement technologies,' from those that promote shared values, to those that seem neither to promote nor threaten shared values, to those that threaten such values" (cited Parens, 1998, p. 1) to help guide policymakers, which showed that 'enhancement technologies' could not be defined so easily. During the study Parens discovered that in its common, colloquial usage, the role of the term 'enhancement' tended to serve one of two purposes. One purpose, he found, is a sort of polar place-holder that opposes 'treatment' in the "treatment/enhancement distinction" (Parens, 1998, p. 2). Parens (1998) exclaims that this use of 'enhancement' most frequently occurs "in conversations by people attempting to say what doctors, as doctors, should and shouldn't do or by people attempting to say what a just system of health insurance should and shouldn't provide" (p. 2). Thus, it is typically the sort of conversation that is "conducted, explicitly or implicitly, in terms of the proper goals of medicine," and is concerned "primarily that doctors might provide an intervention that would undermine the proper goals of the profession" (Parens, 1998, p. 2).

The second purpose – often by contrast, although occasionally in consort – is primarily concerned "that anyone who provided the intervention would be undermining extramedical, social goals or would be exacerbating already existing social problems" (Parens, 1998, p. 2). Although these two purposes can and sometimes do intertwine, the distinction itself is an important one to make. It is important because – more so at the time Parens was writing, but still to this day – a common understanding of what the 'problem' is with enhancement centers on the former interpretation of the purpose of 'enhancement'. While I do not intend to disregard the merits of discussion on the treatment/enhancement distinction (I instead fully support efforts made to clarify our understanding of used terminology and a more dedicated awareness of how we ought to interpret and uphold medical goals) I find the continued attempts to find a clear and present division between 'treatment' and 'enhancement' rather tedious, most likely futile, and an unpleasant distraction from the fact that there are other, perhaps more pressing, matters we should look to when evaluating the issue of enhancement.

Unfortunately, while the debate has progressed in its recognition and understanding of extramedical concerns viz a viz enhancement, the definitions of enhancement continue to be plagued by a more-or-less medical underpinning. One prototypical definition we find comes from enhancement enthusiast David Degrazia (2005), who defined enhancements as "interventions to improve human form or function that do not respond to genuine medical needs," where "medical needs" is defined: "in terms of disease, impairment, illness, or the life"; "as departures from normal (perhaps species-typical) functioning"; or "by reference

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to prevailing medical ideology" (p. 263). For Degrazia (2005), the hallmark of this particular conception is that it "identifies enhancements by the goal of improvement in the absence of medical need" (p. 263). In a similar vein, contemporary transhumanists – the current leading cult of enhancement – Julian Savulescu and Nick Bostrom (2011) consider the hallmark to be that "[h]uman enhancement aims to increase human capacities above normal levels" (preface). Both of these definition, however, require some account of what 'normal' is – whether 'medically' normal or 'species' normal – which the current state of the enhancement debate would seem to suggest is a fairly fruitless endeavor, leading either to reduction infinitum or reduction ad absurdum. Either way, it is a fairly precarious place to set one's Archimedean fulcrum.

Of course, the reduction problem aside, there seems to be need of *something* that distinguishes the fairly innocuous or uninteresting cases of enhancement (again, the exercise, the schools and the moral education) from those as wise to declare as (potentially) problematic. If , for example, Lin and Allhoff (2008) are correct in their understanding that, "Strictly speaking, "human enhancement" includes any activity by which we improve our bodies, minds, or abilities – things we do to enhance our welfare," then we would fall in a trap whereby "reading a book, eating vegetables, doing homework, and exercising may count as enhancing ourselves" (pp. 252-3). Thus it appears that *some* form of demarcation or delineation would indeed be beneficial.

Other ways to approach the notion of enhancement that are not taken in this dissertation are to look to the technologies of enhancement, of which the four

main technologies of enhancement – clustered affectionately under the acronym NBIC – are nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology and cognitive science; or to look at the targets of human enhancement, of which the key targets of the current enhancement include (in no particular order): choosing our bodies; choosing our minds; choosing our life spans; improving performance; choosing our children; and choosing our species.

Technology: Political

In his opus *The Whale and the Reactor: A Search for Limits in an Age of High Technology*, Langdon Winner (1986) laments, "At this late date" – actually over twenty years ago! – "in the development of our industrial/technological civilization the most accurate observation to be made about the philosophy of technology is that there really isn't one" (pp. 3-4). He points out that even though standard bibliographies chronicling philosophy of technology list "well over a thousand books and articles in several languages by nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors… reading through the material listed shows…little of enduring substance" (Winner, 1984, p. 4). What Winner found true then – and what is largely (and unfortunately) true now – is that much of the so-called "philosophy of technology" talk was primarily lip-service: "airy pronouncements", vague generalizations, and abbreviated commentary in footnotes or as discussion points. (We still see much of this trend in the talk of ethics with respect to emerging – and enhancement – technologies from works written by non-philosophers. And,

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occasionally, from philosophers.) What he found lacking were more "ambitious investigations" "examin[ing] critically the nature and significance of artificial aids to human activity" that might indicate that technology has "joined epistemology, metaphysics, esthetics, law, science, and politics as a fully respectable topic for philosophical inquiry" (Winner, 1986, p. 4).

Philosopher Hans Jonas (1979) forged a similar complaint. In "Toward a Philosophy of Technology," he wonders, "if there is a philosophy of science, language, history, and art; if there is social, political, and moral philosophy; philosophy of thought and of action, of reason and passion, of decision and value" then how is it possible that there is not a full-fledge philosophy of technology – "the focal fact of modern life?" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). Since, as he sees it, "Modern technology touches on almost everything vital to man's existence – material, mental, and spiritual" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34), it seems no small wonder that greater investigations have yet to take place, and that the questions it poses have not become central in the ethos of public conscience and public debate.

One explanation for why technology has remained the homely atticked stepchild of our philosophic family has to do with the potent hold that the notion of "progress" has over the minds of men and over society more generally. In response to the question, "Why is it that the philosophy of technology has never really gotten under way?" – or, more directly, "Why has a culture so firmly based upon countless sophisticated instruments, techniques, and systems remained so steadfast in its reluctance to examine its own foundations?" – Winner (1986) proposes that "[m]uch of the answer can be found in the astonishing hold the idea

of "progress" has exercised on social thought during the industrial age." (p. 5)

Since the beginning of the twentieth-century, it has been all but "taken for granted

that the only reliable sources for improving the human condition stem from new

machines, techniques, and chemicals" – that is, new technologies. Time and again

we "affirm that the next wave of innovations will surely be our salvation"

(Winner, 1986, p. 5), and even in the face of "the recurring environmental and

social ills that have accompanied technological advancement" (Winner, 1986, p.

5), our collective faith has never truly wavered in our gilded kine, and the lore and

allure of technological progress remains.

More so than this steadfast allure, however, Winner maintains that the

main reason for the absence of thoroughgoing technological analyses has to do

with our reliance on a faulty "default" view of technology. According to Winner

(1986), the "conventional idea of what technology is and what it means" (p. 6)

supports the social snubbing of any in-depth examination into the philosophical

nature of technology by supposing that "the human relationship to technical

things is too obvious to merit serious reflection" (p. 5). According to

"conventional views," this human-technology relationship is fairly basic:

scientists and engineers and inventors create certain technical artifacts, and the

general public uses said technical artifacts as they are deemed relevant. The

public is only peripherally concerned with the matter of technical making (such

as, e.g., by watching The Science Channel's "How Its Made"). As Winner (1986)

puts it, "How things work" is the domain of inventors, technicians, engineers,

repairmen, and the like who prepare artificial aids to human activity and keep

them in good working order" (p.5). As a result, "Those not directly involved in the various spheres of "making" are thought to have little interest in or need to know about the materials, principles, or procedures found in those spheres" (Winner, 1986, p. 5). This means that what matters, then, is not "How things work" but "Do they work" (and, I might add, "How cheaply can I/we get them?"), since in the end the public is primarily concerned with use (and price).

This "mere use" assumption is the driving force behind the "conventional idea" of technology. It is "understood to be a straightforward matter" that technology and its artifacts function essentially as tools to be used at our disposal: "One picks up a tool, uses it, and puts it down. One picks up a telephone, talks on it, and then does not use it for a time. A person gets on an airplane, flies from point A to point B, and then gets off" (Winner, 1986, p. 6) The idea here is that "[o]nce things have been made, we interact with them on occasion to achieve specific purposes" (Winner, 1986, p. 6). And, because of this sort of commonplace human-techno-artifact relation, Winner (1986) says, "The proper interpretation of the meaning of technology in the mode of use seems to be nothing more complicated than an occasional, limited, and nonproblematic interaction" (p. 6).

The descriptions of "occasional" and "limited" should be pretty straightforward. For "occasional," Winner has in mind that our conventional understanding of technology is such that we see its use as being typically infrequent, occurring only at a particular time when such use is needed. For example, I only interact with planes at such time as I am flying; I only interact

with phones at such time as I am conversing with someone on it; and I only interact with tools at such time as I am building, fixing, and so on in such a way that that tool is required. In most cases, these interactions are not seen as habitual, except with individuals who have careers that explicitly require more regular interaction. For "limited," Winner has in mind that our conventional understanding of technology is such that we see it as pertaining to a fairly narrow scope of our regular existence. This has a lot to do with being limited to use at specific occasions (as in the case of "occasional"); but, rather than being simply concerned with our use of technology (e.g. flying, phoning, hammering), it perhaps more importantly includes the idea that technology's power and influence over us (e.g. what influence does flying, phoning, or hammering have over *me*?) is limited as well (as in the case of "nonstructuring," which is described below).

In addition to being "occasional, limited, and nonproblematic", Winner adds to the conventional description of technology "innocuous" and "nonstructuring" (although it seems to me that these two are best considered as more fundamental parts to "nonproblematic"). By "innocuous" he does not mean to imply that the default view of technology is one where it can never be used for malicious purposes, or that bad things cannot occur in consequence to their application. Instead, the idea is that by supposing a "mere use" understanding we are proclaiming technology to be intrinsically morally neutral. His main idea here is that "The language of the notion of "use"…includes standard terms that enable us to interpret technologies in a range of moral contexts" (Winner, 1986, p. 6). Thus: "Tools can be "used well or poorly" and for "good or bad purposes"; I can

use my knife to slice a loaf of bread or to stab the next person that walks by"
(Winner, 1986, p. 6). Because of this indiscriminateness – this "promiscuous
utility" that "technological objects and processes" seem to have – the question of
a moral goodness or badness with respect to any given technology or
technological artifact is essentially rendered moot. To paraphrase the unofficial
slogan of the National Rifle Association: "Technologies don't harm people.
People harm people."

By "nonstructuring," Winner has in mind the idea that our (i.e. humans')
relationship with technology is essentially one-way: we create, modify, use, and
so on, technologies but technology does not create, modify, use, and so on, us
(this is part of their "limitedness," as described above). This aspect of the
conventional view of technology is "one of occasional human interaction with
devices and material conditions that leave individuals unaffected" (Winner, 1986,
p. 14); once I put my tool back in the toolbox, put down my phone, or exit the
plane, these technologies have no real bearing in my day-to-day life. Moreover, if
I lack a toolbox or phone or refuse to fly on planes, their presence in the world
and use by others can have no impact relevant to me. Ultimately, according to this
view, the structure of my own life is (almost) solely up to me, with technology
and its artifacts limited to the ambit.

However, when it comes to many of the technologies we face today,
especially enhancement technologies, to a great extent these particular aspects
(i.e. "occasional," "limited," "innocuous," and "nonstructuring") simply do not
apply. While we can and presumably do sometimes think of these tools, phones,

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planes, etc., as the sorts of things that once put out of sight hence become out

mind, the truth is that "[t]he kinds of things we are apt to see as "mere"

technological entities" – including the aforementioned tools, phones, and planes –

"become much more interesting and problematic if we begin to observe how

broadly they are involved in conditions of social and moral life" (Winner, 1986, p.

6). As Winner (1986) points out, "As they become woven into the texture of

everyday existence, the devices, techniques, and systems we adopt shed their tool-

like qualities to become part of our very humanity" (p. 12). Consequently, "In an

important sense we become the beings who work on assembly lines, who talk on

telephones, who do our figuring on pocket calculators, who eat processed foods,

who clean our homes with powerful chemicals" (Winner, 1986, p. 12). This

means that even the more seemingly innocent activities we engage in are not freed

from risk of technological reshaping. While Winner (1986) admits that things like

"working, talking, figuring, eating, cleaning, and such things have been parts of

human activity for a very long time," he maintains that "technological innovations

can radically alter these common patterns and on occasion generate entirely new

ones, often with surprising results" (p. 12). Thus, in the end, "the very act of using

the kinds of machines, techniques, and systems available to us generates patterns

of activities and expectations that soon become "second nature"" (Winner, 1986,

p. 11).

In addition to changing the fabric of the physical world that surrounds us,

technological changes also often impact the construction of our thought. For

example, Winner (1986) suggests that "[t]he introduction of a robot to industrial

workplace not only increases productivity, but often radically changes the process of production, redefining what "work" means in that setting" (p. 6). Similarly, "When a sophisticated new technique or instrument is adopted in medical practice, it transforms not only what doctors do, but also the ways people think about health, sickness, and medical care" (Winner, 1986, p. 6). Technology thereby has the power to alter our self-conception, which is a key part of why Winner (1986) exclaims, "If the experience of modern society shows us anything…it is that technologies are not merely aids to human activity, but also powerful forces acting to reshape that activity and its meaning" (p. 6). As such, "The crucial weakness of the conventional idea [of technology] is that it disregards the many ways in which technologies provide structure for human activity" (Winner, 1986, p. 6).

Given this power to shape and provide structure, Winner (1986) says, "the important question about technology becomes, As we "make things work," what kind of *world* are we making?" (p. 17). This means that we need to pay attention to the whole gambit of technological effects, including the "psychological, social, and political conditions" that come about as "part of any significant technical change" (Winner, 1986, p. 17). Given this range of consequences to our technological choices, we are burdened with a much greater responsibility than our forebears, meaning that from the outset we need to ask ourselves such questions as: "Are we going to design and build circumstances that enlarge possibilities for growth in human freedom, sociability, intelligence, creativity, and

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self-government? Or are we headed in an altogether different direction?" (Winner, 1986, p. 17). Hence, we need to ask ourselves political questions.

According to Winner (1986), incorporating a political perspective into our understanding of technology helps to fight against the view of "naïve technological determinism – the idea that technology develops as the sole result of an internal dynamic and then, unmediated by any other influence, molds society to fit its patterns" (p. 21). Since, as Winner (1986) points out, "Those who have not recognized the ways in which technologies are shaped by social and economic forces have not gotten very far" (p. 21), a sort of "technological politics" would appear to be necessary. However, there is a decided danger in tipping the scales entirely to the other pole since taken literally this "technology as politics" "suggests that technical *things* do not matter at all" (Winner 1986, p. 21). Hence, "Once one has done the detective work necessary to reveal the social origins – power holders behind a particular instance of technological change – one will have explained everything of importance" (Winner, 1986, p. 21). This implies that "What matters is not technology itself, but the social or economic system in which it is embedded" (Winner, 1986, p. 20): a naïve political determinism that is no improvement over naïve technological determinism. Because of this inherent danger in sliding to the extreme of pure political determinism, Winner (1986) suggests that the politicized view of technology act as "complement to, rather than a replacement for, theories of the social determination of technology," thereby allowing us to identify "certain technologies as political phenomena in their own right" (p. 22).

For Winner (1986), those technologies that are "political phenomena in their own right" are ultimately "inherently political technologies" (p. 22). Using the definition of politics as "arrangements of power and authority in human associations as well as the activities that take place within those arrangements," Winner (1986) offers two distinct types of political technologies: technologies that are "inventively" political and technologies that are "inherently" political (p. 22). The former class of technologies includes "instances in which the invention, design, or arrangement of a specific technical device or system becomes a way of settling an issue in the affairs of a particular community" (Winner, 1986, p. 22). These sorts of technologies are basically political by accident, or by mere happening. They become political because "specific features in the design or arrangement of [them as] a device could provide a convenient means of establishing patterns of power and authority in a given setting" (Winner, 1986, p. 38). An example would include an airplane and aerospace technology, which at its origin existed primarily as a scientific feat; that this technology has been used in the creation of missiles and dedicated in large part to warfare and other forms of political skirmish comes as an aftermath. These sorts of technologies are also in a meaningful sense independent of the underlying political system in which they happen to be found; airplanes can feasibly exist whether in a capitalist or a communist system, a utopia or an anarchy.

The latter class of technologies includes cases of what Winner (1986) calls "inherently political technologies," namely, "man-made systems that appear to require or to be strongly compatible with particular kinds of political

relationships" (p. 22). Unlike airplanes which, as a technology, appear to be at least somewhat politically promiscuous, inherently political technologies require certain underlying social and political conditions in order to come into being. An example offered by Winner – perhaps a touchy carry-over of post Cold War mentality – is the atomic bomb. According to Winner (1986), "As long as it exists at all, its lethal properties demand that it be controlled by a centralized, rigidly hierarchical chain of command closed to all influences that might make its working unpredictable" (p. 34). This means that "[t]he internal social system of the bomb must be authoritarian; there is no other way" (Winner, 1986, p. 34). Moreover, this "state of affairs stands as a practical necessity independent of any larger political system in which the bomb is embedded [and] independent of the type of regime or character of its rulers" (Winner, 1986, p. 34). Thus, unlike the airplane which could presumably exist with a non-centralized government or even no government at all, atomic weapons *require* a strong, powerful, centralized political "ruler" of sorts to create and sustain them; As Winner (1986) would say, "there is no other way" (p. 34).

When we turn to the example of enhancement technologies, it appears that we will most likely be dealing with another inherently political technology. It is, after all, hard to imagine how this technology can be developed and become widespread without massive government backing and government control (this, indeed, was part of Bertrand Russell's (1924) key concern in "Icarus, or, the Future of Science," responding to JBS Haldane's (1923) far more cheerful outlook on the "gifts" of science and "man's divine faculties of reason and

imagination" in "Daedalus, or, Science and the Future."). Thus, we may be

looking at our age's version of the atomic bomb – an inherently political

technology that has in a very real sense dissipated the "default" notion of

technology as "occasional," "limited," "innocuous," and "nonstructuring",

because the very fact that a given technology is "inherently political" renders such

propitious notions moot.

For this reason, technologies that smack of being "inherently political" are

inherently more problematic. Winner (1986) admits that "[i]t is true that not every

technological innovation embodies choices of great significance"; in fact, "[s]ome

developments are more-or-less innocuous [and] many create only trivial

modifications in how we live" (p. 17). This, however, is not true of inherently

political technologies, whose modifications are never trivial. Particularly

problematic is that fact that rather than being themselves "limited" technologies,

they are very powerful technologies that severely limit *us* in terms of the decision

power we have in their governing. According to Winner (1986), in any "given

category of technological change there are, roughly speaking, two kinds of

choices that can affect the relative distribution of power, authority, and privilege

in a community" (p. 27). In most cases, "the crucial decision is a simple "yes or

no" choice – are we going to develop and adopt the thing or not" (Winner, 1986,

p. 27). With this first decision typically comes a "second range of choices, equally

critical in many instances, [which] has to do with specific features in the design or

arrangement of a technical system after the decision to go ahead with it has

already been made" (Winner, 1986, p. 28). This second set of decisions offers a

way of checking the first decision, modifying it as may be deemed necessary. It ideally allows us to assure that no technological decision is absolutely final, and grants us some semblance of comfort in knowing that we still have a remarkable degree of control over its outcome.

However, this control in safeguarding ourselves from technology run amok is far less present with inherently political technologies. "Here," Winner (1986) says, "the initial choice about whether or not to adopt something is decisive in regard to its consequences [because there] are no alternative physical designs or arrangements that would make a significant difference" (p. 38). Moreover, there tend to be "no genuine possibilities for creative intervention by different social…that could change the intractability of the entity or significantly alter the quality of its political effects" (Winner, 1986, p. 38). Winner does seem at times to equivocate on how truly intractable inherently political technologies are. For example, he admits that "It is still true that in a world in which human beings make and maintain artificial systems nothing is "required" in an absolute sense" (Winner, 1986, p. 38). However, he hedges against this admission by maintaining that "once a course of action is under way…the kinds of reasoning that justify the adaptation of social life to technical requirements pop up as spontaneously as flowers in the spring" (Winner, 1986, p. 38). Meaning, of course, that for all our thoughts of "creative intervention" and "alternative design," the design that best suits the given technology ultimately will out; and, whether genuinely intractable or not, for all *practical* purposes the initial yes-no decision is the final decision over which we have any real control.

From this realization Winner proposes a sort of heuristic perspective on the potential (or perhaps likely) political and social outlook resulting from a given technological innovation. Similar to the suggestions from chapter 1 on an ethics for the future, Winner (1986) asks us to "suppose that every political philosophy in a given time implies a technology or a set of technologies in a particular pattern for its realization" and also "recognize that every technology of significance to us implies a set of political commitments that can be identified if one looks carefully enough" (p. 52). This means that "[w]hat appear to be merely instrumental choices are better seen as choices about the form of social and political life a society builds, choices about the kinds of people we want to become" (Winner, 1986, p. 52).

In the end, what Winner (1986) wants is for us to keep in mind throughout the process of technological adoption and, if possible, technological change, is: "What forms of technology are compatible with the kind of society we want to build?" (p. 52). The idea is that a society should at least attempt "to guide its sociotechnical development according to self-conscious, critically evaluated standards of form and limit" (Winner, 1986, p. 54), recognizing that with the "substantial investment of social resources" and potentially unforgiving consequences, "it always pays to ask in advance about the qualities of the artifacts, institutions, and human experiences currently on the drawing board" (Winner, 1986, p. 18). Moreover, if upon reviewing some plan currently on the drawing board "it is clear that the social contract implicitly created by implementing a particular generic variety of technology is incompatible with the

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kind of society we deliberately choose" – meaning, more pointedly, that "we are confronted with an inherently political technology of an unfriendly sort" – then, we are duty-bound to recognize that "that kind of device or system ought to be excluded from society altogether" (Winner, 1986, p. 55). As with the "ethics for the future" discussed in chapter 1, the idea here is that if the "image of man" – here understood largely in political and societal terms – is to come under threat with a potential future resulting from a given technologies, then we are duty-bound to protect this image from the supposed future by barring the possibility of said technology taking root.

Technology: Promethean

Using Jonas' analysis and terminology, the conventional view of technology that was presented in the previous section is most likely a carry-over of how we tend (or tended) to view "old" or "traditional" technologies. For Jonas (1979), one of the defining features of "earlier technology" is that it "was a possession and a state" (p. 34). We could "roughly describe technology [at that time] as comprising the use of artificial implements for the business of life, together with their original invention, improvement, and occasional additions" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). Thus, they were viewed as mere technological entities: occasional, limited, innocuous, nonstructuring. Moreover, Jonas (1979) maintains, this "tranquil description" – while perfectly apt for "most of technology through mankind's career (with which

it is coeval)" – is no longer adequate for the "new" or "modern" technologies with which we are confronted (p. 34).

The source of this inadequacy can largely be accounted for by the change in the "formal dynamics" of technology from the past to the present. According to Jonas, there are two main thematic approaches we can take in analyzing technology: "formal" and "material." The formal approach analyzes "the *formal dynamics* of technology as a continuing collective enterprise, which advances by its own "laws of motion"" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). It "considers technology as an abstract whole of movement" and seeks "to grasp the pervasive "process properties" by which modern technology propels itself – through our agency to be sure – into ever-succeeding and superceding novelty" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). The material approach analyzes "the *substantive content* of technology in terms of the things it puts into human use, the powers it confers, the novel objectives it opens up or dictates, and the altered manner of human action by which these objectives are realized" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). It "considers its concrete uses and their impact on our world and our lives" and "[looks] at the species of novelties themselves, their taxonomy, as it were, and [tries] to make out how the world furnished with them looks" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). Corresponding with both of these approaches is "[a] third, overarching theme [of] the *moral* side of technology as a burden on human responsibility, especially its long-term effects on the global condition of man and environment" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34); regardless of the approach chosen – formal or material – Jonas believes that the technology analysis includes (or at least ought to include) a moral component.

While the material approach would be useful if our intention was simply to analyze the use and impact of particular, concrete technologies or technical artifacts (e.g. nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, cognitive science, and so on), since our plan is to understand and critique "enhancement technologies" as a whole, we are better served by utilizing the formal approach, which allows us to look at the collective enterprise. In keeping with this approach, Jonas (1979) identifies four "manifest traits" of modern technology – of which enhancement technology is a prime example – from traditional technology: a tendency towards ever-increasing expansion and improvement; a quick spread of knowledge and practice; a circular relationship between means and ends; and an inherent idolization of "progress" (p. 35).

Considering the first trait – the tendency towards ever-increasing expansion and improvement – this tendency opposes the tendency of traditional technologies towards equilibrium and stasis. "In the past," according to Jonas (1979), "a given inventory of tools and procedures used to be fairly constant, tending toward a mutually adjusting stable equilibrium of ends and means" (p. 34). Moreover, once this "stable equilibrium" was achieved, it "represented for lengthy periods an unchallenged optimum of technical competence" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). While he admits that technological revolutions occurred (e.g. stone age to bronze age, bronze age to iron age, etc.), he maintains that they happen "more by accident than by design" (Jonas, 1979, p. 34). Discounting such rarities as outward-enforced technological upheavals and unconscious "revolutions", "the great classical civilizations had comparatively early reached a point of

technological saturation", an ""optimum" in equilibrium of means with acknowledged needs and goals [with] little cause later to go beyond it" (Jonas, 1979, pp. 34-5). The rule for traditional technology was that "convention reigned supreme" and "[p]rogress…if it occurred at all…was by inconspicuous increments to a universally high level that still excites our admiration and, in historical fact, was more liable to regression than to surpassing" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). By contrast, modern technology tends to not approach equilibrium or a saturation point. Instead, it tends to "give rise, if successful, to further steps in all kinds of direction" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). Thus, instead of a situation like the mere transition from bronze to iron followed by relative stability, we have a situation like the introduction of the first airplane, which leads to new missile research, new conceptions of travel and leisure, ever bigger and better and faster airplanes, and so on.

The second "manifest trait" of modern technology that differentiates it from traditional technology is the pace at which technical know-how and practice is spread and adopted. According to Jonas (1979), traditional technologies (if desirable) were often heavily guarded secrets that were therefore unable to spread between cultures or communities because no pathways were accessible for such information transfer, and the tendency was for technology to remain a fairly localized phenomenon that spread only infrequently and in such cases usually by brute force. Still, the more likely outcome was to simply languish and fizzle like "Alexandrian mechanics" than be transferred to a more universal status. By contrast, however, with modern technology "[e]very technical innovation is sure

to spread quickly through the technological world community, as also do theoretical discoveries in the sciences" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35) According to Jonas (1979), the fast spread of technological knowledge is "guaranteed by the universal intercommunication that is itself part of the technological complex"; and the spread of practical technological adoption is "enforced by the pressure of competition" (p. 35). Combined, we have a technology with a "quasi-automatic compulsion" (Jonas, 1979, p. 41) towards self-replication, self-expansion, and extended, mass adoption.

For the third formal trait – the relationship between means and ends – Jonas states that the key distinction between old technologies and new technologies is that with the former this relationship was unilinear, but with the latter it is circular. By unilinear, Jonas simply means that from the perspective of traditional technology, technical artifacts solely (or at least primarily) served as means to some end; hammers exist to pound nails, phones exist so people can call one another, planes exist to transport people from point A to point B via flight, and so on. However, from the perspective of modern technology "new technologies may suggest, create, even impose new ends, never before conceived, simply by offering their feasibility" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). These new technologies "[add] to the very objectives of human desires, including objectives for technology itself" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). Thus, we have the "dialectics of circularity" inherent in modern technology, where once these technologies are "incorporated into the socioeconomic demand diet," whatever ends they fulfilled soon change from luxuries to "necessities of life," thereby setting technology the

task of further perfecting the means of realizing them" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). In the end, the supposed "mere" means, the "mere technological entities" begin suggesting – and even *imposing* – their own ends.

The fourth and final main trait of modern technology that Jonas points to is the ideology of progress. While with traditional technology progress more or less *happened*, with modern technology it is a goal – "an inherent drive which acts willy-nilly in the formal automatics of its *modus operandi* as it interacts with society" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). On Jonas' account (1979), "progress" is actually a descriptive term rather than a value term, because we can "resent the fact and despise its fruits" (p. 35); hence, progress need not be liked (or likeable). However, it is more than mere "change," since in terms of technology "a later stage is always…*superior* to the preceding stage" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). With modern technologies what we find is an "internal motion of a system [which] left to itself and not interfered with…leads to ever "higher," not "lower" states of itself." The upshot slogan becomes "Technology is destiny" (Jonas, 1979, p.35), and with this slogan comes newfound utopianism.

According to Jonas (1979), "the pull of the quasi-utopian *vision* of an ever better life, whether vulgarly conceived or nobly" becomes a "motive force…autonomous and spontaneous" (p. 36). Whether these visions of "the American dream" and "the revolution of rising expectations" drive the technological ideology or progress, or whether they come as a result of this ideology, is unclear (Jonas, 1979, p. 36). But the fact that it plays a role is undeniable. As such, it is "moot to what extent the vision itself is *post hoc* rather

than *ante hoc*, that is, instilled by the dazzling feats of a technological progress already underway and thus more a response to than a motor of it" (Jonas, 1979, p. 36); the important point is not which came first, technological progress or utopian fantasies, but that once both are present and centrally positioned they propel one another forward in an ever increasing, demanding fashion.

Corresponding with all four of these key changes in the formal dynamics of technology from traditional to modern is a change in the fundamental attitude surrounding such technology. Freed from the chains of equilibrium, slowness, unilinearity, and progress-neutral ideology, the Behemoth of modern technology casts our bearings towards uncharted – and indeed *dark* – waters. What we see now is a sort of Promethean drift in the technological mindset. It is Promethean with respect to both artifact and agent. For artifact, the transition from traditional technology to modern technology and the subsequent freeing from the chains imposed by pre-modern society represents a transition from technology as our "humble servant" to technology as an "enterprise" (Jonas, 1979, p. 35). The so-called – or rather *former* – "mere technological entities" have come to "dominate our lives in fact", and also instill in us "a belief in [their] being of predominant worth" (Jonas, 1979, p. 38). Thus, the "sheer grandeur" of the modern technological enterprise "tends to establish *itself* as the transcendent end," and, in doing so "casts its spell on the modern mind" (Jonas, 1979, p. 38).

By changing its own status to "predominant" and "transcendent" end, modern technology also alters the status of mankind. According to Jonas (1979), "at its most modest, this change in modern technology's status "means elevating

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homo faber to the essential aspect of man" (p. 38). However, "at its most extravagant," this change in statues "means elevating *power* to the position of his dominant and interminable goal" (Jonas, 1979, p. 38). This means the difference between man who happens to be tool-bearer (non-Promethean), man who is essentially a tool-bearer (moderately Promethean), and man who is necessarily a tool-bearer *and* a tool-seeker (extravagantly Promethean). At this most extravagant end, the chief vocation of man" is "[t]o become ever more masters of the world, to advance from power to power, even if only collectively and perhaps no longer by choice" (Jonas, 1979, p. 38).

While it is not necessarily the position of Winner or Jonas, I strongly suspect that this modern Prometheanism is largely responsible for the fact that technology is no longer "innocuous." We have already witnessed "limited," "occasional" and "nonstructuring" basically fly out the window with fast-spreading, disequilibriating, circular "progress", but the true source of our loss of (alleged) technological innocence is, to my mind, not so much the change in these "manifest traits" of the formal dynamics of technology itself; instead, it is more accurately the result of the change in our attitude as technological agents and the Promethean drift of the technological enterprise that comes *about* from this change in formal dynamics. In particular, with this Promethean drift the power dynamics in our world have radically shifted. While with traditional technology man's power over others – and especially over nature – was extremely limited, "[m]odern technology has introduced actions of such novel scale, objects, and consequences that the framework of former ethics can no longer contain them"

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(Jonas, 1984, p. 6). Jonas (1984) points in particular to "the critical vulnerability of nature to man's technological intervention – unsuspected before it began to show itself in damage already done" (p. 6). With this damage came to light the fact that "the nature of human action had *de facto* changed, and that an object of an entirely new order – no less than the whole biosphere of the planet – has been added to what we must be responsible for because of our power over it" (Jonas, 1984, p. 7). Contra *Antigone*'s famous Chorus (lines 335-370) suggesting awestruck accolade, we now have a sense of foreboding: the Earth does indeed become wearied, because man – "clever beyond all dreams" and armed with "inventive craft" – has worn Her down with ploughs of power she could not anticipate.

In addition to penetrating more deeply into Nature's once mighty core, man's technological prowess pervades time and space in a heretofore unprecedented fashion. For one thing, as Jonas (1984) points out, "The containment of nearness and contemporaneity is gone, swept away by the spatial spread and time span of the case-effect trains which technological practice sets afoot, even when undertaken for proximate ends" (p. 7). Due to its quick spreading speed and disequilibriating compulsion to amass innovation, we find that even the slightest advance or technical application can affect individuals (or other parts of nature) far away in terms of space or time, and set into motion things unforeseen in terms of proximate ends. Jonas adds to this the "aggregate magnitude" and frequent "irreversibility" of technological decisions in terms of their consequences; Pandora's box, once opened, will not again contain whatever

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evils we might – however accidentally – release into the world. And those evils will come to band together, spawning newer, greater evils. The result, Jonas (1984) says, is "that the situation for later subjects and their choices of action will be progressively different from that of the initial agent and ever more the fated product of what was done before" (p. 7) As we saw with Winner and inherently political technologies, later choices down the line become less and less efficacious, if they exist at all.

Couple with this the fact that the Promethean man will most likely *want* to open the box. For all the noble visions of what technology is and what it can achieve, festering beneath the surface is a much darker ambition, the sort of "Faustian soul" innate in Western culture, that drives it, nonrationally, to infinite novelty and unplumbed possibilities for their own sake" (Jonas, 1979, p. 36). No fear of Mephistopheles is enough to halt the juggernaut of progress, and once started, Prometheanism in the realm of modern technology cannot be undone: technology will compel it, and man will chose it, making it a self-fulfilling prophecy. This ultimately is "[t]he danger [derived] from the excessive dimensions of the scientific-technological-industrial civilization" otherwise known as "the Baconian program" – which "aim[s] knowledge at power over nature [and utilizing] power over nature for the improvement of the human lot"; and carries with it "intrinsic and self-reinforcing dynamics, necessarily propelling into extravagance of production and consumption" (Jonas, 1984, p. 140). Our "danger of disaster [wrought from] attending the Baconian ideal of power over nature through scientific technology arises not so much from any shortcomings of

its performance as from the magnitude of its success" (Jonas, 1984, p. 140); and "succeed" it will with the Promethean attitude propelling it onward. All the Gretchens of the world be damned.

Conclusion

So, what does all of this mean for enhancement technologies? With respect to the 'enhancement' part, we can devise a pragmatic understanding of what such technologies are: those technologies that use the right underlying technical and scientific expertise (e.g. nanotechnology, biotechnology, information technology, cognitive science, and other related sciences and technologies not discussed in this chapter), target the right sort of 'human' area (e.g. choosing our bodies; choosing our minds; choosing our life spans; improving performance; choosing our children; choosing our species; and other potentially related targets not mentioned herein), and endeavor to bring this target above the "mean" or "normal", however this is to be understood given the time and society in which we find ourselves. With respect to 'technology', we have an image wherein enhancement technologies are the sort that will likely (if not *inevitably*) be "inherently political" and "modern", and carry with them a strong Promethean impulse; thus, they will be politically, societally, and ideologically structuring so as to make themselves the transcendent end of our technological action, and will, once instituted, carry with them an (almost) unstoppable power.

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Chapter 3

COMMODIFICATION

Having just culminated our discussion of enhancement primarily as a technology,

we will now be considering enhancement primarily as an ideology. As stated in

chapter 1, I take this enhancement ideology to arguably be in the majority of cases

an ideology of commodification. The only counter-example I can in fact devise

(which is outside the purview of this dissertation and which I will therefore not

discuss here) occurs on Zarathustran grounds. There is already a sense in the

literature surrounding the human enhancement debate that the enhancement

attitude is potentially wrong because it is dehumanizing (see e.g. Habermas 2003;

Kass 2003; President's Council 2003). However, recent scholarship in psychology

has shown that this concept of 'dehumanization' is markedly imprecise in its

common usage (see e.g. Haslam, 2006; Haslam et al, 2005; Leyens et al, 2000;

Leyens et al, 2001), and imprecise in its usage in the enhancement debate as well

(see Wilson and Haslam, 2009). As such, I believe that we are better served by

using a more technical term lacking such colloquial connotative difficulties; and

we find such a term with 'commodification' (and as we will see later in this

chapter, it is deeply connected with dehumanization).

In contemporary discussion of commodification, 'commodification' is

typically associated with an understood or implied relationship between what we

term 'commodities' and the economic market. For example, in the introduction to

her book *Contested Commodities* Margaret Radin (1996) states that a major

difficulty that arises within the debate on commodification is its challenge to our understanding of "the appropriate scope of the market" (p. xi). Likewise, Ivan Cohen (2003) proclaims that a primary goal of the commodification debate is to determine "a principled line between what can and cannot be permissibly sold" – i.e. what can and cannot legitimately be placed within the context market (p. 689). Similar scholars, Donna Dickenson (2007) and Nancy Schepher-Hughes (2001), hold that in order to designate some thing a 'commodity' it is necessary that that thing have some sort of "exchange value" (Dickenson, 2007, p. 29), particularly as a "token of economic exchange" (Schepher-Hughes, 2001, p. 2). While I am sympathetic to this tendency to understand commodification in terms of market association and recognize its prominence in the literature to date, I believe that commodification is best understood as being much more general.

My reasons for this belief are two-fold: First, when we look at the matter of commodification from an anthropological perspective, we see that the nature of a 'commodity' is quite fluid across time and cultures, and in degree of market infiltration; thus, as point of empirical fact, 'commodity' as it exists in the real world is not as narrow as 'object of economic value' or 'object subject to market exchange'. Second, when we look at the matter of commodification from a bioethical perspective *specifically* with respect to humans, we see that the perceived threat of commodification is not limited to an actual market relationship. Bioethicists themselves believe that it can exist when there is solely market rhetoric or the treatment of a person or personal good in a way sufficiently similar to a market commodity that the effect is functionally the same as if it were

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part of an actual market relationship; thus, the presence of an actual market relationship or exchange value does not appear to be the primary morally relevant feature for their understanding of 'commodification' either.

In order to motivate and explain this more nuanced understanding of commodification I will first present the classical anthropological understanding of commodification by focusing on the works of two key commodification theorists in the field, Arjun Appadurai and Igor Kopytoff, adding an addendum to the theory from contemporary anthropologist Lesley Sharp. Next, I present the bioethical understanding of commodification as it pertain to humans by focusing on those scholars whose work seems to set the benchmark for the field, Elizabeth Anderson and Margaret Radin. I will then bring the best of these theories together to build a final, more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (or phenomena?) of commodification, and explain its relation to the enhancement attitude.

Anthropological Perspective

According to cultural anthropologist and social economist Arjun Appadurai (1986) – whose classic theory of commodification remains influential for modern anthropologists, and even some modern philosophers – we should view commodities not so much as a specific class of objects – namely, e.g., objects of economic value – but rather as objects with a certain kind of "social potential" (p. 6). Appadurai (1986) says that even though most contemporary uses of the term

'commodities' refers to "special kinds of manufactured goods (or services), which are associated only with capitalist modes of production" (p. 7), we should nonetheless define 'commodities' as "objects of economic value" only provisionally, if at all (p. 3). Insofar as commodities are thought to be distinct from more seemingly value-neutral things – e.g. 'objects', 'goods', 'products', 'services', and so on – Appadurai maintains that this perceived distinction is nothing more than the result of our own judgment (or judgments) imposed on the thing in question. In other words, from his anthropological perspective there is no inherent property in what we term 'commodity' that makes it a commodity; instead, there is only the individual or collective judgment being made that what we have is in fact a commodity. Thus, it is the "social potential" for something to be perceived as a commodity that is ultimately its distinguishing feature.

Because he believes that things are not commodities in virtue of themselves, but rather commodities only in virtue of being – and to the extent that they *are* – perceived as such, Appadurai (1986) considers the question, "What is a commodity?" to be superfluous. Instead, he says we should analyze the related question, "What sort of exchange is commodity exchange?" (p. 9). To do this we need to consider what he calls the 'commodity situation', which he describes as follows: "*the commodity situation in the social life of any "thing"* [is] *defined as the situation in which its exchangeability (past, present, or future) for some other thing is its socially relevant feature*" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 13) Thus, by changing our question in this manner we manage to move from thinking about commodities *per se* to thinking about commodities as functions of social judgment.

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This commodity situation is further broken down into three components for any particular commodity: First, there is the commodity *phase* of a thing, which is a temporal feature, consisting of the time during which exchangeability is one of that thing's socially relevant features. Second, there is the commodity *candidacy* of a thing, which is more of a "conceptual feature", consisting of "the standards and criteria (symbolic, classificatory, and moral) that define the exchangeability of things in any particular social and historical context" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 14). According to Appadurai, this feature is fundamentally culture-dependent, since the values and criteria that designate a particular thing as being exchangeable can and do vary across time and cultures. Third, there is the commodity *context* of a thing, which refers to the different social transactions in which a thing's exchangeability is either stated or implied, thereby linking that thing's commodity candidacy with its commodity phase. These three features basically represent the when, why, and where of a given thing's state as a (perceived) commodity.

With these three features in mind, Appadurai claims that there are some things that are more or less "quintessential commodities." He says, "To the degree that some things in a society are frequently to be found in the commodity phase, to fit the requirements of commodity candidacy, and to appear in a commodity context, they are its quintessential commodities" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 15). Thus, the sorts of manufactured goods and services that we most commonly associate with commodification because of their frequency and degree of infiltration in the market would be deemed quintessential commodities because they fulfill all three

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of Appadurai's criteria to a very high degree. Moreover, on a societal level, "[t]o the degree that many or most things in a society sometimes meet these criteria, the society may be said to be highly commoditized" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 15). Thus, on this view, if a society contains a very high number or percentage of "quintessential commodities" then that particular society is a highly commoditized society.

Appadurai also presents four different types of commodities, based on Jacques Maquet's (1971) analysis. First, there are "commodities by destination", which are "objects intended by their producers principally for exchange" (cited Appadurai, 1986, p. 16). Examples of this would be goods that are manufactured primarily (if not solely) for the purpose of being sold by the manufacturer. Second, there are "commodities by metamorphosis," which are "things intended for other uses that are placed into the commodity state" (cited Appadurai, 1986, p. 16). Examples of this may include gifts or items of sentimental value, such as a watch your grandmother gave you with the intention of it being a cherished heirloom, but which you instead decide to sell and place in the market. Third, there is "a special, sharp case of commodities by metamorphosis" which are "commodities by diversion, objects placed into a commodity state though originally specifically protected from it" (cited Appadurai, 1986, p. 16). These include by and large the "contested commodities" discussed further in the next section of this chapter, such as (per classic cases) prostitution, baby-selling, and so on. Finally, there are "ex-commodities," which are "things retrieved, either temporarily or permanently, from the commodity state and placed in some other

state" (cited Appadurai, 1986, p. 16). Classic examples of this include works of art, where once purchased the owner or proprietor tends to view it with aesthetic intentions, rather than exchange intentions.

These four types of commodities help to illustrate the fact that commodification is not simply limited to a thing being commodified or non-commodified (as is, unfortunately, the popular breakdown in many analyses of commodification); instead, there are far more nuances that allow us to analyze commodification and commodities for potential moral or social problems. In particular, there is the special emphasis on the third type of commodity: commodities by diversion. The reason Maquet and Appadurai place special emphasis on this type is because "[t]he diversion of commodities from specified paths is always a sign of creativity or crisis" (Appadurai, 1986, p. 26). In particular, the diversion of something from being protected from commodification to being actively commodified carries with it, for us, great cause for concern. While Appadurai thinks that the sort of crisis that moves something from being commodification-protected to commodified is typically economic (e.g. resulting from famine or bankruptcy) and occasionally aesthetic (such as with a change in taste for artistic creations and other sorts of memorabilia), I believe that the main sort of crisis for our purposes in understanding commodification of humans and human goods is going to be a moral one, rather than merely an economic or aesthetic one.

I do, however, have two caveats to the aforementioned: First, there are, I believe, genuine instances where the primary crisis motivating the

commodification of a previously non-commodified good is indeed an economic one, such as, for example, prostitution and baby-selling, in which typically the individual involved in the sex or baby selling is brought to that point due to an economic hardship and themselves consider the selling of the "good" involved morally problematic. Second, I can imagine cases in which what I will claim is the commodification of something importantly human is motivated by aesthetics, such as, for example, persons engaging in specific forms of body modification, genetic modification, and so on, for the purposes of fulfilling some aesthetic ideal. These caveats aside, as we are dealing with the moral issue of commodification I will presume that it is an underlying moral crisis that is the primary motivation for the cases of commodification under consideration for the majority of this dissertation.

To explore more thoroughly this sort of moral crisis, we will now look at the work of another prominent theorist of the anthropological understanding of commodification: Igor Kopytoff. According to Kopytoff (1986), commodities are like persons: they each have individual histories or narratives, and in order to understand their place or role in society we need to look at that narrative. He claims that while "[f]or the economist, commodities simply are", for the cultural anthropologist any commodity has a corresponding "biography" that tracks its movement within the society and culture in which it is found (p. 64). The idea here is that in any given culture, the "production of commodities" is not simply an economic or material process; it is also a "cultural and cognitive" one, where the 'commodity' must be "culturally marked" as such. As with Appadurai, Kopytoff's

cultural anthropological perspective holds that a thing's status as 'commodity' is highly nuanced. For Appadurai, this includes a when (the "commodity phase"), a why (the "commodity candidacy"), and a where (the "commodity context"). Kopytoff continues this sort of analysis with a temporal aspect, wherein "the same thing may be treated as a commodity at one time and not at another"; a conceptual aspect, wherein "commodities must be…culturally marked as being a certain kind of thing"; and arguably adds to the commodity context an element of who, by noting that "the same thing may, at the same time, be seen as a commodity by one person and as something else by another" (p. 64). Here we again see the emphasis with anthropologists viewing the state of being a 'commodity' as not fixed, but highly fluid and dependent upon a number of external factors.

In light of this fluidity, however, Kopytoff maintains that there are still specific moments in which a thing is more or less essentially a commodity. He defines a commodity as "a thing that has use value and that can be exchanged in a discrete transaction for a counterpart, the very fact of exchange indicating that the counterpart has, in the immediate context, an equivalent value" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 68). In fact, it is only at this time of exchange when the status of something as a commodity is uncontroversial: he states, "The only time when the commodity status of a thing is beyond question is the moment of actual exchange" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 83). However, since the act of commodification exists at a discrete time, this allows for the thing or things involved to then be 'decommoditized' afterwards (Kopytoff, 1986, p.69). For this reason, much like Appadurai who believes that commodification is best viewed as some sort of "social potential",

Kopytoff (1986) thinks that commodification "is best looked upon as a process of becoming rather than as an all-or-none state of being" (p. 73).

According to Kopytoff's view, we can provisionally divide the world into two kinds of things: commoditized and decommoditized (which he alternately refers to as "singularized"). However, since in the real world there are in fact neither perfectly commoditized nor perfectly singular things, this provisional division of the world between commodities and non-commodities is best viewed as existing along a continuum rather than as an all-or-nothing state (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 87). Setting up a sort of dichotomized spectrum ranging from perfectly commoditized things (namely, those "that [are] exchangeable with anything and everything else") to perfectly decommoditized (or "singular") things (namely, things that are exchangeable with nothing else), Kopytoff argues that the world is best viewed as a collection of forces attempting to move the various things of the world along this continuum. "Although the singular and the commodity are opposites," he says, "no thing ever quite reaches the ultimate commodity end of the continuum between them. There are no perfect commodities" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 87). Correspondingly, there are no perfect singulars. But, he points out that the "exchange function of every economy appears to have a built-in force that drives the exchange system toward the greatest degree of commoditization that the exchange technology permits" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 87). And acting against this exchange function are "[t]he counterforces [of] culture and the individual, with their drive to discriminate, classify, compare, and sacralize" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 87).

In the end, what we have is "a two-front battle for culture as for the individual – one against commoditization as the homogenizer of exchange values, the other against the utter singularization of things as they are in nature" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 87). Moreover, this is a battle not only over singular and commoditized things; it is a battle over singular and commoditized worlds (and worldviews). Setting up *another* dichotomized spectrum ranging from a "perfectly commoditized world [as] one in which everything is exchangeable or for sale" and a "perfectly decommoditized world [as] one in which everything is singular, unique, and unexchangeable" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 69), we have a world vision wherein the forces of the economic market – especially in "large-scale, commercialized, and monetized societies" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 88) – attempt to push everything in a society towards perfect (or near perfect) commoditization, while individuals and cultures attempt to push back, "sacralizing" certain things and protecting them from the long arm of the market.

According to Kopytoff (1986), this fighting of forces is perhaps most obvious in contemporary Western culture, where "we take it more or less for granted that things – physical objects and rights to them – represent the natural universe of commodities," whereas we take it more or less for granted that "people…represent the natural universe of individuation and singularization" (p. 64). This clear-cut intellectual division between persons as singular and objects as commodity, which Kopytoff claims is fairly anomalous compared to the world at large (see e.g. pp. 84-85), creates a serious problem when we consider where we ought to place certain human attributes and personal goods. Even if we are

committed to protecting 'persons' from commodification, how far this protection ought to extend outwards from an actual human person (whatever *that* is) to those elements that either compose or surround him or her is not a clear or easy decision to make. As previously stated, economies try to push most things in a culture towards the commodity end of the commodity-singularity scale. As such, it would seem that anything not clearly encapsulated by the term 'person' would be deemed fair game for the economy to push towards the commodity end.

Currently, the West suffers from an apparent cultural confusion as to what 'person' things are to be sacralized and protected from commodification, and which are free to be sold; for example, human organs, babies, and pregnancy all are kept (at least openly) out of the market, but ova and sperm can be openly sold without any legal repercussion. This seeming inconsistency has doomed our culture to a kind of cognitive dissonance about commodities and non-commodities. The problem of value equivalence - which "involves taking the patently singular and inserting it into a uniform category of value with other patently singular things" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 71) – is not apparent when the things in question are fairly innocent, non-human goods. For example, most individuals do not find the exchange of labor for money, and money for goods or services produced by labor, to be particularly problematic. This "labor theory of value" is common in the West, and can offer a rough guide for how a car, a hamburger and a haircut can all semi-cohesively exist in the same sphere of 'commodity'; if each of these goods and services can be roughly translated into the labor invested into them, then there is a common denominator through which they are connected.

However, the problem of value equivalence does more clearly arise when we try to place both persons (and personal goods) and objects in the world of commodities. After all, how do we connect a car and a baby within the same sphere? How many hamburgers are equal to a human heart? Intuitively, we do not think that there is any such standard that can collapse all these things into a single sphere of commodities.

It is this lack of an intuitive standard that connects cars, babies, and so on, coupled with the fact that we occasionally *do* see all these things seemingly placed in the same group, that causes the aforementioned cognitive dissonance. As Kopytoff (1986) says, "When things participate simultaneously in cognitively distinct yet effectively intermeshed exchange spheres, one is constantly confronted with seeming paradoxes of value" (p. 82). He offers as an illustration of this phenomenon the example of a Picasso, which "though possessing a monetary value, is priceless in another, higher scheme" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 82). Because of this "we feel uneasy, even offended, when a newspaper declares the Picasso to be worth $690,000, for one should not be pricing the priceless" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 82). However, there is a sense in which "the "objective" pricelessness of the Picasso can only be unambiguously confirmed to us by its immense market price" and its status of singularity "is confirmed not by the object's structural position in an exchange system, but by intermittent forays into the commodity sphere, quickly followed by reentries into the closed sphere of singular "art"" (Kopytoff, 1986, pp. 82-83).

According to Kopytoff (1986), the most notable feature of our "paradoxes of value" – at least with respect to the Picasso – is the "inner compulsion to defend oneself, to others, and to oneself, against the charge of "merchandising" art" (p. 83). Because the singular world of art and the commodity world of exchange "cannot be kept separate for very long" – for example, "priceless" though the Picasso is, the museum will eventually find need of insuring it – what we will see is that "museums and art dealers will name prices, be accused of the sin of transforming art into a commodity, and, in response, defend themselves by blaming each other for creating and maintaining a commodity market" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 83). As Kopytoff (1986) points out, this is not mere "ideological camouflage for an interest in merchandising"; it is a genuine struggle we as a society face given the paradox that we are, in a sense, singularists at heart who nonetheless live in a 'necessarily' commoditized world (p. 83).

As seen in the above example, there is great difficulty in keeping the 'singular' singular in a highly commoditized society; objects like works of art find themselves traipsing briefly into the world of monetary exchangeability, even if just for the purposes of insurance, because there is a sense in which our culture demands of it a monetary valuation. Similarly, while we openly say that every human life is priceless, human lives are nonetheless priced for the purposes of life insurance or medical insurance; so entrenched are we in the language of mammon that everything has a price if we press hard enough. But the fact is that we do not *want* to price all things, or at least *feel* like we should not want them to be priced. In face of the commoditization of certain items (e.g. a Picasso), there is an

apologetic stance – "an inner compulsion to defend [ourselves]" against the commodification – a declaration that we would prefer that the pricing not occur. Thus, there seems to at least be an intuitive belief or understanding that there are some things in the world that are – or ought to be – sacred and unsullied by the priced world in which we find ourselves. So we see the problematic situation in which we find ourselves: we believe that certain things should not be made subject to exchangeability, but at the same time we often feel that the world compels that they be treated on occasion in just that manner.

This leads to a corresponding difficulty in how to respond to this apparent paradox that there are things that the economy or society will compel us to price, but that at the same time we feel ought not to be priced. According to Kopytoff (1986), what typically happens in this situation is that individuals within the society will "maintain some private vision of a hierarchy of exchange spheres, but the justification for this hierarchy [will not be] integrally tied to the exchange structure itself" (p. 82). Since the system, which is based on commodification and exchangeability, has no way of accounting for the decommodification of anything, individuals who want to keep certain things out of the commodity sphere will find it necessary to import their justification for this separation from somewhere else, such as aesthetics, morality, religion, and so on. However, what we find is that these individual responses are unlikely to be systematic or consistent with one another, thus "leading to what appear to be anomalies in cognition, inconsistencies in values, and uncertainties in action" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 82). The final result is a "flattening of values that follows commoditization and

[an] inability of the collective culture of a modern society to cope with this flatness" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 88). These two consequences – the flattening of values and the culture's correspondingly impotent response – combine to frustrate those individuals who wish to protect some things from commodification, but who therefore struggle to find any adequate strategy for doing so; they also give strength to the economic forces propelling a society towards ever greater commodification, because the forces that fight against them are by comparison weak and scattered.

This is even more worrisome now that various increases in biology and medical technologies – including emerging enhancement technologies – encroach ever more deeply into those things that have, at least historically, been seen as intimately human and personal, and therefore singular. It is here that the work of contemporary anthropologist Lesley Sharp (2000) and her examination of increased human commodification resulting from these changes in biology and medicine add a meaningful addendum to the anthropological theory of commodification. In her work "The Commodification of the Body and Its Parts", Lesley Sharp is primarily concerned with commodification as it results from body fragmentation. Since she focuses specifically on commodification of the body, not commodification in general, her analysis is decidedly narrower than what was offered by fellow anthropologists Appadurai and Kopytoff. However, her analysis does highlight the more recent trend in anthropology to view commodification as including a sort of fragmentation or deconstruction of personal identity and (in her case mainly bodily) integrity, which is more particularly relevant to our over-

arching topical focus of human enhancement which, by and large, targets areas central to personal identity and integrity.

On Sharp's (2000) analysis, whether the body is fragmented "metaphorically and literally," whether "through language, visual imaging, or the actual surgical reconstruction, removal, or replacement of specific parts", makes little difference; the presence of metaphorical fragmentation is sufficient to suggest an underlying commodification (p. 289). Moreover, according to Sharp, fragmentation is just one of many terms used to highlight or indicate the potential presence of commodification (although it clearly is the preferred one, and perhaps even the best). Within the over-arching scheme of "fragmentation" rhetoric, she finds that there are a number of words that act as clues to anthropologists (and other scholars) that objectification and commodification either have occurred or are in fact occurring, including any form of dehumanizing, "reductionist language" (e.g. "fragmented", "malleable", "colonizable" ,"subjectified", "medicalized" and so on). This is not to say that fragmentation (and related terms) are *in fact* commodification; but, their presence "is significant because it flags the possibility that commodification has occurred" (Sharp, 2000, p. 293).

Specific to the aforementioned rhetorical examples: "The medicalization of life, the fragmentation of the body, and the subjectification of colonized subjects all potentially dehumanize individuals and categories of persons in the name of profit" (Sharp, 2000, p. 293), or, more broadly, in the name of exchange. According to Sharp (2000), "The theme of objectification [and commodification] is clearly central to all these examples" since in them we are "transforming

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persons and their bodies from a human category into objects of economic desire"
(p. 293). This means that, ultimately, as the human body, human sexuality, human
genetics, and so on, become increasingly commodifiable in terms of our ability to
decompose humans into these various saleable or exchangeable components –
medicalized, fragmented, subjectified, and so on – the need for a coherent,
systematic justification to forbid such exchangeability becomes more pressing.
For this, we will have to turn to a bioethical analysis of human commodification.

Bioethical Perspective

According to bioethicist Elizabeth Anderson (1990), "To say that something is
properly regarded as a commodity is to claim that the norms of the market are
appropriate for regulating its production, exchange, and enjoyment" (p. 72). By
contrast, "To the extent that moral principles or ethical ideals preclude the
application of market norms to a good, we may say that the good is not a (proper)
commodity" (Anderson, 1990, p. 72). Thus, as with Appadurai and Kopytoff we
have a sort of world division in which all things are provisionally either
commodities or non-commodities (or, as Kopytoff would say, commodities and
singularities).

For Anderson, the main reason that we might object to the use of market
norms with respect to a given good would be that is fails to value that good in an
appropriate way (p. 72). One manner in which the use of market norms fails to
value something in an appropriate way is when doing so undermines an important

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value associated with, or inherent to, the thing in question. In her book *Value in Ethics and Economics*, Anderson (1993) argues that applying market exchange to certain 'human' things is commodifying and dehumanizing because doing so leads to the diminishment of human freedom and human autonomy. She defines an individual as free if he or she has access to a wide range of options for expressing his or her judgments; thus, freedom requires that a person have "significant opportunities…to value different kinds of goods in different ways" (Anderson, 1993, p. 141). She defines a person as autonomous if he or she "confidently governs" himself or herself by self-determined principles and judgments; thus, a person is autonomous if that person has the power to value goods in a way that he or she "reflectively endorses" (Anderson, 1993, p. 142). So, on this account an ideally free and autonomous individual is able to live by and have unfettered access to those life choices that allow him or her to fully realize and embody his or her self-chosen life valuations.

To make this state of affairs possible so that an ideally free and autonomous individual might plausibly be able to exist, Anderson maintains that there need to be "significant constraints" on the scope of the market. For example, since the use of addictive drugs make one susceptible to addiction, thereby limiting one's ability to be self-determining, we have reason to prohibit the sale of these drugs on the grounds of protecting autonomy. Similarly, since the buying and selling of votes potentially enables the wealthy to control political outcomes, thereby limiting "collective autonomy", we have reason to prohibit the sale of votes on the grounds of protecting autonomy. On her view, then, if we can

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determine what goods are necessary for autonomy, we will then know what ought to be protected from potential commodification.

Ultimately, those things most important to the preservation of autonomy, for Anderson, are "goods embodied in the person" (Anderson, 1993, p. 142), with examples including freedom of action and power of productive and reproductive labor. Anderson claims that selling these sorts of goods to someone else reduces a person's autonomy by subjecting himself or herself to another's domination. Thus, it appears that, on her view, any seeming relinquishment of self-determination and subsequent submission to other-determination is necessarily detrimental to autonomy, and we should therefore block this possibility by prohibiting such goods from entering the market and, in so doing, protect autonomy by assuring that any "rights in ourselves" remain inalienable.

According to Anderson, there are two questions we ought to ask ourselves in order to determine if a certain good ought to be deemed an economic good, subject to commodification and market valuations. First, we ask ourselves, "do market norms do a better job of embodying the ways we properly value a particular good than norms of other spheres?" If our answer is "no," Anderson says, "then we shouldn't treat them as commodities but rather locate them in non-market spheres" (Anderson, 1993, p. 143). The second question we ask ourselves is, "do market norms, when they govern the circulation of a particular good, undermine important ideals such as freedom, autonomy, and equality or important interests legitimately protected by the state?" If our answer is "yes," then she claims that "the state may act to remove the good from control by market norms"

(Anderson, 1993, pp. 143-4). Corresponding with these two questions it is apparent that on Anderson's account we have two reasons for excluding some good or thing from the market: First, if the more appropriate way to value that thing is in non-market terms; second, even if market terms may be appropriate, we find that other, more important interests would be undermined by applying market norms to that thing.

In order to answer the first question we will need to explore how things are valued when they are treated as market goods. According to Anderson, an essential part of the nature of how we value commodities, considering the social relations within which we produce and distribute them, is that they are pure "use"; commodities are only valued instrumentally, and never intrinsically. This is contrasted with other noncommodified valuations such as respect, whereby the good in question is valued intrinsically. These "modes of valuation" (Anderson, 1990, p. 72) can be roughly approximated in Kantian terms of "use" and "respect", wherein "use" refers "to the mode of valuation proper to commodities, which follows the market norm of treating things solely in accordance with the owner's nonmoral preferences" (Anderson, 1990, p. 72).

However, to say that market valuation of a thing simply consists in "use" is, for Anderson, insufficient. Instead, she proposes what she takes to be the "five features" that express and embody our attitudes surrounding economic freedom and economic exchange: impersonality, egotism, exclusivity, want-regarding, and an orientation to "exit" rather than to "voice" (Anderson, 1993, p. 145). Of these five features, she believes that the attitude of impersonality is central. According

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to Anderson, the norms that govern our market relations are the kind that are basically "suitable for regulating the interactions of strangers. Each party to a market transaction views his relation to the other as merely a means to the satisfaction of ends defined independent of the relationship and of the other party's ends" (Anderson, 1993, p. 145). In other words, each party is allowed – nay, *expected*– to be driven simply by his or her own egoistic desires. The buyer of some good on the market is not expected to concern himself with various features of the seller: what the seller's interests are; whether the good is being sold freely or out of desperation; what sort of "value" the seller places on the good; and so on. What matters instead is whether or not the seller is willing to sell the good at a price that the buyer is willing to pay. If the sale is made, there is no real or implied future obligation either parties have to the other; once the exchange is completed, their relationship is over, and the seller has no potential claim to what happens to the good once sold.

According to Anderson, this sphere of economic exchange exists in contrast to what she calls the "sphere of personal relations". This competing sphere is defined by the ideals of intimacy and commitment. The norms governing personal relations are personal, suitable for regulating the interactions of friends or family. Parties involved consider not simply their own wants, needs and desires, but those of the other party as well; each party views the other as an end, not simply a means to the satisfaction of an independent, egoistic end; there is a presumed continuance of the relationship once the 'exchange' is over, an expected reciprocity, and the good in question is a "shared good" that is part of

the relationship. Insofar as exchanges can legitimately occur in this sphere of personal relations, Anderson maintains they must be limited to gift-giving, never to including buying and selling (or, presumably. bartering, trading, or similar). Thus, in the end we have two competing, non-overlapping spheres of valuation, each with their own corresponding attitudes and relationship ideals.

As illustration of her views on the contrasting realms of relations and their corresponding attitudes, Anderson considers the example of prostitution. She says, "From a pluralist standpoint, prostitution is the classic example of how commodification debases a gift value and its giver" (Anderson, 1993, p. 154). According to Anderson (1993), "[t]he specifically human good of sexual acts exchanged as gifts" is the sort of thing that "is founded upon a mutual recognition of the partners as sexually attracted to each other and as affirming an intimate relationship in their mutual offering of themselves to each other" (p. 154). This means that is "is a shared good" wherein a "couple rejoices in their union, which can be realized only when each partner reciprocates the other's gift in kind, offering her own sexuality in the same spirit in which she received the other's – as a genuine offering of the self" (Anderson, 1993, p. 154). In the case of prostitution, however, "[t]he commodification of sexual "services" destroys the kind of reciprocity required to realize human sexuality as a shared good" because by viewing the encounter as an economic exchange "[e]ach party values the other only instrumentally, not intrinsically" (Anderson, 1993, p. 154). Thus, Anderson says, since we tend to value sex as being a shared good the likes of which is best understood by the sphere of personal relations, to let it be bought and sold in the

sphere of economic relations is wrong. She claims, "The goods of the personal sphere, which are shared gift values, cannot be adequately realized by market norms" (Anderson, 1993, p. 158); as such, market norms do not do a better job of embodying how we ought to value sex than do the norms of a competing sphere of valuation, namely the sphere of personal relations.

Since we have just answered "no" to Anderson's first question on determining whether or not some good should be allowed into the market, we need not necessarily continue on with the second question and determine whether or not selling sex diminishes autonomy and freedom. But, if we do proceed with such an analysis, it is clear that on Anderson's account prostitution does indeed inhibit autonomy. According to Anderson, when we reduce personal preferences and valuations to mere market choices, the question of whether and how these choices represent an individual's "reflective endorsement" is dropped and deemed unnecessary. This, she maintains, fails to take account of various social relations and the types of domination of the self by others that would necessarily occur when goods that are "embodied in the person are commodified and alienated to others" (Anderson, 1993, p. 165). Accordingly, we conclude that autonomy is in fact harmed by governing such goods by market norms.

In addition to her view that there are different spheres of relations that correspond to different modes of valuation, Anderson also believes that there are higher and lower modes of valuation. When dealing with human goods, it is not simply the fact that we are using a less apt mode of valuation when we place these goods in the market; we are also subjecting them to a lower mode of valuation

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than that of which they deserve. When we treat as an object of mere use something that warrants respect, we are degrading that object. This "[d]egradation occurs when something is treated in accordance with a lower mode of valuation than is proper to it" (Anderson, 1990, p. 77). Since, she says, "We value things not just "more" or "less," but in qualitatively higher and lower ways" this means, for example, that "[t]o love or respect someone is to value her in a higher way than one would if one merely used her" (Anderson, 1990, p. 77).

A classic example of this qualitative valuation is seen in the case of children and surrogacy. According to Anderson (1990), when viewed properly children are "loved by their parents and respected by others" (p. 77) However, in the case of surrogacy "children are valued as mere use-objects by the mother and the surrogate agency when they are sold to others, and by the adoptive parents when they seek to conform the child's genetic makeup to their own wishes" (Anderson, 1990, p. 77). This means that "commercial surrogacy degrades children insofar as it treats them as commodities" – mere-use objects ((Anderson, 1990, p. 77).

Returning to the earlier example of prostitution, using market norms to govern human sexuality is not only wrong because there is a better way to govern it, but because there is a *higher* way to govern it. Love and respect are higher modes of valuation, and therefore more befitting. In the end, perhaps the greatest harm caused by using the incorrect, lower mode of valuation for "human" things (e.g. sex and babies) is its effect on our conception of proper human flourishing. According to Anderson (1990), "The ideals which specify how one should value

certain things are supported by a conception of human flourishing" (p. 73). Thus, "To fail to value things appropriately" – in this case, to treat a human or human good as a commodity – "is to embody in one's life an inferior conception of human flourishing" (Anderson, 1990, p. 73). The fear here is that if we continue to push many things of human value closer to the commodity end of the commodity-singularity continuum, we will end up with a diminished view of humanity, and of ourselves.

In fact, it is this "inferior conception of human flourishing" and the diminishment of human value that fellow bioethicist Margaret Radin sees as the most dangerous consequence of human commodification. After considering various popular accounts for why the inclusion of human goods on the market is problematic, she concludes that the corresponding market rhetoric is inconsistent with an appropriate view of human flourishing, and consequently diminishes an individual's personhood and self-development.

In discussing noncommodification – which she terms here 'market-inalienability' – Radin focuses specifically on nonsalability, whereby certain goods cannot be bought, sold or traded in the market. She does this in part because she still wants to allow the gifting of certain things that should not be sold; thus, these goods are able to be placed outside of the marketplace, but "not outside the realm of social intercourse" (Radin, 1987, p. 1953). As Radin sees it, the desire to make something market-inalienable often expresses a desire for the noncommodification of that thing. She says, "By making something nonsalable we proclaim that it should not be conceived of or treated as a commodity" (Radin,

1987, p. 1855). This means that when we say "something is noncommodifiable," we meant that "market trading is a disallowed form of social organization and allocation" and we moreover "place that thing beyond supply and demand pricing, brokerage and arbitrage, advertising and marketing, stockpiling, speculation, and valuation in terms of the opportunity cost of production" (Radin, 1987, p. 1855). The thought here seems to be that if a good is made nonsalable, then noncommodification of that good is assured. Or, in the least, we are stating that we believe that the good in question should not be thought of or treated like a commodity.

Before proceeding to her argument against the commodification of certain human goods, Radin makes a number of distinctions that she believes are relevant in understanding the commodification debate. First, she identifies three general views of commodification: universal commodification, whereby everything can or ought to be considered in market terms; universal noncommodification, whereby everything cannot or should not be considered in market terms; and pluralism, whereby there are certain things that do or should exist in normative realms outside of the market, e.g. rights, politics, families, and so on, but many or most goods in society can justifiably be placed in the market. This corresponds with Kopytoff's analysis of societies as ranging from perfectly commoditized (universal commodification) to perfectly decommoditized (universal noncommodification), with pluralism representing a sort of partially commoditized society.

She also distinguishes between broad commodification and narrow commodification. According to her interpretation, narrow commodification refers specifically to the actual (or, at least, legally permitted) buying and selling of something. By contrast, broad commodification refers not only to the actual buying and selling of something, but also to the market rhetoric involved, the sorts of attitudes surrounding treating the given interactions of market transactions, and the use of monetary cost-benefit analysis as the appropriate means of judging the given interactions. This latter form of commodification fits with Anderson's view that commodification can exist when there is simply the use of market norms of valuation and market rhetoric, and it is the form that Radin ends up adopting in her analysis of the problems with human commodification.

Since she is dealing with the problem of commodification as broadly understood, she looks more closely at the issue of market rhetoric. She considers as a key question about the problem of market rhetoric the following: "Why should it matter if someone conceptualizes the entire human universe as one giant bundle of scarce goods subject to free alienation by contract[?]" with the added caveat, "especially if reasoning in market rhetoric can reach the same result that some other kind of normative reasoning reaches on other grounds?" (Radin, 1987, pp. 1877-8), and explores in turn the three most common answers to the question. The first answer says, "It matters because the rhetoric might lead less-than-perfect practitioners to wrong answers in sensitive cases" (Radin, 1987, p. 1878). The idea here is that even if a sophisticated practitioner might not be confused or

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misled by commodification talk, imperfect practitioners might be led to the wrong answers. For example, one worry about surrogacy and 'baby selling' is that thinking about the babies in economic terms might lead people to think of *all* humans in economic terms, not simply babies. Here, it may be the case that only unsophisticated, imperfect practitioners would reach this conclusion; but, proponents of this argument say that the risk of that error (here, the commodification of all human beings) in certain cases (e.g. baby selling) is deemed sufficient to block the marketing of these sorts of goods.

The second answer says that it matters because the rhetoric itself is insulting, or, it injures personhood regardless of the result. She considers the example of rape, where "for all but the deepest enthusiast, market rhetoric seems intuitively out of place here, so inappropriate that it is either silly or somehow insulting to the value being discussed" (Radin, 1987, p. 1880). The basis for this intuition, Radin (1987) says, "is that market rhetoric conceives of bodily integrity as a fungible object," that is, something "replaceable with money or other objects" (p. 1880). In practice, "A fungible object can pass in and out of the person's possession without effect on the person as long as its market equivalent is given in exchange" (Radin, 1987, p. 1880). For Radin (1987), "To speak of personal attributes [generally] as fungible objects – alienable "goods" – is intuitively wrong" (p. 1880). This means that "thinking of rape as a fungible object in market rhetoric implicitly conceives of as fungible something that we know to be personal, in fact conceives of as fungible property something we know to be too personal even to be personal property" (Radin, 1987, p. 1880). Therefore, it is not

just the case that personal things are sacred, and therefore should be treated as singular; rather, Radin (1987) believes, "Systematically conceiving of personal attributes as fungible objects is threatening to personhood, because it detaches from the person that which is integral to the person" (p. 1881). This means that there is an underlying reason for the sacralizing: the presumption of personal attribute fungibility is a threat to personhood, and for this reason certain things should be sacralized.

The third answer Radin (1987) considers as to why conceptualizing "the entire human universe as one giant bundle of scarce goods subject to free alienation by contract" is problematic is that it simply is not the case that "reasoning in market rhetoric can reach the same result that some other kind of normative reasoning reaches on other grounds" (pp. 1877-8), at least with respect to human goods and human flourishing. She believes that market rhetoric represents a *radically different* kind of normative discourse than we ought to be using with respect to humans. And, if we do use it, the results are simply not the same. As she explains: "Market rhetoric, if adopted by everyone, and in many contexts, would indeed transform the texture of the human world" (Radin, 1987, p. 1884). For example, "This rhetoric leads us to view politics as just rent seeking, reproductive capacity as just a scarce good for which there is high demand, and the repugnance of slavery as just a cost" (Radin, 1987, p. 1884). On this account, market rhetoric becomes the whole of our normative talk, supplanting other norms and values (Radin, 1987, pp. 1884-5).

Moreover, Radin (1987) says, "To accept these views is to accept the conception of human flourishing they imply, one that is inferior to the conception we can accept as properly ours" (p. 1885). To explain what she means by the idea of a conception of human flourishing being "properly ours", Radin (1987) suggest that "[i]n order to decide what conception of human flourishing is properly ours, all we can do is reflect on what we now know about human life and choose the best from among the conceptions available to us" (p. 1884, footnote 131). For Radin (1987), this means that "we should not accept a conception of human flourishing that" denies certain fundamental values we might have, such as "politics as (also) community self-determination," "of reproductive capacity as essentially human and personal," and an understanding that "the pain of witnessing criminal acts and unjust institutions is not like the price of shoes or snowplows" (p. 1884, footnote 131). On Radin's view, then, it would not matter if we could somehow price politics, reproductive capacity, and so on, perhaps in virtue of the labor theory of value or similar, because regardless of whether or not we can price these things, we should not, because doing so is inconsistent with our reflectively determined conception of proper human flourishing. However, in the end, we may choose other values.

Radin also expands this view of human flourishing to include our views of personhood. According to Radin (1987), "our understanding of personhood" is such that "we are committed to an ideal of individual uniqueness that does not cohere with the idea that each person's attributes are fungible, that they have a monetary equivalent, and that they can be traded off against those of other

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people" (p. 1885). Thus, the problem with broad commodification and universal market rhetoric is that it "transforms our world of concrete persons, whose uniqueness and individuality is expressed in specific personal attributes, into a world of disembodied, fungible, attribute-less entities possessing a wealth of alienable, severable "objects"" (Radin, 1987, p. 1885). It thereby "reduces the conception of a person to an abstract, fungible unit with no individuating characteristics" (Radin, 1987, p. 1885).

This "fungible unit with no individuating characteristics" is to be contrasted with what Radin believes is the more "proper" understanding of persons and personhood. For her, "a better view of personhood" (Radin, 1987, p. 1904) must give adequate account to three important features of personhood: freedom, identity, and contextuality. Freedom, as she defines it, emphasizes the power to choose for oneself (i.e. "free will"). Identity deals with "the integrity and continuity of the self required for individuation"; this includes having a unique identity that is "integrated and continuous" over time (Radin, 1987, p. 1904). The third feature, contextuality, focuses on the inevitable interconnectedness between a person and his or her surrounding environment, giving greater emphasis on those environmental aspects that are integral to the person and his or her self-conception, such as a sense of 'home', place, interpersonal relations, and so on. According to Radin, if a given view of personhood cannot offer a satisfactory account of each of these three features, then we should not adopt it.

Given these three necessary features, on Radin's (1987) final account the more appropriate view of personhood recognizes various things – such as "one's

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politics, work, religion, love, sexuality, friendships, altruism, experiences, wisdom, moral commitments, character, and personal attributes" (p. 1906) – as integral to a person and, therefore, not alienable and monetizable. And to commodify these things, she believes, or to adopt a societal scheme that uses the rhetoric of commodification for them, "undermines personal identity…[and does] violence to our deepest understanding of what it is to be human" (Radin, 1987, p. 1906). A major part of this resulting "violence" is that individuals ultimately end up suffering from a sort of alienation, whether personal or social: at the personal level, to the extent that the market rhetoric and conceived fungibility is internalized, the individual suffers from a "disorientation of the self" (Radin, 1987, p. 1907); at the social level, to the extent that this rhetoric is not internalized, the individual finds herself or himself alienated from the social structure that does use and accept this rhetoric. Both of these forms of an alienation response to commodification will be explored more fully in the next chapter.

Working Analysis of Commodity and How it Relates to Enhancement

Having explored some of the archetypal views of commodification in the anthropology and bioethics literature, we are now in a better position to devise an overarching conception that can be used for the remainder of this dissertation. As I will define it, a commodity is a 'thing' (loosely defined so as to tentatively include humans, human attributes, personal goods, and so on) that has the social

potential for being perceived – at some time, in some social context, as per some cultural markings that define it as such to the individuals involved – as having as a defining feature is potential exchangeability for some other thing. While, as with Kopytoff, I believe that a thing's status as a commodity is guaranteed only at the moment in which it is actually participating in some sort of exchange (because at that moment the potential exchangeability has been proven in virtue of being actualized), I do not believe that it is necessary for a thing to ever undergo some form of social exchange for it to be deemed a commodity. Instead, on my analysis, it will be sufficient to say that the thing in question might arguably be perceived as a thing with exchangeability potential.

Since I adopt what Radin referred to "broad commodification" analysis, on my view to say that something is perceived as having exchangeability potential is roughly equivalent to saying that it is perceived as governed – or perhaps simply governable – by the "norms of the market", as Anderson would put it. Since the presence of this set of norms is often indicated by its corresponding rhetoric, on my analysis it will be sufficient to declare a given thing a commodity if the rhetoric surrounding it at a particular time or in a particular context is the sort of rhetoric that is associated with this set of norms. While the rhetoric of pricing and exchangeability will probably be a clearer indication of some underlying commodification, I nonetheless believe we can expand this list to include aspects of Sharp's "fragmentation rhetoric" as well. As such, if the thing in question is perceived as "fragmented", "malleable", "colonizable", "subjectified", "medicalized", "fungible", "alienable", and similar, we will

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therefore have reason to suspect that that thing may have the social potential of being a commodity.

This is not a particularly serious deviation from the kind of analysis offered by Radin earlier. In discussing some of the problems with using the rhetoric of universal commodification in dealing with "things of value to the person", Radin (1987) says that a major difficulty is that these things are described as being "in principle alienable" (pp. 1859-1860, footnote 44). In fact, throughout her analysis, Radin (1987) frequently equates (or, at least, associates) alienation with commodification (see, e.g. p. 1861, pp. 1877-8, and p. 1885). While the fact that something can be decomposed into fragments does not necessarily mean that those fragments can ultimately be separated from that thing for the purposes of exchange, the alienability and exchange of a thing's components does require that those components first be fragmentable; so, fragmentation is a clue that there may be the potential for commodification.

Also, in my analysis there can be degrees of commodification. Like Appadurai, I believe that the more that a thing finds itself in a time during which it is defined by its potential exchangeability, as a bearer of the cultural markings of exchangeability, or in social contexts that either state or imply potential exchangeability, the more quintessentially that thing is deemed a commodity. It may also be the case that the more such a thing finds itself governed by more explicitly market rhetoric, rather than simply fragmentation rhetoric, we will consider it more explicitly a commodity.

I also believe that the more things in a society that contain the social potential of being a commodity – roughly, the more things perceived as potentially exchangeable – the more highly commoditized is that society. By contrast, the less things in a society bearing this potential, the less highly commoditized is that society. To use Kopytoff's description: "the perfectly commoditized world would be one in which everything is exchangeable or for sale. By the same token, the perfectly decommoditized world would be one in which everything is singular, unique, and unexchangeable" (Kopytoff, 1986, p. 69). This will be important in analyzing what is ultimately wrong with human modification and its corresponding commodification: that it pushes our society further and further towards the commodity end of the singular-commodity scale, which ultimately leads to a diminishment of human flourishing and a destruction of human nature and proper human value.

The relation that this account bears to enhancement is hopefully (at least partly) obvious: insofar as enhancement technologies target some human feature (gene, neurochemical makeup, physical or mental trait, etc) it is fragmenting the given human and decomposing him or her to a point where at least that feature is isolatable and, at the point of enhancement, exchangeable for some other and/or better feature. If the hallmark of a commodity is that its socially relevant feature is its exchangeability for something else – which I take here to allow for bidirectionality of definition – then the feature for which enhancement is sought is by necessity a commodity. If we focus on broad commodification, this means that the talk of potential human enhancement is then, also by necessity,

commodification talk. I hereby take all of this to be fairly straightforward, which

means that in our analysis of the moral ills commodification (and enhancement)

entail, our final account of how human enhancement might undermine human

flourishing may well hinge on its relative quintessence.

Chapter 4

COMMODIFIED MAN

Having just explored the general concept of 'commodification' in some of its

dominant anthropological and bioethical meanings, we will now turn to the matter

of what happens to the individual who is being commodified. As stated in chapter

3, the accepted use of commodification that will be employed for the remainder of

this chapter includes a broad interpretation, whereby we may say that an

individual is being commodified even when there is no explicit exchange taking

place, but rather simply the presence of commodification rhetoric and attitudes.

Additionally, this commodification rhetoric includes the related concepts (e.g.

fragmented, malleable, etc.), as well as the view of individuals being

commodified as being able to suffer such commodification to varying degrees.

While there are no doubt many different kinds of (negative) responses that

a commodified individual may experience – and there is no doubt that, in a sense

and to some degree, we are all commodified in some domain(s) of our lives – I

will focus on five key responses that help us to understand the commodification-

enhancement attitude. First, I will consider how commodification closes off a

person's 'right' to an open future for self-determination and self-fulfillment,

based on Joel Feinberg's analysis. Second, focusing on Jurgen Habermas'

argument about prenatal genetic engineering, I will consider how

commodification of an individual functions as a form of invasion and control.

Third, I will describe how commodification results in an individual's sense of

fragmented identity, drawing heavily from Michael Shapiro. Fourth, I will discuss how commodification and its associated invasion and fragmentation lead to the commodified individual suffering from either self-alienation or alienation from others. Finally, I will present the psychological theory called 'objectification theory' and explain how the felt subjective experiences and psychological consequences of objectification arguably parallel the experiences we would expect from individuals being commodified.

Although these five consequences are discussed individually, they are arguably part of a cluster of commodification consequences, and perhaps even indicative of a progression of consequences. For example, beginning with the more general effect of a person's open future being closed, we can see that this closing off is potentially more insidious with various forms of human enhancement technologies than current modes of parental and societal control, resulting in what amounts to a co-authored life and a corresponding feeling of invasion of self. This invasion can in turn lead to an individual's fragmentation of personal identity, and both of these – invasion and fragmentation – can lead to alienation, both from oneself and from others in society. This self-alienation – as well as the commodification itself – leaves the individual suffering from the psychological consequences of objectification. Thus, all these consequences are apparently part of an interlocking whole (which can broadly be thought of as: commodified man as object).

Commodified Man and the Open Future

For Joel Feinberg (1980), the right to an open future is essentially a premature or "anticipatory" autonomy right. Autonomy rights in adults include such things as the right to vote, to drink, to drive, and so on. Some autonomy rights, which Feinberg (1980) classifies as "protected liberties of choice" (p. 125), are the sort that cannot apply to children because they lack the capacity necessary to make that sort of choice. For example, there is the autonomy right to "the free exercise of one's religion…which presupposes that one has religious convictions or preferences in the first place" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 125). Another example would be the right of an individual to protect his or her body from intrusive measures by refusing medical treatment. Since children are not thought to have the capacity to understand the full ramifications of such a choice, decisions of this sort are typically conferred to the parents or guardian (or an appropriate court appointed surrogate decision-maker). However, upon reaching adulthood, the right to this sort of decision-making is in essence 'returned' to the former child, who now (barring any reasons to suspect diminished capacity) takes full possession of it.

A key component of Feinberg's analysis of the right to an open future includes this idea of representative adults (or perhaps society at large) acting like the 'trustees' of a child's autonomy rights; they have a duty to protect them until the child is old enough to use them himself or herself. This is why Feinberg (1980) categorizes the right to an open future as a more general expression for what he calls "rights-in-trust" or "anticipatory autonomy rights" (p. 125). These

rights look like autonomy rights in adults, but, given the fact "that the child cannot very well exercise his free choice until later when he is more fully formed and capable…[they] are to be *saved* for the child until he is an adult" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 125).

Even though they are not full-fledged autonomy rights, Feinberg (1980) claims that they "can be violated "in advance," so to speak, before the child is even in a position to exercise them" (pp. 125-6). This sort of violation "guarantees *now* that when the child is an autonomous adult, certain key options will already be closed to him" (Feinberg, 1980, p.126). As such, "[h]is right while he is still a child is to have these future options kept open until he is a fully formed self-determining adult capable of deciding among them" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 126). This means that because the child has a present right protecting his or her future autonomy, surrounding individuals have a corresponding duty to not violate that present right by acting in such a way that they end up closing off those future options that are necessary for a self-determined, autonomous adult.

While Feinberg does not explicitly limit the future options to those necessary for a self-determined, autonomous adult (as I just did), he clearly does not advocate that the right to an open future protect and ensure a *completely* open future. He believes that there will always be an "inevitable narrowing of options" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 146) because "whatever policy is adopted by a child's parents, and whatever laws are passed and enforced by the state" will have "substantially narrowed" "the child's options in respect to life circumstances and character…well before he is an adult" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 146). Over the course

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of childhood, socialization and education mold and influence the development of the boy's or girl's "own values, tastes, and standards, which will in turn determine in part how he [or she] acts, feels, and chooses" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 146). This will then in turn reinforce a tendency to continue acting, feeling, choosing, and so on, until the child's character is fully set. This means that, according to Feinberg (1980), "children are not born with a precisely determined character structure" (p. 146). Moreover, since "they must be socialized by measures of discipline if they are to become fit members of the adult community, and this must be done even if it is against the wishes of the pre-socialized children themselves" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 141), a certain element of "paternalism" and control (from either parent or state) will be unavoidable – and indeed *desirable* – in the upbringing of any child.

But, this paternalistic element cannot limit the child in *any* way that the parents and society wish, or else the child's right to an open future will have indeed been violated. According to Feinberg (1980), there are two specific things being protected by the right to an open future: the right of self-determination and the good of self-fulfillment (p. 145); violating either of these two things will be particularly problematic on his account. For Feinberg (1980), the right of self-determination means that a person has a right to determine "his own life-circumstances", including career-type, lifestyle, religious affiliation, and other related things (p. 145). The right of self-determination also means that a person has a right to determine his own character, which includes "that set of habitual traits that we create by our own actions and cultivated feelings in given types of circumstances [and] our characteristic habits of response to life's basic kinds of

situations" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 145). In addition to this, we have the good of self-fulfillment, which includes three necessary components: "the development of one's chief aptitudes into genuine talents in a life that gives them scope"; "an unfolding of all basic tendencies and inclinations, both those that are common to the species and those that are peculiar to the individual"; and "an active realization of the universal human propensities to plan, design and make order" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 143).

To summarize: what we want to protect by ensuring a child's open future is that, as an adult, he or she will be able to live a life that fits with his or her self-reflective conception of the good life, which includes the choice of life-circumstances and character, the development of talents, and the realization of self-potential. This is why I characterized earlier the violation of a right to an open future as being specifically limited to violating those options necessary for a self-determined, autonomous adult: it is not the right to *any* open future that is valued, but a *specific* view of what kind of future constitutes "a better view of personhood" (Radin, 1987, p. 1905).

Feinberg's above analysis of the good life and a better view of personhood is similar to those set out by Elizabeth Anderson (1990, 1993) and Margaret Radin (1987), as presented in the previous chapter. Recall that as part of the good life, Anderson believes that a person should be both free and autonomous. This requires that a person self-govern by self-determined principles and values (i.e. be autonomous) and have access to a wide range of options for expressing these self-determinations (i.e. is free). Since the goal of this freedom is no doubt that it

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enables a person's self-fulfillment, her view of the good life and Feinberg's are roughly the same.

Similarly, Radin conceives of personhood as containing three main components: freedom, identity, and contextuality. On her account, freedom is primarily the power to choose for oneself, like Feinberg's account of self-development; identity deals with a person being able to have or to develop an integrated, unique identity; and contextuality has to do with those aspects of a person's lived-in environment that enable him or her to develop this sort of identity. Arguably, this integrated, unique identity is only made possible when there is self-fulfillment, and this self-fulfillment entails that the person be placed in and interacts with an appropriate context in order that that identity can be achieved. So we can see that, to a great extent, Feinberg, Anderson and Radin are all concerned about the same (liberally-minded) things with respect to the goods of human development and human flourishing, and our duty (should we share the same vision of human good) to protect them as such.

When we take this given understanding of personhood and recognize that it is the real reason why an open future matters – not simply the protection of future autonomy rights – I do not see why we should not be able to expand on Feinberg's analysis of violating a person's right to an open future to include similar violations with adults. Feinberg's underlying intuition seems to be that any undue intrusions on a person's development that inhibit his or her ability to be self-determined and self-fulfilling at some future point, one at which that self-determination and self-fulfillment would be otherwise expected had the intrusions

not occurred, are ipso facto morally problematic. While Feinberg would no doubt want to block this understanding of his view because it opens the doors to paternalism, if the interpretation in the forgoing sentences is correct, then it is not obvious to me that on this account we must limit our analysis to children; that the individual in question is in the process of self-development, and that the intrusions inhibit the development of the person that the given individual "will become if his [or her] basic options are kept open and his [or her] growth kept "natural" or unforced" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 127), appear to be sufficient grounds for protecting that individual from these inhibiting intrusions.

Perhaps, when we are dealing with adults, Feinberg intends for us to analyze any violations or intrusions of this sort as straight out violations of autonomy. However, consider his explanation of how the child and adult are related in his open future argument. He says, "In any case, that adult does not exist yet, and perhaps he never will. But the child is *potentially* that adult, and it is that adult who is the person whose autonomy must be protected now (in advance)" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 127). If we simply replace 'adult' with 'future person' and 'child' with 'current person', we have exactly the case I described in the previous paragraph. Since the parallel between the two is so strong, it would seem like either we ought to be able to protect adults in similar developmental conditions by appealing to their right to an open future, or else protect the children under a straight out right to autonomy as well.

Or, perhaps instead Feinberg believes that, as a person ages, he or she garners ever increasing degrees of control over the process of self-development.

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As such, children might demand more specific protection in ensuring their open

future because they are more vulnerable to its being violated at a time when they

cannot reasonably be said to have reflectively agreed to it, or have the reasonable

expectation to have been able to fight against it. This would fit with his contention

that "from the beginning the child must – inevitably *will* – have some "input" in

its own shaping, the extent of which will grow continuously even as the child's

character itself does" and in this way he or she "can contribute towards the

making of his [or her] own self and circumstances in ever-increasing degree"

(Feinberg, 1980, p. 149). As he sees it, "At every subsequent stage" in the child's

self-development, "the immature child plays an ever-greater role in the creation of

his own life, until at the arbitrarily fixed point of full maturity or adulthood, he is

at last fully and properly in charge of himself" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 150). At this

point he is "sovereign within his terrain [and] his more or less finished character

the product of a complicated interaction of external influences and ever-increasing

contributions from his own earlier self" (Feinberg, 1980, p. 150).

The problem with this account, however, is that Feinberg seems to assume

a slow, interactive development process, presumably along the lines of Claudia

Mills' (2003) interpretation of the open future argument as consisting of

"encouraged versus discouraged options" (p. 501). Since Feinberg (1980) already

conceded to an "inevitable narrowing of options" (p. 146), she maintains,

"Options, then, are not properly viewed as open or closed, but as more or less

encouraged or discouraged, fostered , or inhibited" (Milles, 2003, p. 501).

However, certain acts of narrow commodification – like, e.g., choosing or

changing a child's genetic makeup – are not simply encouraging one developmental pathway and discouraging another; they in fact close off certain pathways that would have been available otherwise, or ensure that a particular pathway is guaranteed. Moreover, when we consider broad commodification and the arguably pervasive presence that is inherent in market or fragmentation rhetoric, were such rhetoric to become an ever-present aspect of the "texture of the human world" (Radin, 1987, p. 1881), that sort of presence would hardly be considered merely 'encouraging' or 'discouraging', but indeed overbearing.

One final thought: even though Feinberg self-describes the open future argument as being essentially an autonomy-based argument, I suspect that a better understanding of it is that it is a personhood-based argument. True, his conception of personhood utilized includes a strongly favored autonomy component (he is, after all, liberally inclined). However, the primary goal for protecting this autonomy appears to be that doing so is necessary in order to protect adequate individual personhood and overall human flourishing. As such, should we choose to cash out the open future violations as resulting from commodification and commodifying rhetoric, we should declare them problematic because they are damaging personhood and human flourishing, rather than simply autonomy.

Commodified Man and Invasion and Control

Perhaps a better way of understanding the problems of commodification when it involves open future violations is to look to the corresponding invasion of person

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that occurs. Because this sort of invasion is arguably more apparent when we consider the kinds of commodifying technologies that are implemented before an individual is born, thereby closing off the potential open future in a more definitive and insidious manner, we will look at this sort of example.

One major proponent of this argument – which states that pre-birth modification leads to a problematic violation of the right to an open future – is Jurgen Habermas. Habermas (2003) focuses specifically on genetic modifications that are aimed at human enhancement, and his basic argument is that "[e]ugenic programming of desirable traits and dispositions" is morally problematic because "it commits the person concerned to a specific life-project or, in any case, puts specific restrictions on his freedom to choose a life of his own" (p. 61). More specifically, "[e]ugenic interventions aiming at enhancement reduce ethical freedom insofar as they tie down the person concerned to rejected, but irreversible intentions of third parties, barring him from the spontaneous self-perception of being the undivided author of his own life" (Habermas, 2003, p. 63) Thus, we see that for Habermas the specific kind of open future violation that is morally problematic is one that the individual would upon self-reflection reject, but which cannot in fact be rejected because it has already been fixed by the intervener through his or her intervention. This requires more than simply the encouragement or discouragement of life options; rather, there must be a forced commitment to one option, or the irreversible restriction of another. The reason that this violation and forced commitment are morally problematic is, ultimately, because it invades the self-conceived personhood of the individual in question.

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On his account, Habermas (2003) refers to the encouragement or discouragement of life options as non-genetic "intentions" (p. 61), and the actual eugenic manipulation for desired traits as genetic intentions. He concedes to his opponents that a parent's genetic intentions for his or her child during such eugenic programming would no doubt closely parallel their non-genetic intentions – e.g. a parent's desire that his or her child become a doctor, develop an athletic or musical talent, and so on, and subsequent encouragement that the child develop talents or career aspirations along such lines. Moreover, he believes that it is possible in cases of both non-genetic intentions and genetic intentions that these intentions are internalized by the given child, and therefore do not lead to ill effects and the feeling of invasion. However, he objects to genetic engineering specifically because it leaves open the distinct possibility of "dissonant cases", which he does not believe are genuinely possible with non-genetic intentions.

Consider the example where parents want their child to become a doctor and actively encourage that life course. If the child in question "appropriates these expectations as aspirations of his own" (Habermas, 2003, p. 61), meaning he or she does not see the goal of being a doctor as something alien and imposed upon himself or herself, then there is no resulting feeling of invasion. As Habermas (2003) puts it, "If an intention is "appropriated" in this way, no effect of alienation from one's own existence as a body and a soul will occur, nor will the corresponding restrictions of the ethical freedom to live a life of one's own be felt" (p. 61). However, in those instances in which the parental intention is not

appropriated, this will result in what he calls "dissonant cases" (Habermas, 2003, p. 61), wherein there is a feeling of invasion and resulting alienation.

While it may initially appear that there can be dissonant cases in response to non-genetic parental intentions, Habermas believes that these cases are in fact fixable. Recall that non-genetic intentions are essentially limited to the socialization process, a matter of encouragement or discouragement. According to Habermas, the power of this socialization process is ultimately limited. As he sees it, "[s]ocialization processes proceed only by communicative action, wielding their formative power in the medium of propositional attitudes and decisions" (Habermas, 2003, p. 61). These attitudes and decisions "are connected with internal reasons even if, at a given stage of its cognitive development, the "space of reasons" is not yet widely open to the child itself" (Habermas, 2003, p. 62), and the reasons can be given to (or discovered by) the child and ultimately critiqued. Because of this sort of "interactive structure," the child has the option – even if only available in adolescence or adulthood – to "respond to and retroactively break away from" the initial parental communication (Habermas, 2003, p. 62). On Habermas' account, then, non-genetic intentions can only take the form of communication, which by its nature inevitably leaves open the possibility for the child to contest that communication and rebel against the intention. No matter how strongly a child's parents wish him or her to become a doctor, and express that wish, the child always has the option of simply saying, "No," and "They can retrospectively compensate for the asymmetry of filial dependency by liberating themselves through a critical reappraisal of the genesis of such restrictive

socialization processes" (Habermas, 2003, p. 62). Thus, for Habermas (2003),

even the strongest forms of communicative action that threaten to invade an

individual and his or her sense of person "may be resolved analytically, through

an elaboration of self-reflexive insights" (p. 62).

For genetic intentions, however, there is no communicative action to

which the child can say, "No." According to Habermas (2003), "With genetic

enhancement, there is no communicative scope for the projected child to be

addressed as a second person and to be involved in a communication process" (p.

62). This means that even once the child becomes an adolescent or an adult, he or

she has no option here for "critical reappraisal" or "a *revisionary* learning

process" like he or she had with communicative action. Thus, "*Being at odds with*

the genetically fixed intention of a third person is hopeless. The genetic program

is a mute and, in a sense, unanswerable fact" (Habermas, 2003, p. 62). While it is

not clear, even with Habermas, that intentions limited to "communicative action"

are *in fact* going to be that easy to respond to – after all, the more we learn about

developmental psychology the more we realize how truly puissant certain aspects

of parental and adult influence are on the impressionable mind – it is clear that

Habermas wants to make a distinction between communicative and genetic

intention such that meaningful response to the former is at least far more likely in

that any response to the latter is truly *impossible*. This is because, in contrast to

non-genetic intentions, where even the strongest form of communicative action

can be resolved, with genetic intentions, even the weakest form of eugenics is in a

sense irresolvable; there is no option of replying, reappraising, contesting, and so on.

This is perhaps where the distinction between Feinberg's analysis of the open future and Habermas' analysis of eugenic intervention is most apparent. According to Feinberg (1980), it is false to say "that there is any early stage at which a child's character is *wholly* unformed and his talents and temperament *entirely* plastic," since "in the continuous development of the relative-adult out of the relative-child there is no point before which the child himself has no part in his own shaping" (p. 148). Contra Feinberg, Habermas maintains – and I believe rightly so – that any sort of genetic intervention that occurs before a child's birth is necessarily beyond that child's power to shape. Hence, while Feinberg claims that there is no part of the developmental process that we should consider to be explicitly beyond the possibility of the child's input, there seems to genuinely be such a time, although perhaps best conceived of as 'pre-development'.

Of course, it looks as though even with the developmental process there are certain aspects of it that are permanently barred from an individual's input, regardless of whether there are genetic intentions being enforced. Even Habermas (2003) agrees, saying, "All persons, including those born naturally, are in one way or another dependent on their genetic program" (p.64). As such, "There must be a different reason for dependence on a deliberately fixed genetic program to be relevant for the programmed person" (Habermas, 2003, pp. 64-5). For Habermas (2003), this reason is that "He is principally barred from exchanging roles with his designer. The product cannot, to put it bluntly, draw up a design for its designer"

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(p. 65). According to Habermas (2003), in the case of genetic programming we have a "program designer" who "carries out a one-sided act for which there can be no well-founded assumption of consent" by "disposing over the genetic factors of [the designee with] the paternalistic intention of setting the course, in relevant respects, of the life history of the dependent person" (p. 64). This designee – or "dependent person" – "may interpret, but not revise or undo this intention," thereby making the consequences of this original "intention" irreversible (Habermas, 2003, p. 64). In this way, liberal eugenics is problematic for Habermas (2003) because of the type of interpersonal relationship it creates "for which there is no precedent" (p. 63), resulting in 'irreversible dependence'; it is a relationship of necessary asymmetry, wherein the "creation" can never switch places with the "creator", resulting in "a specific type of paternalism" (p. 64). Because of this degree of control that the designer has to invade and alter the designee, and because there is no sense in which the designer and the designee can switch places in society, the result is that we have an "unprecedented and irreversible" form of paternalism over "biological destiny" (Kass, 2003, p. 52).

In addition to harming the individual subject to eugenic interventions, Habermas believes that this sort of paternalism also harms society. For Habermas, the absence of "irreversible dependence" of one person on another is a necessary condition for moral agency in interpersonal relationships. While he admits that there are in fact asymmetrical relationships in society, he nonetheless maintains that we recognize them as an obstacle to "egalitarian interpersonal relations" (Habermas, 2003, p. 63) that ideally should not be present. Moreover, even if we

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cannot in fact change this asymmetry of power, we can at least in principle change them and recognize them as being in need of change insofar as they go against our shared conceptions of human flourishing. Thus, the problem with "eugenic programming" is that it "establishes a permanent dependence between persons who know that one of them is principally barred from changing social places with the other" and "which is irreversible because it was established by ascription…is foreign to the reciprocal and symmetrical relations of mutual recognition proper to a moral and legal community of free and equal persons" (Habermas, 2003, p. 65). In the end, then, the irreversible act present in eugenic intervention is problematic because, in addition to harming the individual being genetically altered, it also permanently undermines our collective understanding of human flourishing by undermining the sorts of relationships we believe to be warranted when dealing with "free and equal persons."

While Habermas (2003) conceives of the problematic relationship between designer and designee in terms of its "irreversible dependence" and "moral self-understanding" (p. 72), I believe that it is perhaps better understood in terms of invasion and control. On this analysis, what is happening in this irreversible dependence is that the designer wields an unprecedented degree of control over the designee, as evidenced by the fact that the designee cannot meaningfully consent, contest, reappraise, or, on Habermas' analysis, change places with the designer. Moreover, this sort of control, when recognized as a "dissonant case", is necessarily a form of invasion. In wielding and acting upon this degree of control, the designer is in essence encroaching more decidedly upon the interior of the

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person in question. In effect, as Habermas (2003) puts it, "the designer makes himself the *co-author of the life of another*, he intrudes – from the interior, one could say – into the other's consciousness of her own autonomy" (p. 82). Ultimately, this intrusion is felt as a form of invasion – an assault from the outside – and it can in turn affect an individual's "moral self-understanding" by causing a sort of fragmentation of identity or alienation, both of which are discussed in the following two sections of this chapter.

Commodified Man and Fragmented Identity

In addition to violating an open future and invading and controlling an individual, the commodification of that individual can also lead to fragmentation in his or her identity. According to legal scholar and bioethicist Michael Shapiro (1990), "Certain technologies fragment the unity of human life processes and the social structures that are built upon them, assault their givenness, and break them down" (pp. 334-5). The main examples he considers are reproductive technologies, life-prolonging techniques, forms of human enhancement, and organ transplantation; but, on his account, essentially any technology that "presupposes knowledge that life forms and processes are alterable, manipulable…and predictable in ways that remind one of made rather than found or received entities" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 337), would qualify as a fragmenting technology. Relating to chapter 3, this would likely include essentially any commodifying or fragmenting technologies.

According to Shapiro (1990), part of the problem with the "fragmentation and reassembly of the world" is that it acts as a "challenge [to] our classification systems and, therefore, challenge [to] the core of our descriptive and normative thinking" (pp. 338-9). This is because "[f]ragmentation and reassembly create anomalies" – strange things "that simply do not fit our forms of thought and discourse" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 339). This fragmentation and reassembly leads to "strange beings that straddle personhood and thingness (or animalness or plantness)" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 371-2). When we consider certain fragmenting technologies with the capacity to significantly alter either the traits of existing beings (e.g. "persons, fetuses, some early embryos") or possible persons or beings (e.g. "by reworking the genetic material in early embryos"), the source of this fragmentation (at least as it relates to how we think about personal identity) is how the technologies in question focus our attention and efforts of specific traits (Shapiro, 2005, p. 309).

While there are a number of different kinds of variables that go into trait changes (e.g. rate of change; original role of the trait; global effect of the trait, and so on) (Shapiro, 2005, pp. 311-2), Shapiro says we should focus on what he refers to as the "intrusive" variables. Despite the associated pejorative connotations with a word like "intrusive", when describing trait changes themselves Shapiro (2005) means for the term to be used in a descriptive, morally neutral fashion, referring simply to "the more "discontinuous" aspects of technological change of traits" (p. 312 footnote 17), such as, e.g., genetic manipulations that alter what would have been the natural genetic course of an individual as opposed to genetic

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manipulations that would simply enable the natural course to continue as projected.

This neutral description of intrusive trait changes is contrasted with the idea of moral intrusion, which he describes by saying, "a technological choice or outcome is morally intrusive when it eludes or straddles categories that guide the application of moral criteria" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 357). With humans, then, fragmenting technologies – also often examples of intrusive trait changes – are morally intrusive because they treat human beings as being "fully manipulable physical systems" which acts as "an anomaly" because "it creates an intersection between sets – objects and persons – that we normally (if unreflectively) view as disjoint" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 357). According to Shapiro (1990), "Things that straddle categories bearing moral force are unsettling partly because the rules governing our dealings with them have lost at least some force" (p. 357). Thus, by turning humans into anomalous person-object entities, we are confronted with "things" that threaten our folk categorization of the world, which in turn leads to a sort of disequilibrium

Such cognitive disquiet comes about in response to the apparent joining of things traditionally conceived of as being disjoint (humans and objects), which is a result of engaging in the kind of trait focusing normally only reserved for objects and applying that degree of focus to humans. As Shapiro (1990) points out: "The very idea of planned technological modification of traits entails an intensified focus on discrete traits" which ends up "amplifying the attention we historically paid to individual traits and their varying presentations, both in

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ourselves and in others" (p. 314). Now, in itself, some degree of trait attention is perfectly benign; after all: "We do not, for the most part, view each other as indistinguishable or fungible, and we do not mate with or befriend traitless wraiths" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 314). The significance, to Shapiro (1990), seems to be partly in the "matter of *planning*" (p. 343). In the cases of trait changing technologies, he says, "we are necessarily *centering our attention* on a subset of attributes (variously described) to the exclusion (at least temporarily) of others" (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 343-4). This degree of attention on a specific trait, however, and the corresponding view that that trait is fungible – otherwise how would we consider it changeable, replaceable, and so on? – runs the risk of being too similar to how we view and treat objects.

Specific to the object-person intersection mentioned above, Shapiro (1990) says, "If human beings or human material are dealt with in ways associated with objects, the fear is that we will transfer the object status to humans generally" (p. 351); thus, the "descent from person to object…is indeed the central nightmare of the new biology" (p. 354). While Shapiro focuses on genetic interventions as the harbingers of this descent, arguably any "biotechnology that comes closer and closer to the natural functions and mechanisms of the human body also raises doubts about what are the genuinely 'human' qualities of the body" and therefore "poses the question of human identity as well as the distinction of body and machine" (Lenk and Biller-Adorno, 2007, p. 178). In the end, a major part of what is morally intrusive about fragmentation technologies that create an object-person intersection – or perhaps

simply make the boundary between the two less clear – is the fact that they confuse our ability to place 'objects' and 'persons' into their appropriate moral categories.

This confusion of 'object'-'person' moral categorization in turn affects an individual's sense of personal identity. In answer to the question, "How do reduction, objectification, and mere use bear on personal identity, if at all?" Shapiro (2005) replies, "They would seem to affect identity as perceived by others and by oneself, and in some extreme situations the reduced/objectified/merely-used party may operate functionally *as* an object, from all viewpoints, including his own" (p. 343). Thus, the worry is that if the moral categories of 'object' and 'person' are not sufficiently separated as a consequence of some fragmenting or commodifying technology, then individuals might view themselves and others as mere objects; since they can no longer clearly distinguish themselves from objects, personal identity is fragmented to include both 'person' and 'object' associations with respect to the individual's sense of self.

To see how this fragmentation of identity in a person might come about, Shapiro (2005) asks us to "[c]ompare technological alteration of traits with the modifications of machines" (p. 344). He says, "If we are doing *the same sort of thing* to persons as we do to machines [then] perhaps we are objectifying persons by assimilating – reducing – them to things." (Shapiro, 2005, p. 344) His comparison example involves "adjusting the toaster from "toast" to "bagel" [and] switching Donovan the quarterback from "pass" to "run"" (Shapiro, 2005, p.

344). From the outside, this adjustment "from "toast" to "bagel"" and "from "pass" to "run"" (Shapiro, 2005, p. 344) may look like the same sort of thing. If so, the concern is that those outside will come to view or treat Donovan in some meaningful way like they would a toaster, and Donovan will need to incorporate that into his psyche. The underlying concern here is that if an individual sees himself or herself as being treated like an object – in either action or rhetoric and attitude – then the result is a fragmentation of personal identity as a person, to personal identity as some sort of person-object hybrid, or perhaps, more worryingly, solely object.

In addition to the specific impact of this fragmentation of personal identity, Shapiro (2005) is also concerned with what he calls the "conceptual impact" of "the known availability or prospect of technological modification of traits…on the concept of personal identity" (p. 316). For Shapiro (2005), "conceptual impact" with respect to personal identity is not an easy thing to define; however, he offers as a rough estimation the idea that if our concept of personal identity gets "battered in some nonstraightforward senses" (p. 317), then that is sufficient grounds for claiming that there is a conceptual impact afoot. With the example of technological intervention and its conceptual impact on personal identity, Shapiro focuses on the sort of cognitive dissonance that happens to our sense of self and understanding of humanity that results when people are treated increasingly like decomposable units, fragmented into components and reassembled into seemingly new beings.

For an example of how conceptual impact works, we can return to the oft used example in the commodification debate: prostitution. If, as Anderson and Radin proclaim, sex is meant to be a shared, reciprocal good "founded upon a mutual recognition of the partners as sexually attracted to each other and as affirming an intimate relationship in their mutual offering of themselves to each other" (Anderson, 1993, p. 154), then the *selling* of sex – which does not fall under the reciprocal, shared good paradigm – creates a sort of conceptual "split" (Shapiro, 2005, p. 318). Similarly, consider the example of pregnancy and surrogacy – the fact that a single child can have both genetic mother and a gestational mother. This is a recent technological phenomenon that results in the "unbundling" of our concept of motherhood, which used to contain both genetic and gestational components automatically.

This sort of conceptual impact can also occur when concepts previously thought to be separate are suddenly joined together. Considering again the issue of prostitution, there is not simply the dissolution of sex and mutual sharing that is at issue; there is also the joining of sex and money, which are usually treated as functionally non-overlapping concepts. Hence, when they are found conceptually intertwined, there is a similarly problematic conceptual impact like we had when concepts previously held together were separated.

Note that the presence or potential for a problematic *conceptual* impact resulting from a novel bundling or unbundling does not necessarily entail that this (un)bundling is im*moral*. For example, as a liberal society and as liberally-minded people we may wish to say that gay marriage is not immoral, even though it

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unbundle from "marriage" the notion of "heterosexuality" and bundles to marriage the notion of "homosexuality." Similarly, if we go so far as to legalize plural marriage we will unbundles from "marriage" the notion that it is limited to two people and bundle to it the notion that there can be many. Any of these unbundlings and subsequent bundlings will have problematic conceptual impacts (as seen by raucous contemporary debate and outcry). But we may not wish to say that such changes are immoral.

With this understanding of conceptual impact, we can see that there are at least two distinct ways in which commodification and fragmenting technologies are potentially morally problematic. First, by focusing attention on specific traits and viewing them as malleable, changeable, upgradeable, and so on, these traits are therefore treated as decomposable and separable from the conception of a person's identity. For certain traits and trait changes, this perceived separability may not be particularly problematic. More specifically, if the traits being changed are not central to a person's conception of personal identity, or if the changes in question are relatively minor in degree, then the conceptual impact may ultimately be minor. For example, to a woman for whom hairstyles are fairly unimportant to core identity, the whimsical change from bob to bouffant may be of little consequence; for Pope's Belinda, however, such change would lead to nothing less than the invocation of the gods. Locks aside, when we face more central attributes and more extensive changes, the result will likely be an instability in our view of personal identity (Shapiro, 2005, p. 327).

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The second morally problematic form of conceptual impact that might occur with commodifying and fragmenting technologies is the 'bundling' together of seemingly disparate concepts. As above, the conceptual impact and its effect on moral understanding is arguably linked to the centrality and importance the given concepts have to personal identity. Returning to the marriage example, it may be that marriage is a feature of such fundamental importance in the lives of the population that the conceptual impact impacted by gay or plural marriage is of near astronomical proportions, thereby indicating a genuine moral intrusion. However, the more mundane and benign example where we have unbundled "cow" from "leather" and bundled to the latter "polyurethane" – thereby creating the fashion anomaly "pleather" – is of little conceptual and moral impact (except, e.g., on Project Runway). Perhaps things would be different if we were cows.

With respect to personal identity, the more problematic concepts that are likely to be brought together are 'person' and 'object'. As previously mentioned, there is a perceived "central nightmare" that if the categories of 'person' and 'object' are too closely associated, then the moral status of 'object' – and the corresponding way we treat and think about objects – will be transferred to persons, resulting in a "descent from person to object" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 354). This is arguably the form of personal identity fragmentation that would occur as a result of the invasion and control discussed in the previous section. When "the designer makes himself the *co-author of the life of another*" (Habermas, 2003, p. 82), he or she treats the other essentially as an object, since in our accepted concepts only objects actually have designers (this is, of course, unless you

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include a religious perspective wherein human individuals are designed by a creative intelligence; but this is outside the purview of this dissertation). Alternatively, the designer may cause fragmentation in the designee through another sort of bundling, since the designee now must conceive of his or her personal identity as including 'self'-authorship and 'other'-authorship, when typically 'other' does not pervade one's sense of self in this fashion. Whatever the method – whether conceptual impact via bundling or unbundling – fragmenting and commodifying technologies, rhetoric, and attitudes can negatively affect and fragment an individual's sense of personal identity, thereby making these technologies, etc., morally problematic.

Commodified Man and Alienation

In addition to the potential problems of a closed future, invasion and control of a person, and fragmentation of identity, the commodification of individuals can also lead to a person feeling a sense of alienation. As briefly indicated in chapter 3, according to Radin, there are two possible types of alienating responses to commodification: First, "If the discourse of fungibility" – that is, the view that one or more of one's personal attributes is separable from oneself – "is partially made one's own, it creates disorientation of the self that experiences the distortion of its own personhood" (Radin, 1987, p. 1907). As a sort of classic Marxist example, "workers who internalize market rhetoric conceive of their own labor as a commodity separate from themselves as persons; they dissociate their daily life

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from their own self-conception" (Radin, 1987, p. 1907). Second, if the discourse of fungibility is not internalized – and to the extent that it is not internalized – "it creates alienation between those who use the discourse and those whose personhood they wrong in doing so" (Radin, 1987, p. 1907). As a parallel to the above example, "workers who do not conceive of their labor as a commodity are alienated from others who do, because, in the workers' view, people who conceive of their labor as a commodity fail to see them as whole persons" (Radin, 1987, p. 1907).

On Radin's account of alienation, then, the difference between the two types of alienation results essentially from whether or not the individual in question internalizes (or "appropriates", as Habermas would say) the surrounding commodifying rhetoric and attitudes. Insofar as the rhetoric is internalized, the individual suffers from a sort of self-alienation; insofar as it is not internalized, he or she suffers from a sort of alienation from others and society.

Radin's analysis of alienation is at least partly derived from the work of Karl Marx, who in his "Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844" discussed the alienating effects of "Estranged Labour". As Marx (1978) saw it, labor doesn't just produce commodities; it also reproduces itself and produces the worker himself (or herself) as a commodity, and it "does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally" (p. 71). Marx therefore saw a sort of inverse relationship between the power of overall commodification in a society and the power (or value) of the individual, "With the *increasing value* of the

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world of things [proceeding] in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men" (Marx, 1978, p. 71).

According to Marx's analysis, the generation of this inverse relationship, and its resulting alienation, occur essentially as follows: First, "The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the objects" (Marx, 1978, p. 72) . Moreover, "Whatever the product of his labour is, he is not" (Marx, 1978, p. 72). As such, "the greater this activity, the greater is the worker's lack of objects" and "the greater this product, the less is he himself" (Marx, 1978, p. 72). This means that "[t]he *alienation* of the worker in his product" represents "not only that his labour becomes an object, an *external* existence, but [also] that it exist *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him" (Marx, 1978, p. 72), In a sense, then, the life of the worker becomes transferred from himself to the object of his labor, which feeds off him as a parasite and becomes stronger as he becomes weaker.

Marx therefore sees not only an inverse relationship between the world of commodities and the world of men, but in fact an antagonistic one; commodities themselves become "hostile" forces, generating alienation for the individuals who create them. Moreover, by experiencing these commodities as hostile forces, Marx says that the worker ends up becoming estranged or alienated not only from the commodities themselves, but also from his own self. He asks, "How would the worker come to face the product of his activity as a stranger, were it not that in the very act of production he was estranging himself from himself?" (Marx, 1978, p.

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73) After all, the product of labor "is…but the summary of the activity of production," so if this product "is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation" (Marx, 1978, pp. 73-4). In the end, "the estrangement of the object of labour is merely [the summary of] the estrangement, the alienation, in the activity of labour itself" (Marx, 1978, p. 74). Because Marx (1978) sees a person's labor as "belong[ing] to his essential being" (p. 74) – which in Radin's (1987) terms would mean that it is something "integral to personhood" (p. 1906), or in Feinberg's (1980) analysis an important part of a person's self-determination (p.145) – the experience of his labor as something alien to himself means that the worker inevitably feels alienated from himself, because his very person has become fragmented and alienating.

This estrangement from one's own labor in turn leads to an individual feeling alienated from others. Marx (1978) asks the question, "If the product of labour is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong? If my own activity does not belong to me, if it is an alien, a coerced activity, to whom, then, does it belong?" (p. 77). His answer: "To a being *other* than me" (Marx, 1978, p. 77). According to Marx (1978), "If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, if it confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to some *other man than the worker*" (p. 77). Moreover, "If the worker's activity is a torment to him, to another it must be *delight* and his life's joy" (Marx, 1978, p. 77). And, since "[n]ot the gods, not nature, but only man himself can be this alien power over man," this means that

the "*other*" must be some other man (Marx, 1978, p. 78). The result of man's estranged labor is therefore ultimately an alienation and "*estrangement of man from man*" (Marx, 1978, p. 77).

Moreover, unlike Radin (1987) who thinks that this estrangement essentially occurs between those who internalize the commodification rhetoric and those who do not (p. 1907), on Marx's account it looks as though everyone who internalizes the commodifying rhetoric will experience this estrangement from others. He says, "Every self-estrangement of man from himself and from nature appears in the relation in which he places himself and nature to men other than and differentiated from himself" (Marx, 1978, p. 78). As such, relationships with every other man become estranged relationships.

This direct relationship between alienation from self and alienation from others was further explored by neo-Marxist Herbert Marcuse, whose later interpretation of Marx likewise maintains that these two types of alienation necessarily occur simultaneously. According to Marcuse (1941), "Labor separated from its object is, in the last analysis, an 'alienation of man from man'" (p. 279). In labor, "individuals are isolated from and set against each other. They are linked in the commodities they exchange rather than in their persons" (Marcuse 1941, p. 279). Consequently: "Man's alienation from himself is simultaneously an estrangement from his fellow men" (Marcuse, 1941, p. 279). In this respect, then, Radin's division of commodification as resulting two types of alienation is practical only in terms of categorization; in the real world – should we agree with Marx and Marcuse – they will necessarily be present concurrently.

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Returning to Habermas' (2003) analysis of how commodification and the closed future lead to the experience of a co-authored life, we can see how this intrusion "from the interior…into the other's consciousness of her own autonomy" (p. 82) relates to the types of alienation just described. "Insofar as the genetically altered person feels that the scope for a possible use of her ethical freedom has been intentionally changed by a prenatal design," Habermas (2003) says, "she may suffer from the consciousness of sharing the authorship of her own life and her own destiny with someone else" (p. 82). Moreover, "[t]his sort of *alienating* dilution or fracturing of one's own identity" functionally represents "that an important boundary has become permeable" (Habermas, 2003, p. 82). Namely, it represents that "the deontological shell which assures the inviolability of the person, the uniqueness of the individual, and the irreplaceability of one's own subjectivity" has been breached, and is now open to external manipulations (Habermas, 2003, p. 82). Hence, Habermas (2003) conceives of alienation as "dilution or fracturing of one's own identity" (p. 82), which arguably is akin to Shapiro's analysis of fragmentation. But, this fragmentation follows the pattern Marx described as to how the experience of commodities as alien, hostile forces leads to self-alienation. When the individual, like the worker, sees part of his genes, his neuro-chemical makeup, his essential self, and so on, as a stranger to himself and the result of an outside source or influence, then he can become estranged from that part of his self, and perhaps over time even his entire sense of self.

This self-alienation will in turn lead the individual in question to feel alienated from others: the recognition that this estrangement from his or her own personhood requires that that personhood, in effect, belong to another leads to him or her feeling alienated from others. If the individual can point to a specific invader, like Habermas' designee who can pick out the designer, then there is a particular 'other' from which he or she can be alienated. However, when we move away from Habermas' example of a single individual engaging in specific commodifying acts to a broad commodification example of a society engaging in widespread commodifying rhetoric and attitudes, then there is no one person that the commodified, alienated person can point to as the 'other'. This is arguably a better extension of Radin's (1987) understanding of the "alienation between those who use the discourse and those whose personhood they wrong in doing so" (p. 1907); here, everyone using the discourse – i.e. everyone involved in the commodifying rhetoric – constitutes the 'other' from which the commodified individual is alienated. If, in the end, the entire society or the structure of the society itself is guilty of some form of broad commodification, then the alienated individual may ultimately feel alienated from his or her entire surroundings in addition to his or her own self.

Commodified Man and Objectification

In addition to feeling invaded and alienated, an individual being commodified is also likely to feel objectified. While nomologically similar, there is at present a

specific theory of objectification that is distinct from commodification, so it warrants its own discussion section as part of understanding the present overall theory. Martha Nussbaum (1995) suggests that there are at least seven different plausible conceptions at play when we are discussing objectification. First, is instrumentality, whereby "The objectifier treats the object as a tool of his or her purposes" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Second, there is the denial of autonomy, whereby "The objectifier treats the object as lacking in autonomy and self-determination" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Third is inertness, wherein, "The objectifier treats the object as lacking in agency, and perhaps even activity" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Fourth, we have fungibility, when "The objectifier treats the object as interchangeable (a) with other objects of the same type, and/or (b) with objects of other types" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Fifth, there is violability, wherein "The objectifier treats the object as lacking in boundary-integrity, as something that is permissible to break up, smash, break down" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Sixth is ownership, when "The objectifier treats the object as something that is owned by another, can be bought or sold, etc" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Finally, we have the denial of subjectivity, where "The objectifier treats the object as something whose experience and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account" (Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257).

Arguably many (or all) of these types of objectification, or combinations thereof, qualify as the sort of commodification and fragmentation discussed in chapter 3 and earlier sections of this chapter. For example, the second version (denial of autonomy) looks like Feinberg's concern about violating an

individual's open future; the fourth version (fungibility) is a primary component in Radin's analysis of commodification; the fifth version (violability), fits with both Habermas' understanding of commodification as a form of invasion and Shapiro's view that commodification leads to fragmentation; and the sixth version (ownership) is essentially the traditional view of commodification. The other versions (first, third, and seventh) might also qualify as the sort of pervasive commodification rhetoric and attitudes that we are concerned with respect to broad (e.g. rhetorical) commodification.

Given this consideration of how objectification, at least roughly speaking, is a form of the kind of commodification with which we are concerned, the primary focus of this section is going to be on how objectification affects the person being objectified. In order to understand these effects of objectification, we will look more closely at the psychological theory called 'objectification theory', focusing on the work of Barbara Frederickson and Tomi-Ann Roberts. They emphasis in particular the consequences of sexual objectification as experienced by women; however, since, as Nussbaum points out, there are several available types of objectification not limited to sexual objectification, I believe that we can use their analysis of the effects of sexual objectification as a plausible illustration of the potential effects of these other forms of objectification as well. Moreover, when we consider the contention by such scholars as Donna Dickenson (2007) that the various forms of commodifying technologies act in such a way as to subject all those commodified – both male and female alike – "to the objectification that was previously largely confined to women's experience" (p.8),

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then we have reason to believe that the objectification effects of being commodified may indeed be quite similar to those of being sexually objectified.

According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997), "The common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the experience of being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (p. 174). Using Nussbaum's different types of objectification, Frederickson and Robert are using a combination of at least the first (instrumentality – in terms of being valued mainly for consumption by others) and third (inertness – in terms of being just a body) types. They are also using an understanding of objectification as reducibility to parts or functions that are taken as representative of the value of the whole. In another description of sexual objectification, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) say, "Sexual objectification occurs whenever woman's body, body parts, or sexual functions are separated out from her person, reduced to the status of mere instruments, or regarded as if they were capable of representing her" (p. 175). The closest parallel to this that we have in Nussbaum would be something along the lines of a hybrid of versions four (fungibility) and five (violability), since the bodily integrity of the woman being objectified is broken down into decomposable 'units', which are then treated as exchangeable with similar 'units' in other women. Thus, we have a view of objectification wherein a body or body parts are seen are separable from a person, or a person reducible to a mere body or body parts, and these parts, which are functionally interchangeable with similar parts in any other, are in turn thought freely available for exploitation by the objectifier.

In their analysis, Frederickson and Roberts focus on the effects of experiencing "objectifying gaze". They contend that "The most subtle and deniable way sexualized evaluation is enacted – and arguably the most ubiquitous – is through gaze, or visual inspection of the body" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 175). According to their view, there are three main "related arenas" in which a woman might experience objectifying gaze, namely: "within actual interpersonal and social encounters"; "in visual media that depict interpersonal and social encounters"; and "in people's encounters with visual media that spotlight bodies and body parts and seamlessly align viewers with an implicit sexualizing gaze" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 176). This third manifestation, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) claim, is "perhaps most insidious manner in which objectifying gaze infuses American culture" (p. 176). In brief, "objectifying gaze occurs in certain kinds of objectifying social or interpersonal encounters and in visual media depicting such interpersonal encounters or focusing on specific body aspects" Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 176). These specific arenas aside, however, I believe that the sort of "ubiquitous" nature of objectifying gaze fits well with our understanding of broad commodification as being an ever-present rhetoric of attitude of the thing or individual in question being open to commodification.

The primary harm that results from this sort of ubiquitous objectifying gaze is that it eventually leads, in most cases, the individual being objectified to in turn engage in self-objectification. According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997), objectifying treatment "coaxes girls and women to adopt a peculiar view of self.

Objectification theory posits that the cultural milieu of objectification functions to socialize girls and women to, at some level, treat themselves as object to be looked at and evaluated" (p. 177). Thus, beginning "with compliance to minimally sufficient external pressures," this objectification socialization "proceeds through interpersonal identification, and ends with individuals claiming ownership of socialized values and attitudes, often by incorporating them into their sense of self" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 177). To use Habermas' terminology, the individual "appropriates" the objectifier's view and expectation that she (or he) is open to objectification – therefore reducible to a mere body, body part, or function, interchangeable with similar parts in others, and freely available for use. For Radin, this would mean that the objectified individual has made the discourse of objectification (or, in our case, commodification) partially her or his own.

As a result of this internalization of the objectifying attitude, the individuals being objectified can adopt an "observer's perspective on self" and "come to view themselves as objects or "sights" to be appreciated by others" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 179). According to objectification theory, this leads "to a form of self-consciousness, characterized by habitual monitoring of the body's outward appearance" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 179). Some studies indicate that those women who self-monitor often view their relative attractiveness in terms of exchange value, something to be "good treatment in relationships" and "social and economic power", thereby behooving them "to anticipate the repercussions of their appearance… [and] to be their own first

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surveyors" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 178) "as a strategy…to help determine how other people will treat them, which has clear implications for their quality of life" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 180). However, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) maintain that "This habit of self-conscious body-monitoring is far from trivial" (p. 180). Instead, they "propose that it can profoundly disrupt a woman's flow of consciousness" because "significant portions of women's conscious attention can often be usurped by concerns related to real or imagined, present or anticipated, surveyors of their physical appearance" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 180). Moreover, "This habitual body monitoring…can create a predictable set of [negative] subjective experiences" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 180).

Included in this set of subjective experiences that result from (self-) objectification are: increased shame and anxiety, loss of peak motivational states, and lack of awareness of internal bodily states. According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997), "The negative emotion of shame occurs when people evaluate themselves relative to some internalized or cultural ideal and come up short" (p. 181). Over time, this attitude towards oneself often becomes recurrent, difficult to alleviate, and global (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 182). They point out, "Individuals experiencing shame tend to attribute their short-comings globally to the self in its totality (e.g., "I am a bad person") rather than narrowly to their specific actions (e.g., "I did something bad")" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 181). Moreover, "The extent to which body "correction" is motivated by shame elevates the task of meeting societal standards of beauty to a moral obligation"

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(Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 182). Thus, once an individual has internalized the objectification rhetoric and ideals of a society, she or he might ultimately see it as a moral obligation to fulfill those ideals.

This shame is often associated by anxiety, which Frederickson and Roberts (1997) describe by saying, "People experience the negative emotion of anxiety when they anticipate danger or threats to self; distinct from fear, however, these threats often remain ambiguous" (p. 182). With respect to appearance anxiety in particular, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) say, "Not knowing exactly when and how one's body will be looked at and evaluated can create anxiety about potential exposure" (p. 182). More broadly, we can say that an individual who lives in a society wherein one might frequently be exposed to objectification (or commodification) experiences frequent anxiety over not knowing exactly when, where, or by whom she or he will be so objectified (or commodified).

This anxiety, which requires the individual "to maintain an almost chronic vigilance" with respect to her body and her observer's perspective of self (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 183), in turn leads to the diminishment of "peak motivational states". As defined by Frederickson and Roberts (1997), peak motivational states are "those rare moments during which we feel we are truly living, uncontrolled by others, creative and joyful" (p. 183). Women in highly objectifying cultures end up experiencing a diminishment of these states in one of two ways: First, women "are interrupted when actual others call attention to the appearance or functions of her body" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 183). Second, trying to maintain "an observer's perspective on physical self forces

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women to simultaneously experience their bodies as "objects" as well as capacities" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 184). When considering commodification, this analysis would basically mean that an individual being commodified could suffer from a diminishment of peak experiences in one of two ways: First, when being subjected to acts of narrow commodification, such as being actively objectified by receiving a "cat call", actively invaded in terms of some external co-author, and so on. Second, when being subjected to broad commodification, which imposes an ever-present "observer's perspective" and forces the individual to see himself or herself as both 'person' and 'object', 'self' and 'other', and so on.

Active adoption of an observer's perspective also results in a lack of awareness of internal bodily states. According to Frederickson and Roberts (1997), this lack of awareness of internal bodily states leads to feeling that the self and body are "alienated" or "distant" (p. 184). An individual is no longer able to read his or her own "physiological cues", and instead looks for external cues that might indicate an underlying physical state. One proposed explanation is that "Because women are vigilantly aware of their outer bodily appearance, they may be left with fewer perceptual resources available for attending to inner body experience" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 185). Another, more *disturbing*, explanation is that perpetually adopting the observer's perspective may actually lead women to have their own first-person perspectives on their selves completely *supplanted* by an observer's perspective on the self (Frederickson and Roberts,

1997, p. 187); they therefore cannot read their internal bodily states simply because they have become so far removed from their own sense of self.

As a result of this set of negative subjective experiences caused by an individual's habitual body monitoring – increased shame and anxiety, loss of peak motivational states, and lack of awareness of internal bodily states – Frederickson and Roberts indicate a number of potential mental health risks. In particular, they discuss the increased likelihood that an individual undergoing these subjective experiences will also suffer from unipolar depression, sexual dysfunction and eating disorders (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 185). However, I believe that the more distressing consequence is the plausible "loss of self" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 187), or "silencing" of the self (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 193). When there is a self that is experiencing depression, dysfunction of disorders, there still is hope that these negatives can be alleviated and the underlying self healed; but with the self gone and entirely subsumed by an *other*'s perspective, it is not clear that the original self can be saved.

Frederickson and Roberts (1997) do allow that "an observer's perspective on the body might become internalized to varying degrees" (p. 180). As such "We would expect to find individual differences in the degree to which girls and women self-objectify" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 180). Moreover, there are likely to be differences in an individual's experience of being objectified from either himself or herself, or from others. Accordingly: "some women may have internalized and consequently be dogged by observers' perspectives on their bodies in *most* of the contexts in which they find themselves"; others, however,

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"may only be made aware of these perspectives when, for example, they receive a "cat call" while walking down a busy street" (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997, p. 180). Nonetheless, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) maintain "that in a culture that objectifies the female body, whatever girls and women do, the potential always exists for their thoughts and actions to be interrupted by images of how their bodies appear" (p. 180). For commodification, this would mean that in a highly commoditized society – one with ever-present market rhetoric or fragmentation rhetoric – an individual will, in essence, *always* have the "social potential" for being commodified.

Conclusion: Commodified Man as Object

While throughout this chapter we have seen a seemingly wide array of potential commodification effects – physical, emotional, and attitudinal – they can all reasonably be cashed out as variations of a view wherein man is seen as object. Returning to the beloved potter v pot scenario from chapter 1, you will perhaps recall that this relationship was fundamentally and irreversibly asymmetrical, with the potter having unquestionable control over the creation and outcome of the pot. This level of control denies the possibility of the pot having an open future (a la Feinberg), and demands a level of power over the pot that becomes genuinely invasive (a la Habermas). Moreover, the inherent right of the potter over the pot necessitates that the pot has, at a minimum, a co-authored life (with the potter as co-author), which can lead to a sense of alienation (a la Radin and Marx) and –

given the power and righteousness of the potter – a sense of unrighteousness, shame, etc. (a la Frederickson and Roberts). And finally, insofar as we do not believe that people and pots ought to both be categorized as 'objects', the fact of the person being treated like a pot results in a fragmentation to identity and is ergo immoral (a la Shapiro). Contra Job our attitude here should not be one of self-despite, and we should be most unwilling to repent to dust and ashes.

Chapter 5

MAN COMMODIFYING

Perhaps more interesting than the feelings of those individuals being commodified are the correlative attitudes of those individuals who are doing the commodifying (including, of course, the possibility that one might be both). I say more interesting because, in working under the assumption that we might be heading towards some near or distant future in which human enhancement technologies will be widely available and more widely used, then at present, we are more likely the ones doing the commodifying. In our quest to establish an ethics for the future it is not enough to hypothesize about those who will be harmed in the wake of our decisions now and what their emotional responses might be; we need also to consider what we ourselves will become in the making of these decisions and whether, having thus made them, we will continue to be "a mankind worthy of the human name" (Jonas, 1979, p. 42).

While I had originally intended to do this by separating the matter of man commodifying into two distinct chapters – one in which man extends this drive to commodify outwards and against others; and another in which this drive is extended inwards, and man engages in a form of self-commodification – as the two chapters progressed it became increasingly clear to me that my desire for the outward-inward dichotomy to present itself along clear lines would simply not be translatable into the actual attitudes as we find them. The further I delved, the more convinced I became that beneath this drive on both sides of this illusory

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dichotomy was essentially the same sort of impulse, one that would ultimately manifest itself differently depending on the commodifying agent and the commodifying object. I have therefore decided to keep the two types of commodification manifestation together under one chapter.

For each of the following three sections, then, I will be considering both the inherent commodification attitudes of the individuals who are commodifying others as well as the inherent commodification attitudes of the individuals who are commodifying themselves. I will consider first the commodification manifestation that is outward directing, then the manifestation that is inward directing, typically devoting greater space to the former. In doing this, I do not mean necessarily to imply that the outward directing form of commodification is the prior or more fundamental of the two (such as with Freud, who in discussing sadism and masochism considers sadism, which is outward directing, to be the primary, fundamental impulse, whereas masochism is essentially sadism turned inwards when it cannot achieve an appropriate outside outlet. After discussing some of the features of the respective type of commodification and its corresponding commodification attitude, in both outward and inward manifestation, I will highlight what I take to be some of the key features of the relevant attitude of the commodifying man in that section.

I will begin in the next section with the notion of commodifying man as a manufacturer. Since we ended the previous chapter with the general conclusion that a commodified man is essentially an object or product of manufacture (e.g. a pot), I believe it is most appropriate to begin our discussion of commodifying man

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with the correlate member of this relationship: the manufacturer (or, more broadly, the objectifier). After this, I will turn to the related notion of commodifying man as master. It is related, I will argue, because it is hard to conceive of a manufacturer who does not consider himself or herself a sort of master of the object of manufacture; however I also treat it separately because the defining attitudinal feature is different and, moreover, we can arguably consider a master who is not also a manufacturer. Next, I draw out the more menacing implications of the attitude of a commodifying man, namely that it represents a form of sadism when directed outwards, or masochism when directed inwards. Finally, I explain and expand upon what I believe to be the main underlying impulses of the commodifying attitude.

Commodifying Man as Manufacturer

For dealing with the notion of commodifying man as a manufacturer we will be taking two main approaches. First, in considering the general attitude of man commodifying an 'other', we will look to the more specific case of engineering or enhancing children, and the resulting manufacturer-product dichotomy that usurps the treasured parent-child relationship. For this, we will emphasize the work of bioethicist Leon Kass and the President's Council of Bioethics (2003). We will also discuss some of the implications of this view when it extends past the parent-child relationship to human-human relations more generally. Next, we will explore the role of man as manufacturer of himself or herself, drawing mainly

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from the work of bioethicist and feminist scholar Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991) on cosmetic surgery. Finally, having thus illustrated the manufacture-like relationship that such commodification encourages, we will consider some of the general traits of a commodifying man acting as a manufacturer.

In 2003, the President's Council on Bioethics (henceforth referred to as the Council) – chaired by Leon Kass – critically explored a number of proposed biotechnological "pursuits" of "happiness" – better children, superior performance, ageless bodies, and happy souls. While we might arguably consider all of these "pursuits" to be areas subject to potential human commodification, the pursuit of better children is where the attitude of commodifying man as manufacturer is perhaps most apparent, and so we will focus our efforts here. In analyzing this particular pursuit, the Council considers at least three general arguments about the potentially objectionable effects of biologically engineering humans – particularly one's offspring: (1) a concern about changing the parent-child relationship; (2) the moving of procreation toward manufacture; and (3) expanding parental choice and mastery over the next generation.

For the first argument – the change in the parent-child relationship – the Council points out the already present shifting parental attitude from gift to conditional existence. According to the Council (2003), "the practice of prenatal screening has established as a cultural norm (or at least as a culturally acceptable norm)" the idea "that admission to life is no longer unconditional, that certain conditions or traits are disqualifying" (p. 36). Thus, they believe, "there appears to be a growing consensus, both in the medical community and in society at large,

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that a child-to-be should meet a certain (for now, minimal) standard to be entitled

to be born" (President's Council, 2003, p. 36). This growing practice of making

the existence of children conditional upon them meeting certain minimum

standards – increasingly common as a result of the widespread practice of prenatal

genetic diagnosis – when expanded to the eventual choosing of qualities an

individual wants for his or her children, is thought to cause a shift in parental, as

well as societal, attitudes towards prospective children. Specifically, according to

the Council (2003), it is a shift "from simple acceptance to judgment and control,

from seeing a child as an unconditionally welcome gift to seeing him as a

conditionally acceptable product" (p. 37).

Now, we might question the Council's assumption that at present children

are, in point of fact, welcomed unconditionally; we might also take issue with the

presumption that if not viewed as an "unconditionally welcome gift" then the only

other option is to be viewed as "a conditionally acceptable product". However, let

us bracket these concerns and see what follows if the Council is indeed correct in

their futurological assessment: If the Council is right, then coinciding with this

perception of one's child "as a conditionally acceptable product" are heightened

quality standards and a diminished tolerance of imperfection. While selecting

against disease primarily functions to eliminate parents' fears about any potential

future ailments their child might have, selecting *for* specific traits seems to add to

parents' hopes and expectations about their child's future potential for excellence.

According to the Council (2003), this ""better" child may bear the burden of

living up to the standards he was "designed" to meet" (p. 55). Not only does the

oppressive weight of this burden potentially "impinge upon the child's freedom to make his own way in the world" (President's Council, 2003, p. 55) (see, e.g. chapter 4 of this dissertation), but when moved to a societal level, this burden of perfection might lead to widespread intolerance of those individuals who fail to live up to this perfection – i.e. those individuals who are deemed "imperfect". Even now, parents who have children with Down Syndrome and related afflictions are often looked down upon for not screening such a child out; Kass and the rest of the Council worry about how much worse the social pressure will be to only have perfect children once the technology becomes more advanced, and that soon even those parents who might have otherwise viewed their child as an "unconditionally welcome gift" might ultimately come to view him or her as a "conditionally acceptable product" because of this social consensus. Thus, their worry is that beginning with a shift of parental attitude in individual cases, whereby the children are seen as products (of manufacture), we will end up with a shift of societal attitude wherein both children and adults are subject to being viewed like products rather than people: like pots, made for certain purposes that, should they fail to fulfill them, are (modestly) viewed as "less than" and (extravagantly) subject to elimination.

This shifting perception of individuals as the products of manufacture is even more evident when we look at the procedural changes in the creation of children, and how these children come to be, in a very real sense, made or manufactured. To illustrate this, the Council (2003) asks us to consider a hypothetical scenario wherein "a decade from now, IVF and PGD have been

perfected to the point where preimplantation screening is safe and effective, not prohibitively expensive, and capable of identifying a wide range of markers for heritable disorders" (p. 53). This means that "prospective parents (perfectly fertile) routinely have the option of using these technologies in order to select an essentially disease-free embryo for transfer to the mother's womb" (President's Council, 2003, p. 53). The Council (2003) asks whether under such hypothetical circumstances "might not the practice become moderately" – perhaps even *highly* – widespread?" They wonder, "Could many people come to regard using IVF plus PGD as safer (for the child) than the randomness of sex, and therefore preferable to natural procreation even when there is no particular history of genetic disease?" (p. 53). The concern here is not so much that these technologies might ensure better health (indeed, the Council, like most people, would deem health a worthy value and a worthwhile goal); the main concern the Council has is that as a result of such widespread adoption of these technologies we do irreversible damage to another worthy value – the meaning of child-bearing (and, more broadly, inter-human relations).

For the Council, the widespread adoption and infiltration of IVF and PGD into our social psyche is not just a small shift in procreation, but rather a complete usurpation of the original act. According to the Council (2003), "The salient fact about human procreation in its natural context is that children are not *made* but *begotten*" (p. 70). What they mean by "begotten" is that "children are the issue of our love, not the product of our wills. A man and a woman do not produce or choose a *particular* child, as they might buy a particular brand of soap [but] stand

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in relation to their child as recipients of a gift" (President's Council, 2003, p. 70).

Part of being a "gift" is the notion that with gifts "we learn to accept as gratefully

as we can"; by contrast, "products of our wills we try to shape in accordance with

our wants and desires" (President's Council, 2003, p. 70). Since, on their account,

"[p]rocreation as traditionally understood invites acceptance, not reshaping or

engineering", the attitude wherein children are made is wrong, since we have lost

the sense of children as gifts and instead see them as existing "simply for our

fulfillment" (President's Council, 2003, p. 70).

As before, we may take issue with the sort of either-or perspective

imposed by the Council. Indeed, it hardly seems fair or accurate to suppose that a

parent views their child as either a gratefully accepted, loved gift or as a designed

product of narcissistic wish-fulfillment; even in the case of soap-selection we can

appreciate certain properties of the soap (e.g. lather, color, scent, etc.) for their

own sake rather than purely for our self-service. But, these concerns aside we

begin to see with IVF and PGD a shift – even if only a subtle one – underlying

parental attitude, wherein, "procreation begins to take on certain aspects of the

idea – if not the practice – of manufacture, the making of a product to a specified

standard" (President's Council, 2003, p. 55). Instead of simply letting nature take

its course – as per "traditional" procreation – we now have a situation where

"[t]he parent – in partnership with the IVF doctor or genetic counselor – becomes

in some measure the master of the child's fate" (President's Council, 2003, p. 55).

This newly added, more mechanistic measure is thought to lead to "a more

objectified understanding of children" (Widdows, 2009, p. 41) – wherein they are

products of design, subject to a given standard – "and a more mechanical and contractual construction of the parenting relationship" (Widdows, 2009, p. 41) – whereby they are expected to meet that standard as part of the 'contract' of their conditional existence.

Elsewhere, Kass (1997) describes this problem of what happens when the seemingly more benign goals of genetic screening move towards the control of genetic engineering and genetic enhancement. While he agree that "health and fitness are clearly great goods," he says, "there is something deeply disquieting in looking on our prospective children as artful products perfectible by genetic engineering, increasingly held to our willfully imposed designs, specifications and margins of tolerable error" (Kass, 1997, p. 20). For him, "One must never forget that these are human beings upon whom our eugenic or merely playful fantasies are to be enacted" (Kass, 1997, p. 23). The problem with genetic enhancement then has to do with what it takes "to achieve the requisite quality control over new human life" (Kass, 1997, p. 25). For this, "human conception and gestation will need to be brought fully into the bright light of the laboratory" where it will then be "fertilized, nourished, pruned, weeded, watched, inspected, prodded, pinched, cajoled, injected, tested, rated, graded, approved, stamped, wrapped, sealed and delivered" (Kass, 1997, p .25); according to Kass, "There is no other way to produce the perfect baby" (p. 25). This image is one of an assembly production line – baby by Honda, or perhaps baby by the Central London Hatchery and Conditioning Center – and it is likely this sort of imagery that underpins the intuition that, even if for benign or health-driven goals, we should be concerned

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about the potentially unpleasant and damaging attitudinal side-effect wherein "the world of genetic engineering" is one in which "our children would become products of our own manufacture" (Annas, 2005, p. 35).

While this example of engineered children is more narrow than we ultimately want for our argument – especially since it runs the risk of bringing in confounding baggage of the special status of the parent-child relationship, pre-existent control aspects potentially inherent in the relationship, and so on – it illustrates in a very poignant way the sense of manufacture that accompanies the more general view that another's traits can be determined, exchanged, upgraded, and so on down the line. The more expanded worry is that this view of children will extend to our view of humans writ large, and that in seeing people as mere "assemblages of molecules, arranged in a certain way" (Annas, 2002, p. 135), open to the 'pruning' and 'prodding' of laboratory production we will begin to "view [ourselves] and each other as products which can be "manufactured," and subject to quality-control measures," as things that can "be "made to measure," both literally and figuratively" (Annas, 2002, p. 135) .

We have already begun to see this mechanistic mentality slip itself into our social psyche. Take, for example, the increasingly mechanized, commodified view of the human body: In their 1998 Hastings Center Report, Dorothy Nelkin and Lori Andrews analyzed the escalating view of the human body as a location for "prospecting." They say that as a result of this prospecting attitude, "The body is a "project" – a system that can be divided and dissected down to the molecular level" (Nelkin and Andrews, 1998, p. 35). The body is "viewed as an object with

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replaceable and collectible parts" ((Nelkin and Andrews, 1998, p. 32), "popular repugnance" of which "is suggested by a recurrent image of the bar code on the body" ((Nelkin and Andrews, 1998, p. 36). Anthropologist Cecil Helman (1988) concurs with these findings, indicating that as a result of the more frequent division and dissection of the human body – more specifically with implants and transplants – "the image of the body in industrial society…has been reconceptualized as a 'machine'…The body is now a collection of 'parts' or 'pieces', for which 'spares' are available when they finally wear out" (p. 15). Moreover, these spare parts "are mass-produced, impersonal [and] replaceable" (Helman, 1988, p. 15), which is in keeping with the machine-like imagery.

Similarly mechanistic understandings of the human mind have come to dominate contemporary psychology and psychiatry, wherein many psychological disturbances are seen as mostly (if not solely) the result of damaged mental machinery, faulty hardware to be fixed with, e.g., Prozac as we might fix a faulty car with a new part (see e.g. Kramer, 1993; for arguments as to the problematic nature of this sort of view, see e.g., Freedman, 1998). Collectively, the mind and body have come to be described metaphorically as ""systems," "chemical building blocks," "hardware," "software"" and so on, which "have, in effect, objectified the person, who becomes less an individual than a set of mechanical parts or chemical processes that can be calibrated or well defined" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 337, footnote 33). In the end, this mechanistic view of mind and body – viewing it as a decomposable system, etc – likens humans to being *themselves* mechanistic – mere products of manufacture.

When directed inwards, however, this attitude of man as manufacturer is perhaps even more problematic. To see why this is so, we will look at one already existent form of self-manufacture, namely cosmetic surgery. According to feminist bioethicist Kathryn Pauly Morgan (1991), one striking, even defining, feature of cosmetic surgery is that in it "actual, live women are reduced and reduce themselves to "potential women" and choose to participate in anatomizing and fetishizing their bodies as they buy "contoured bodies," "restored youth, and "permanent beauty" (p. 28). Thus, these women are seen as – and moreover see themselves as – malleable (since they are "potential women"), reducible to pieces (since they are "anatomizable"), and, in a sense, alienable (since they fetishize the traits or features for which improvement is sought). (see e.g. chapter 4 for further discussion of these traits.)

In her analysis, Morgan believes that current trends in the medical view of human being, such as we see with cosmetic surgery, emphasize a mechanistic, machine-like understanding of humans. According to Morgan (1991), "Western scientific medicine views the human body essentially as a machine" (p. 31). This "machine model," she says, "carries with it certain implications, among which is the reduction of spirit, affect, and value to mechanistic process in the human body" (Morgan, 1991, p. 31). It also "facilitates viewing and treating the body in atomistic and mechanical fashion," meaning that, e.g., "the increasing mechanization of the body in terms of artificial hearts, kidneys, joints, limbs, and computerized implants is seen as an ordinary progression within the dominant model" (Morgan, 1991, p. 31). When this perspective of the mechanical human is

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internalized, individuals then are "increasingly socialized into an acceptance of technical knives" (Morgan, 1991, p. 32), knives that mold and shape and cut, knives that manufacture bodies.

One inherent feature of this acceptance of technical knives is the corresponding acceptance of the 'natural' human body as primitive and changeable. According to Morgan (1991), "The domain of technology is often set up in oppositional relation to a domain that is designated "the natural" (p. 31). As part of this "oppositional relation," technology is often assigned the role of "transcendence, transformation, control, exploitation, or destruction", whereas "the technologized object or process is conceptualized as inferior or primitive, in need of perfecting transformation or exploitation through technology in the name of some "higher" purpose or end" (Morgan, 1991, p. 31). As a result, "What is designated "the natural" functions primarily as a frontier rather than as a barrier", and areas that "were previously regarded as open to variation primarily in evolutionary terms…are now seen by biotechnologists as domains of creation and control" (Morgan, 1991, p. 31).

Also, like Kass and the President's Council on Bioethics, Morgan believes that the technologies of perfection will ultimately become instruments of control. Comparing cosmetic surgery to IVF and other forms of reproductive technology, Morgan (1991) points out that "[a]s more and more reproductive technologies and tests are invented (and "perfected" in and on the bodies of fertile women)" what happens is that "partners, parents, family, obstetricians, and other experts on fertility pressure women to submit to this technology in the name of "maximized

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choice" and "responsible motherhood"" (p. 39). As a result, "women are being subjected to increasingly intense forms of coercion, a fact that is signaled by the intensifying *lack of freedom* felt by women to refuse to use the technology if they are pregnant and the technology is available" (Morgan, 1991, p. 39). By analogy, Morgan (1991) believes that with respect to cosmetic surgeries: "Women who refuse to use these technologies are already becoming stigmatized as "unliberated," "not caring about their appearance" [or] as "refusing to be all that they could be"" (p. 40).

According to Morgan's (1991) account, "technology is making obligatory the appearance of youth and reality of "beauty" for every woman who can afford it" and "[n]atural destiny is being supplanted by technologically grounded coercion [that] is camouflaged by the language of choice, fulfillment, and liberation" (pp. 40-1). As such, what appears at first glance to be an instance of choice is in fact an instance of conformity (Morgan, 1991, p. 36). Moreover, Morgan (1991) believes that this conformity is not just to the creation of "beautiful bodies and faces but white, Western, Anglo-Saxon bodies in a racist, anti-Semitic context" (p. 36). Thus, the "technical knives" that we are being socialized to accept are in fact: "Magic knives. Magic knives in a patriarchal context. Magic knives in a Eurocentric context. Magic knives in a white supremacist context" (Morgan, 1991, p. 32).

What Morgan (1991) finds "particularly alarming" about the social acceptance of these "magic knives" is that as a result of acceptance "what comes to have primary significance is not the real given existing woman but her body

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viewed as a "primitive entity" that is seen only as potential, as a kind of raw material to be exploited in terms of appearance, eroticism, nurturance, and fertility as defined by the colonized culture" (p. 37). Thus, when turned inwards the view of man as manufacturer means that an individual not only sees others as mere objects of manufacture, but he or she also embraces that view as applied to himself or herself. Self-manufacture therefore leads to individuals viewing themselves mechanistically, like "a series of quantifiable traits…that are subject to augmentation or alteration" (Bess, 2008, p. 124).

However, as stated earlier we are concerned here not only with the descent of man to universally commodified object in the form of a product, whether in the realm of designer child, decomposable body, mechanistic mind, or object of self-manufacture; we are also concerned with the *attitude* of the commodifier as a manufacturer, regardless of the object of this manufacture attitude. What, we may ask, is the essence of this attitude? Throughout this section, we have already seen some of the key features: First, a manufacturer manufactures something (or someone) *for* some purpose, be it design, function, excellence, aesthetics, and so on. Thus, there is a corresponding expectation that the product of manufacture fulfill that purpose, else it is essentially a failure. This means that the manufacturer feels a more or less conditional acceptance and appreciation of the product of manufacture (Note: Some may argue that, especially with children, parents (or manufacturers) may ultimately offer full acceptance even in face of failed expectations; however, I suspect this is the mark of a particular personality, and the default response to a product that fails one's expectations is rejection.); it

is an instrumental relationship, one that does not require that the manufacturer take into account any intrinsic worth of the product of manufacture. For example, with respect to cosmetic surgery we might say that the object or product of manufacture is valuable to the manufacturer only insofar as it (e.g. a smaller nose, younger-looking skin, an 'enhanced' complexion) fulfills or meets his or her expectations (e.g. aesthetic appeal, and so on). Similarly, with the mechanistic conception of mind according to psychopharmacology, a given feature of an individual's personality is valuable only insofar as it serves his or her goals (or, perhaps, the goals of the psychiatrist, or the state, etc.); as such, if he or she would prefer not to be 'rejection sensitive', or would rather be more assertive or competitive, and so on, then according to the perspective of the manufacturer there is no compelling reason not to simply change the mechanism of that individual's mind to better fit the other, 'enhanced' view of self.

Second, a manufacturer perceives the object under manufacture as being open to poking, prodding, pruning, and so on (which in turn may mean that it is available to be patented, sold, copied, and so on). To use the terminology from chapter 4 on objectification, the manufacturer sees the product as being violable, fungible, and subject to ownership (see also Nussbaum, 1995, p. 257). Returning to the example of cosmetic surgery, the individual seeking the surgery must view himself or herself – at least with respect to his or her body – as open to the surgery being sought. Moreover, the trait or feature being altered must in a sense be viewed as fungible, since it is essentially going to be exchanged for an alternate, 'enhanced' feature. Also, not explicitly mentioned prior but implied in

this relationship being the manufacturer and the product of manufacture is the "irreversible dependence" of the latter on the former (see also chapter 4); a manufacturer is allowed – nay *expected* – to tinker with products, but products are never meant to tinker back.

A third feature of the manufacturing attitude, one that is not explicit in the previous discussions of this section, is the potential *coldness* of the manufacturer in relating to the product of manufacture. The clinical image of a baby built by Honda, or the mechanistic views of the human body as a machine and the human mind as "software", do not illicit any warmer response than that of a car, robot, or computer – how should manufacturers of the latter differ in attitude from manufacturers of the former? In her analysis of the felt monstrosity of certain biotechnologies, Mary Midgley (2000) expands on this sort of 'coldness' attitude, saying, "The really strange and disturbing thing about all these images" of man as manufacturer "is the alienation of the human operator from the system he works on" (p. 12). In his relation to this "system", the man "appears as an extraneous critic, a fastidious reader, free to reshape books to suit his own taste, a detached engineer redesigning a car to his own satisfaction" (Midgley, 2000, p. 12). Moreover, "Even when the book or car in question is a human body – perhaps his own," Midgley says, "this designer stands outside it, a superior being who does not share its nature. Readers can always get another book if they don't like the first one, and car-owners are not much surprised at having to get another car" (Midgley, 2000, p. 12).

She asks, therefore, "What sort of being, then, is this operator supposed to be?" (Midgley, 2000, p. 12). In a word, perhaps: detached. A commodifying man who acts as manufacturer stands outside and above the product of his manufacture; he can change it as he sees fit, abandon it if he sees fit to, and there is no sense of emotional attachment or guaranteed or unconditional responsibility in his relationship to the product. While this detachment may appear inconsistent when we consider the given individual who is commodifying himself or herself – after all, he or she cannot properly thought to be standing entirely *outside* his or her own self! – there is still a sense in which this individual is at least standing outside those features of himself or herself that are subject to commodification and enhancement. As such, whether man wields the scalpel against others or against himself, it remains a cold instrument of manufacture.

Commodifying Man as Master

Related to the view presented in the previous section – that of commodifying man as manufacturer – is the view of commodifying man as master. For dealing with this attitude extending outwards, the notion of mastery follows from that of manufacturer. After all, as Kass (1997) has stated, "As with any product of [man's] making, no matter how excellent, the artificer stand above it, not as an equal but as a superior, transcending it by his will and creative prowess" (p. 23). Accordingly, the manufacturer necessarily *is* a master. In discussing cloning, Kass (1997) points out that "[s]cientists who clone animals make it perfectly clear that

they are engaged in instrumental making; the animals are, from the start, designed as means to serve rational human purposes" (p. 23). By extension, he supposes, cloned human beings will be treated in a similar fashion – instrumentally valuable, designed to serve some utilitarian function for the designer. Individuals created via cloning will inevitably suffer from "inherently despotic" treatment, subject to control by the will of the cloner (Kass, 1997, p. 24). Therefore, by analogy, we might expect that similar forms of technological intervention – such as human enhancement technologies, and perhaps other forms of commodifying technologies as well – will result in roughly the same attitude that we see associated with cloning: the attitude of mastery.

For dealing with this attitude of mastery extended inwards – as a form of *self*-mastery – we may suppose that this attitude comes part and parcel with the enhancement program itself. One hallmark feature of the view man and human nature inherent in human enhancement is that man is a creature that is partly or wholly made, typically by himself or herself. For them, "Human nature…is dynamic, partially human-made, and improvable" (Bostrom, 2005, p. 213). Man is a "soft self" (Clark, 2007, p. 278), with "fluid boundaries" (Lock, 1993, p. 138) and "a constantly negotiable collection of resources easily able to straddle and criss-cross the boundaries between biology and artifact" (Clark, 2007, p. 278). Thus, it will not be necessary to establish the connection between human enhancement (or human commodification more generally) and the corresponding attitude of mastery, and we can instead turn to the nature of this attitude and some of its human consequences.

To explore this attitude and its proposed consequences more fully, in this section we will be looking primarily at the work of one scholar who has spent substantial time exploring this attitude of mastery as it pertains to human enhancement – philosopher Michael Sandel. His classic *The Case Against Perfection*, while decidedly of the so-called "bioconservative" camp, is nonetheless one of the best investigations into the attitude of mastery as it pertains to human enhancement and human enhancement technologies. His argument, as we will see, is slightly more geared towards man commodifying others; however, his conclusions are generalizable to man commodifying himself or herself as well. Thus, for this section we will look initially at Sandel's argument and conclusions. Then, we will consider their implications for both the outward and inward manifestations of the attitude of commodifying man as master, and end the section, as in the previous one, with a brief discussion of what we may consider to be some of the defining traits of this attitude.

According to Sandel (2004), "the main problem with enhancement and genetic engineering…is that they represent a kind of hyperagency – a Promethean aspiration to remake nature, including human nature, to serve our purposes and to satisfy our desires" (p. 54). Thus, for him the real problem with human enhancement and human engineering is not "the drift to mechanism" – as we explored in the previous section – "but the drive to master" (Sandel, 2004, p. 54). After considering and rejecting the main arguments against four of the more popular examples of these sorts of enhancements – muscle enhancement, memory enhancement, height enhancement, and sex selection, all of which focus on

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arguments from autonomy – he focuses on what he considers to be the "true" underlying problems with them, namely the attitudes they reflect and their diversion from the underlying *telos* or ideal they are supposed to embody. According to Sandel, the genetic and pharmaceutical engineering of humans leads to a diminished understanding about the moral status of nature, the proper stance of human beings towards nature and the given world, and the proper conception of human freedom and human flourishing.

On Sandal's (2004) analysis, there are three main things – "three key features of our moral landscape" (p. 60) – that are at risk because of the mastery attitude associated with enhancement: humility, responsibility, and solidarity. The source of this risk is fundamentally the denial of 'giftedness' that he believes necessarily accompanies the attitude of mastery. According to Sandel (2004), "the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness, of dominion over reverence, of molding over beholding" (p. 60) – all of which constitute the overall attitude of mastery in question – ultimately dissolve "our sense of giftedness" (p. 60). He elaborates on this phenomenon of "giftedness," saying, "To acknowledge the giftedness of life is to recognize that our talents and powers are not wholly our own doing, nor even fully ours, despite the efforts we expend to develop and to exercise them" and "to recognize that not everything in the world is open to any use we may desire or devise" (Sandel, 2007, p. 27; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 54). As such, "[a]n appreciation of the giftedness of life constrains the Promethean project and conduces to a certain humility" (Sandel, 2007, p. 27; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 54).

Conversely, "If bioengineering made the myth of the "self-made man" come true," Sandel (2004) says, "it would be difficult to view our talents as gifts for which we are indebted, rather than as achievements for which we are responsible" (p. 60; see also Sandel, 2007, pp. 86-7). Thus, there is an apparent dichotomy between the humility of giftedness and the pridefulness of mastery. Moreover, this pridefulness, to Sandel (2007), borders on hubris (p. 87) – something that is more apparent when we consider again the parent-child relationship. Traditionally understood, this relationship teaches parents lessons in loving acceptance and "being open to the unbidden". The child in this relationship is a "gift" begotten, not an artifact made; as such, we are not allowed (or supposed to) actively *choose* what we get, but rather accept joyously that which we are given. According to Sandel (2007), in the appropriately understood parent-child relationship, parents should "appreciate children as gifts [and] accept them as they come, not as objects of our design, or products of our will, or instruments of our ambition" (p. 45). This acceptance of the unbidden helps instill in parents a sense of humility, thereby undermining the human tendency towards hubris.

However, he says, "A *Gattaca*-like world in which parents became accustomed to specifying the sex and genetic traits of their children would be a world inhospitable to the unbidden, a gated community writ large" (Sandel, 2004, p. 60). Instead, parents as masters would have expectations that their children fulfill certain qualifications, contain certain qualities, and so on. This, for Sandel, is a greater harm than we see in man as a manufacturer. Contra Feinberg (1980) and Habermas (2003) (both discussed in chapter 4), Sandel (2007) maintains that

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the problem with this degree of parental design "is not that the parents usurp the autonomy of the child they design" but rather "lies in the hubris of the designing parents, in their drive to master the mystery of birth" (p. 46; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 56). According to Sandel (2007), "Even if this disposition does not make parents tyrants to their children, it disfigures the relation between parent and child" by depriving "the parent of the humility and enlarged human sympathies that an openness to the unbidden can cultivate" (p. 46; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 56). Thus, what matters morally is not so much that in designing (or commodifying) another individual one denies his or her (autonomy) right to an open future, or even that the designer imposes upon the designee a relationship of irreversible dependence; instead, it is the attitude that the designer represents in engaging in the designing itself – the tyrannical drive to mastery divorced from humility.

According to Sandel, along with this decrease in humility comes a corresponding increase in personal responsibility. He says, "As humility gives way, responsibility expands to daunting proportions. We attribute less to chance and more to choice" (Sandel, 2007, p. 87). For him, "One of the blessings of seeing ourselves as creatures of nature, God, or fortune is that we are not wholly responsible for the way we are" (Sandel, 2007, p. 87; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 60). By contrast, "The more we become masters of our genetic endowments, the greater the burden we bear for the talents we have and the way we perform" (Sandel, 2007, p. 87; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 60). Here, we see that the designers may ultimately suffer from an increased sense of responsibility as a result of the

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act of design and its corresponding denial of giftedness and an openness to the unbidden. Because this act of design necessitates that the designer become himself or herself the sole master, so there will be no one else to blame should the design fail in its perfection.

Moreover, there will be no one else to praise should the design turn out right. This means that whoever or whatever exists as a result of the design has lost some of his/her/its capacity for free action, praiseworthiness, and blameworthiness (Sandel, 2007, p. 25). As Sandel (2007) explains: "It is one thing to hit seventy home runs as a result of disciplined training and effort, and something else, something less, to hit them with the help of steroids or genetically enhanced muscles" (p. 25). The question of enhancement and its potential threat to merit has been thoroughly explored elsewhere (Shapiro, 1991). However, the question of enhancement and its effect on responsibility warrants further discussion. Consider an individual who was designed or altered so as to perform the function of a stellar athlete. Should he or she succeed in this function, then there is a sense in which he or she is not the one responsible – and hence worthy of praise – for this success, but rather the designer (or perhaps the altered genes, traits, or whatever). However, what Sandel seemingly fails to mention, is the potential for this individual to feel the responsibility to perform the function for which he or she was designed (or to fulfill the function of the enhanced gene, trait, and so on). After all, time, money, and mastery went in to the design, so there may be a felt obligation to see that all these resources were not spent in vain. This runs remarkably close to the sort of invasion discussed in chapter 4. While

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Sandel (2007) explicitly decries Habermas' emphasis on autonomy and concern for securing a non-co-authored life (p. 45), this in fact appears to be a natural correlate to Sandel's concern with responsibility. If "our capacity to act freely, for ourselves, by our own efforts, and to consider ourselves responsible – worthy of praise or blame – for the things we do and for the way we are" (Sandel, 2007, p. 25) is undermined because these things (responsibility, praise, and blame) seem to belong to the designer rather than to ourselves, is this designer not in essence functioning like a co-author?

Sandel also worries that with the increase in responsibility there will be a diminishment of solidarity. He suggests that "the explosion of responsibility for our own fate, and that of our children, may diminish our sense of solidarity with those less fortunate than ourselves" (Sandel, 2007, p. 89). According to Sandel (2007), "The more alive we are to the chanced nature of our lot, the more reason we have to share our fate with others" (p. 89). For example, health insurance, wherein the healthy end up subsidizing the unhealthy, mimics solidarity only insofar as the insured are unaware of and unable to control for their own risk factors. After all, if the healthy can be assured of their genetics and know with confidence that they are unlikely to become sick, what motivation do they have to pay to be insured? By analogy, Sandel suspects that the more an individual feels responsible for his own good fortune – health or otherwise – the less he or she will feel compelled to share his or her good fortune with others. In the end, "The more alive we are to the chanced nature of our lot" – that is, the less responsible

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we feel for our own lot in life – "the more reason we have to share our fate with others" (Sandel, 2004, p. 60).

This is ultimately what connects solidarity with the earlier mentioned sense of giftedness. According to Sandel (2007), it is a "lively sense of the contingency of our gifts" – that is, "an awareness that none of us is wholly responsible for his or her success" – that keeps "a meritocractic society from sliding into the smug assumption that success is the crown of virtue that the rich are rich because they are more deserving than the poor" (p. 91; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 61). For Sandel (2007), the most "compelling answer" as to why "the successful owe anything to the least advantaged members of society" comes from their sense that "[t]he natural talents that enable the successful to flourish are not their own doing but, rather, their good fortune – a result of the genetic lottery" (p. 91; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 61). Ultimately if we view "our genetic endowments [as] gifts, rather than achievements for which we can claim credit," then we can recognize that "it is a mistake and a conceit to assume that we are entitled to the full measure of the bounty they reap in a market economy" and correspondingly "[w]e therefore have an obligation to share this bounty with those who, through no fault of their own, lack comparable gifts" (Sandel, 2007, p. 91; see also Sandel, 2004, p. 61). His concern, then, is that "[t]he meritocracy, less chastened by chance, would become harder, less forgiving" (Sandel, 2007, p. 92); in short: the worry is that if the drive to mastery were to become widespread or dominate our general societal attitude, we would then feel increasingly responsibly for our own fate and less responsible for the welfare of others.

This, for Sandel, would be a serious loss to humanity. However, he appears less than optimistic about the prospect that, even perceiving this loss, we will manage to quell our desire for mastery. He believes that "[t]here is something appealing, even intoxicating, about a vision of human freedom unfettered by the given" (Sandel, 2007, p. 99). He says while "[i]t is often assumed that the powers of enhancement we now possess arose as an inadvertent by-product of biomedical progress" and then "stayed to tempt us with the prospect of enhancing our performance, designing our children, and perfecting our nature" (Sandel, 2007, pp. 99-100), the truth may well be the opposite. It may instead be that "genetic engineering is the ultimate expression of our resolve to see ourselves astride the world, the masters of our nature" (Sandel, 2007, p. 100). This view is more fitting with our Promethean understanding of man's relationship to technology (see, e.g., chapter 2), and in the end the desire to be "DNA Master in the Game of Life" (Trew, 1997, p. 272) and continue with our conquests all the way to "the subjugation of the dark and evil elements of [our souls]" (Haldane, 1923) may be too alluring a prospect for us to pass up.

This "intoxicating…vision of human freedom unfettered by the given" (Sandel, 2007, p. 99) wherein we "see ourselves astride the world, the masters of our nature" (Sandel, 2007, p. 99) is arguably present with both the outward and inward directing versions of commodifying man as master. When directed outward, we can especially see this with the "hubris" of the designing parent. But in the case of any designer manufacturing the features of another human being there will no doubt be some sense of mastery over the nature of the designee. And

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when directed inward, the sense of self-mastery seems clear when we consider the idea of a self-commodifying man as a self-made man, the latter of which it is hard to imagine does not follow from the former.

However, we are again concerned here with the attitude as well as the possible consequences to which Sandel points. What is the essence of the attitude of a commodifying man as master? Perhaps we should look to psychologist and behaviorist John B Watson (1930), who is famously quoted for a prime example of the attitude of mastery, saying if we but give him "a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and [his] own specified world to bring them up in" then, "regardless of [any child's] talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors", Watson can "guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist [he] might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief" (p. 82). Watson (1930) does actually soften the impact of this attitude somewhat, when he continues: "I am going beyond my facts and I admit it, but so have the advocates of the contrary and they have been doing it for many thousands of years" (p. 82); however, the resounding confidence present in the first part of the quotation is a remarkable example of the attitude in question. In a word, perhaps, the essence in question with Watson's example is: control. Thus, a commodifying man who acts as master is able to design and create whatsoever he wishes in the subject of that design, and the latter will be entirely at the mercy of the former.

Even when we consider a commodifying man as self-master, this essential attitudinal feature of control seems to hold true. In its more potentially benign

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manifestations – such as those that emphasize a felt need for self-transformation and the molding of self into the type of person an individual feels he or she is meant to be (see e.g. Garet, 1991 for further discussion) – we might often say that the sort of control is a positive one. After all, individuals are often praised for the physical triumph of transforming their bodies via exercise and athletics, or for transforming their minds via education. In a democracy we pride ourselves on our individualism, and the myth of the self-made man has become socially accepted dogma. However, even with these more positive connotations it is a form of control nonetheless. And this sort of control, whether directed outwards or inwards, is in part what potentially leads to the next set of defining attitudes of a man commodifying.

Commodifying Man as Sadist and Masochist

Ultimately, when we extend the previous two commodification attitudes – manufacture and mastery – to their logical conclusions, we come to realize that the man commodifying is arguably, in point of fact, a sort of sadist (when directing the commodifying act or attitude outwards) or a sort of masochist (when directing the commodifying act or attitude inwards). In this section, we will consider how the commodification impulse results in both of these attitudes, focusing on the psychological accounts presented by Sigmund Freud and Erich Fromm, with additional insight from philosopher Gilles Deleuze. We will be looking both at how this relationship between commodification and

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sadism/masochism occurs, as well as its implications for the underlying personality and attitude of the individual who is doing the commodification. We will begin with the outward manifestation of commodification as sadism, and then we will turn to the inward manifestation of commodification as masochism. Afterwards, we will briefly consider the general defining traits of both manifestations when we consider the attitude of commodifying man as sadist and masochist.

As the oft-proclaimed father of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud (1961) has famously stated, "men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness" (p. 65) And, for Freud, it is this instinctual aggressiveness that endows man with his innate capacity for both sadism and masochism. While he did not actually coin either of the terms 'sadist' or 'masochist' – that honor is bestowed upon Austrian psychiatrist Prichard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing (in *Psychopathia Sexualis*, von Krafft-Ebing 1998) – he is nevertheless the first theorist to bring these two concepts into a sort of predominance in the realm of psychological and scholarly inquiry.

The source of this theoretical predominance is Freud's analysis of Eros, the life instinct, and Thanatos, the death instinct. (As a quick aside: Freud never actually used the term 'thanatos' to refer to the death instinct. Instead, colleague Paul Federn is said to have introduced the term for this usage (Menand, 2005, p. 10)) As Freud (1961) defines them, Eros is basically "the instinct to preserve

living substance and to join it into ever larger units" (p. 73); by contrast, Thanatos is "another, contrary instinct seeking to dissolve those units and to bring them back to their primaeval (sic), inorganic state" (Freud, 1961, p. 73). According to his psychoanalytic theory, then, "[t]he phenomena of life could be explained from the concurrent or mutually opposing action of these two instincts" (Freud, 1961, p. 73). Both of these instincts are potentially aggressive in nature, since for Freud "the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man" (Freud, 1961, p. 77); however, the death instinct is more obviously aggressive, since it is inherently destructive, whereas he believes that the 'libido' manifestation of Eros can indeed be positive.

For Freud (1961), sadism is essentially a corrupted "alloy" between the libido of Eros and the destructive impulse of Thanatos (p. 74). This alloy leads, narrowly, to an individual's sexual enjoyment being linked to his or her causing pain in another, "where the death instinct twists the erotic aim in its own sense and yet at the same time fully satisfies the erotic urge" (Freud, 1961, p. 76). It also leads, more broadly, to an individual finding narcissistic enjoyment in engaging in the destruction of another. Freud (1961) describes this version of sadism in saying that "even where [sadism] emerges without any sexual purpose, in the blindest fury of destructiveness," there still exists a "satisfaction of the [sadistic] instinct" that "is accompanied by an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfilment (sic) of the latter's old wishes for omnipotence" (p. 76). For Freud (1961), this "instinct of destruction" – even when it is "moderated and tamed, and…inhibited in its aim" – "must, when it is

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directed towards objects, provide the ego with the satisfaction of its vital needs and with control over nature" (p. 76). In this version of sadism, then, we have "sadists indulging in positions of power and acts of mastery over others" (Grimwalde, 2011, p. 160), and receiving some sort of enjoyment from the experience, even though this enjoyment is not explicitly sexual in nature.

Fellow psychoanalyst and humanistic philosopher Erich Fromm (1941) expands on this Freudian account of sadism. Focusing on the non-sexual form of sadism, Fromm identifies three types of distinct, yet closely related sadistic tendencies. The first "is to make others dependent on oneself and to have absolute and unrestricted power over them, so as to make of them nothing but instruments, "clay in the potter's hand"" (Fromm, 1941, p. 165). The second "consists of the impulse not only to rule over others in this absolute fashion, but to exploit them, to use them, to steal from them, to disembowel them, and, so to speak, to incorporate anything eatable in them" (Fromm, 1941, p. 165). According to Fromm, this impulse can be extended not only to material things, but also to immaterial ones, such as a person's intellect or emotions. Finally, the "third kind of sadistic tendency is the wish to make others suffer or to see them suffer" (Fromm, 1941, p. 165). For Fromm (1941), "This suffering can be physical, but more often it is mental suffering [and i]ts aim is to hurt actively, to humiliate, embarrass others, or to see them in embarrassing and humiliating situations" (p. 165).

We can easily see parallels between the first two types of sadistic tendencies and the previous two accounts of man commodifying. First, recall that

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one defining feature of the attitude of commodifying man as manufacturer was that he or she views the product of manufacture as essentially having only instrumental or 'use' value. The object of commodification, the product, the individual subject to human enhancement intervention, is created to serve some purpose or perform some function; the value exists inherently in the latter, not the former (i.e. not with the product himself/herself/itself, but with how well the product fulfills the wishes of the former). Another related feature of the manufacturer's attitude was that he or she saw the product of manufacture as being, for the most part, completely open to the poking, prodding, and modification of the manufacturer. These two features combined look very much like the attitude of a sadist viewing the object of sadism as a sort of exploitable "clay in the potter's hand."

What appears new or anomalous, then, is the third sadistic tendency, namely an impulse to cruelty. We will consider in greater detail later how this tendency comes about with the commodification attitude; but, even lacking this impulse to cause suffering, sadism is still present in the commodifying man's controlling attitude of mastery (as seen in the previous section of this chapter). In fact, according to Fromm, this attitude of control and mastery is the *defining essence* of the sadistic attitude. On his account, every observable form of sadism comes down to a single "essential impulse" – "namely, to have complete mastery over another person, to make of him a helpless object of our will, to become the absolute ruler over him, to become his God, to do with him as one pleases" (Fromm, 1941, pp. 178-9; see also Fromm, 1964, p. 32). The means to this end

are frequently "[t]o humiliate him, to enslave him," but "the most radical aim is to make him suffer, since there is no greater power over another person than that of inflicting pain on him, to force him to undergo suffering without his being able to defend himself" (Fromm, 1941, p. 179; see also Fromm, 1964, p. 32). In a later elaboration, Fromm (1964) extends this account of sadism, saying, "Another way of formulating the same thought is to say that the aim of sadism is to transform a man into a thing, something animate into something inanimate" (p. 32). Here, it seems, the most basic way we can understand sadism is that it is desire (and action) to treat a person like an object (e.g. a pot), and have a sort of ultimate control over them.

Another interesting aspect to Fromm's (1964) later edition is that he describes the impulse to treat another like an object as being rooted in an understanding that "by complete and absolute control the living loses one essential quality of life – freedom" (p. 32). The reason it is interesting that Fromm reformulates the essence of sadism to be the act of denying – or perhaps even simply the desire to deny – another individual's capacity for freedom, is because, if correct in its analysis, this would have sweeping effects in implicating many other forms of autonomy-denial – such as, e.g., denial of an individual's right to an open future, invasion of another's self, and so on – as being arguably, at their root, acts of sadism. This would then mean that the most basic characteristics of the commodified man, as discussed in chapter 4, suggest that the commodified man, in the end, is essentially an object of sadism.

At the root of this drive to master, dominate and control is, for Fromm as it was for Freud, a form of the death instinct. We saw that according to Freud all life can be thought to consist of two forces: the life instinct (Eros) and the death instinct (Thanatos). Fromm refers to these forces as biophilia (love of life) and necrophilia (love of death), which he considers to be more like 'orientations' rather than instincts. On his analysis, then, the true sadist is essentially a necrophile (or, alternatively termed, necrophilous person). According to Fromm (1964), "While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical" (p. 41). In this regard, "The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things" and also to transform "[a]ll living processes, feelings, and thoughts…into things" (Fromm, 1964, p. 41). As with Freud (1961), this necrophilous orientation still seeks to dissolve living things and "bring them back to their primaeval (sic), inorganic state" (p. 73) However, what is new with Fromm is that this drive to dissolve living matter is particularly represented as a mechanistic attitude, an inclination to see living things mechanically (as we saw earlier in this chapter on the section of commodifying man as master).

As a corollary to the sadist's emphasis on control is the necrophile's emphasis on force (Fromm, 1964, p. 40). For Fromm (1964), true force is, in the end, "the capacity to transform a man into a corpse" (p. 40). Thus, for the true sadist, "the greatest achievement of man is not to give life, but to destroy it; the use of force is not a transitory action forced upon him by circumstances – it is a

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way of life" (Fromm, 1964, p. 40). However, it is not necessary for the sadistic attitude that an individual be the true sadistic, necrophilous person emphasizing this sort of force. Indeed, for Fromm this would represent the extreme, a consequence of having fully embraced the sadistic attitude and made it entirely a way of life (and, to my knowledge, Adolf Hitler is the only person Fromm describes as a truly necrophilous person; see e.g., Fromm, 1964); most sadists only display this tendency in a mitigated form. Thus, for our purposes, an individual engaging in commodification need not meet the extreme for him or her to be considered a sadist; it will be enough that he or she simply portrays the essence of a controlling attitude and sadistic orientation.

However, a more complete understanding of the extreme will be helpful for our projections in chapter 6, so we will now consider it more in depth. For understanding this extreme we will look to the man for whom the term 'sadist' is named: Marquis de Sade. In analyzing the attitude of the libertine – de Sade's sadistic hero – philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1989) has determined that the primary goal of this hero is thinking about or engaging in negation (p.30). According to Deleuze (1989), in de Sade's work there are two types, or levels, of negation: "negation (the negative) as a partial process and pure negation as a totalizing Idea" (pp. 26-7). What the sadistic hero *longs* for, but cannot ever *achieve*, is this latter form of totalizing negation. This "pure negation" is able to "override all reigns and all laws, free even from the necessity to create, preserve or individuate"; it "needs no foundation and is beyond all foundation, a primal delirium, an original and timeless chaos solely composed of wild and lacerating

molecules" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 27), which French psychologist Francois Flahault

refers to as "radical limitlessness" (Flahault, 2003, p. 40) – a kind of primeval

Behemoth or Leviathan.

However, as Deleuze (1989) points out, "this original nature cannot be

given: secondary nature alone makes up the world of experience, and negation is

only ever given in the partial processes of the negative" (p. 27). As such, "original

nature is necessarily the object of an Idea, and pure negation is a delusion"

(Deleuze, 1989, p. 27). What this means is that the "original nature" of pure

negation can only exist for us (mere experiential beings) as an "Idea." So, in the

end, the libertine is limited to the former form of negation as a partial process.

Deleuze (1989) explains, "In practice, however, the libertine is confined to

illustrating his total demonstration with partial inductive processes borrowed from

secondary nature. He cannot do more than accelerate and condense the motions of

partial violence" (p. 29). And the way he or she accelerates and condenses these

"motions of partial violence" is "by multiplying and condensing the activities of

component negative or destructive instincts" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 31), namely "by

multiplying the number of his victims and their sufferings" (Deleuze, 1989, p.

29). Thus, since the libertine can never achieve the absolute destruction of pure

negation, which ultimately exists only as an Idea or ideal, he or she must instead

resort to engaging in as many small acts of partial destruction as is possible,

thereby coming as close as he or she can to the ideal of pure negation.

An interesting aspect of de Sade's libertine and his or her sadistic attitude

is a necessary component of *coldness*. As Deleuze (1989) explains, this

"condensation of violence" ends up implying "that violence must not be dissipated under the sway of inspiration or impulse, or even be governed by the pleasures it might afford, since those pleasures would still bind him to secondary nature"; instead, this violence "must be exercised in cold blood, and condensed by this very coldness, the coldness of demonstrative reason. Hence the well-known *apathy* of the libertine…"(p. 29). According to Deleuze, *any* emotion on the part of the libertine diminishes the purity of pure negation; hence there must be apathy. Moreover, this coldness is indeed similar to the coldness we saw with the commodifying man as manufacturer. Just as the manufacturer is emotionally detached from the product of manufacture, so too is the libertine sadist from the sadistic object. Thus, with sadism we have all four of the defining commodification attitudes presented earlier: perceived use value of the object; perceived openness of the object to commodification or control; coldness; and mastery.

Where these features become more confusing is with this commodifying attitude turned inwards as a form of masochism. As Erich Fromm (1941) has stated, "Sadism to many observers seemed less of a puzzle than masochism" (p. 168). By contrast, "[m]asochistic strivings…tendencies directed against one's own self, seem to be a riddle" (Fromm, 1941, p. 169). There is a sense in which "the phenomenon of masochism contradict[s] our whole picture of the human psyche as directed toward pleasure and self-preservation" and we are therefore unable to "explain that some men are attracted by and tend to incur what we all seem to go to such length to avoid", namely, our own self's destruction (Fromm,

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1941, p. 169). In order to explain this phenomenon, Freud considers masochism to be a form of inverted sadism, the result of true sadism being thwarted. Basically, "If the aim of the sadist's exaggerated aggressive drive – to conquer, master, and control the sexual object – cannot be achieved then he unconsciously replaces his sexual object with himself" and in this way he "becomes his own sexual object [and therefore] derives a sadistic pleasure from being dominated, tortured, and mastered by another person with whom he identifies" (Grimwalde, 2011, p. 158). Thus, in the case of masochism what we still have is a sadist, but instead of controlling and dominating an object outside himself or herself, he or she turns the sadistic impulse inwards, towards his or her own self.

Fromm (1964), likewise, considers masochism to be basically the death instinct turned inwards (p. 49). However, unlike Freud, he does not view masochism as simply an inverted, inferior form of sadism. For Fromm (1941), both sadism and masochism are simply two manifestations of the same goal – man's desire to escape the aloneness of his individual self (p. 173). According to Fromm (1941), "Both the masochistic and sadistic strivings tend to help the individual to escape his unbearable feeling of aloneness and powerlessness" (p. 173). He says, "The frightened individual seeks for somebody or something to tie his self to; he cannot bear to be his own individual self any longer, and he tries frantically to get rid of it and to feel security again by the elimination of this burden: the self" (Fromm, 1941, p. 173). Moreover, this security can occur both by dominating and controlling another person (as in with sadism), as well as by being dominated and controlled (as in with masochism).

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According to Fromm (1941), the masochist's response to his or her felt aloneness is basically to "increase the original feeling of insignificance" (p. 174). The masochist "is driven by an unbearable feeling of aloneness and insignificance" and tries "to overcome it by getting rid of his self (as a psychological, not as a physiological entity); his way to achieve this is to belittle himself, to suffer, to make himself utterly insignificant" (Fromm, 1941, p. 176). However, the masochist's goal is not belittlement or suffering, and so on; these things are simply "the price he pays for an aim which he compulsively tries to attain" (Fromm, 1941, p. 176). While overcoming feelings of aloneness and insignificance by *increasing* them may sound counter-intuitive, according to Fromm (1941) they are quite logical (at least in the masochistic person's mind): "As long as I struggle between my desire to be independent and strong and my feeling of insignificance or powerlessness I am caught in a tormenting conflict"; however, "If I succeed in reducing my individual self to nothing, if I can overcome the awareness of my separateness as an individual, I may save myself from this conflict" (p. 174). For Fromm (1941), there are three ways towards this aim that are at the masochist's disposal: first, "[t]o feel utterly small and helpless"; second, "to be overwhelmed by pain and agony"; and third, "to be overcome by the effects of intoxication" (p. 174). Thus, for the masochist the way to alleviate the felt aloneness of self is simply to do whatever is necessary to no longer feel this self, to remove all organic feeling and become as close as possible an inorganic, self-less being.

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However, destruction of the masochist's sense of individual self is only part of his or her strivings. According to Fromm (1941), he or she also tries to surrender this self to "a bigger and more powerful whole outside of [himself or herself]", and "[gain] a new security and a new pride in the participation in the power in which [he or she] submerges" (p. 177). Here, the original self is supplanted, and "determined by the greater whole into which the self has submerged" (Fromm, 1941, p. 178). The striving to eliminate the self by joining into a union with another is ultimately what drives both the masochist and the sadist. According to Fromm (1941), both sadists and masochists are driven toward the aim he calls "symbiosis," which is "the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside of the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other" (p. 180). He says, "The sadistic person needs his object just as much as the masochistic needs his [but] instead of seeking security by being swallowed, he gains it by swallowing somebody else" (Fromm, 1941, p. 180). However, with both cases – sadist and masochist – "the integrity of the individual self is lost" (Fromm, 1941, p. 180). For the former, "I enlarge myself by making another being part of myself and thereby I gain the strength I lack as an independent self"; for the latter, "I dissolve myself in an outside power [and] I lose myself" (Fromm, 1941, p. 180). In the end, it is "the inability to stand the aloneness of one's individual self that leads [both sadist and masochist] to the drive to enter into a symbiotic relationship with someone else" (Fromm, 1941, p. 180). Thus, we see some possible new features of the attitude of commodifying man, as both sadist

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and as masochist: weakness; the inability to stand alone; and a sort of hatred of self.

Conclusion: Commodifying Man as Potter

At the end of this chapter we see an image emerge of the true nature of the commodifying man (i.e. the Potter). When applying his skills and will towards others, we see he is a manufacturer, a master, and a sadist. There is the impression that he views himself as over-and-above the 'other' (i.e. the pot), the arbiter of the latter's existence. His relationship with the pot is most likely conditional, clinical, and cold. At his most kindly, he may (in a sense) "love" the pot; but there is always a sort of righteous authority and control (no doubt the "rod of iron" is never placed too far away), and the love itself smacks of a sort of self-serving self-gratitude. At his least kindly, the commodifying man seeks simply to reduce his subject (or rather *object*) of commodification to the purely inorganic, a state of near-nothing. And turning his energies inward does little to improve the matter, because the general attitude remains the same (manufacturer, master, controlling, etc.). While at its best this may be relatively benign (in a sort of Zarathustran, self-creating artist sense), at its worst it is an effort at self-destruction formed out of a deep self-loathing and a tragic inability to stand alone in freedom. In the end, we potential potters ought to take care that as we attempt to draw out Leviathan with a fishhook, we do not fall victim to Leviathan ourselves.

Chapter 6

MAN COMMODIFIABLE AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

Having already explored the matters of what happens to the individual who is

being commodified, as well as the general attitudes of those individuals who are

doing the commodifying, we will now turn to the issue of what happens to a

society at large when it is dominated by broad commodification and

commodification rhetoric as applied to human beings and human 'goods'. It is my

contention that our worries about the negative future effects of enhancement exist

not only with those individuals actively 'engaged' in enhancement practices –

whether in act or rhetoric, victim or aggressor – but moreover that the true horror

is that the society at large where such practices are taking place will ultimately be

affected and we will therefore all be made worse off. To explore this possibility,

we will consider first the sort of mechanism whereby a so-called "bystander"

might be so affected.

Arguments of this sort are what law professor Scott Altman (1991) calls

"modified experience" arguments, which are based on the overall concern that

"medical technologies [might] alter the sensibilities of observers" thereby making

it such that even individuals "who merely learn about powerful technologies

could come to think about people as they do objects and commodities" (p. 294).

Specific to this dissertation, this translates into a concern about whether or not a

society in which some (or many or *most*) of its members are utilizing

commodifying, enhancing technologies – or, as per broad commodification,

simply engaging in enhancement rhetoric – will be able to affect those members

who are not actively using or subject to said technologies or their corresponding

rhetoric.

A modified experience argument is perhaps best viewed as a variation of a

sort of "slippery slope" argument," wherein the power of association leads

individuals not directly involved in human commodification (as was seen in

chapters 4 and 5) to view themselves and/or others in commodified fashion

simply because of that association. I will focus primarily on Altman (1991) and

Shapiro (1990) in explaining this phenomenon. After laying out the basics of this

"modified experience" mechanism, I will explain how, given our work from the

previous chapters on how enhancement as a technology and as an attitude

functions, we can expect that this alteration of societal sensibilities is a perfectly

reasonable – if not indeed highly *warranted* – outcome. I will then present how

we can expect this change in sensibilities, combined with active enhancement,

will result in diminished human flourishing.

Man Commodifiable

In his analysis of modified experience arguments, Altman (1991), states that the

term "commodification" can have many meanings, including reference to actions

that: "violate a duty of respect for persons by treating the person as a thing that

can be sold"; or "alter a person's moral status so that the person becomes a thing

without a will" (p. 295). However, when dealing with the matter of modified

experience, the more relevant (and interesting) forms of "commodification" include those actions that "alter the sensibilities of people directly involved in market transactions by causing them to regard each other as objects with prices rather than as persons"; or "alter the sensibilities of people who learn about or live in a society that permits the sale of persons but who do not participate in such transactions themselves" (Altman, 1991, pp. 295-6). Particular to this chapter, we are interested in the fourth variation: actions that can alter the sensibilities of mere commodification bystanders.

In looking at this possibility of a change in bystander sensibility, Altman says that there are at least two main types of modified-experience arguments that should be considered. First is the "norm-loss argument", which he says is based on the view that some new technology is "violating an important norm, such as the infinite value of life, the equal worth of all people, the impropriety of treating others only as means, or the ideal of unconditional love or duty (Altman, 1991, p. 298). By treating people in this way, the (new) technology runs the risk of creating a sort of cognitive dissonance in the viewer by placing two seemingly distinct categories – e.g. persons and objects – together. In response to this cognitive dissonance, the observer might then feel compelled to resolve this dissonance by modifying his or her views about the categories in question, such as by viewing the category of persons as normatively the same (or nearly the same) as the category of objects, or by modifying or simply abandoning this once-cherished norm. Accordingly, Altman (1991) says, "If these norms play a central

role in maintaining important personal experiences, then technology could lead to the modified experience" (p. 299).

Using the prostitution example from chapter 3, a norm-loss argument would state that part of the problem with sex-selling is that it could lead even those individuals who neither practice prostitution nor purchase its services to have a diminished view of human sexuality because they live in a society where prostitution takes place; faced with the cognitive dissonance caused by seeing sex and commerce co-occurring, observers might choose to resolve the conflict by abandoning their previously held "cherished" norms about sex (Radin, 1987, champions such an argument).

Alternatively, the second type of modified-experience argument that Altman considers is the "attitude-change argument," which is based on the concern that "[t]echnologies might alter attitudes or feelings without changing any particular beliefs" (Altman, 1991, p. 299). The idea here is that we can start with "someone [treating] a person (or something that resembles a person) in a way usually associated with treatment of things" (i.e. by selling, fragmenting, exchanging, etc), and then end up with that person viewing persons (or things resembling persons) as things instead (Altman, 1991, p. 299). According to Altman (1991), "Because people learn, remember, and feel through association of concepts in schemas" – that is, basically, bundles of beliefs and attitudes and feelings that are powerfully connected and act largely on the force of association – "observers might transfer attitudes from sales, products, or resources to persons" (p. 299). Thus, an initial instance of commodifying someone can in turn

to a complete change of person-orientation, whereby the person (or those around him or her) "might be unable to recover the attitudes or feelings formerly attached to persons because they have been displaced by feelings and attitudes toward things" (Altman, 1991, p. 299).

Returning to the example of prostitution, an attitude-change argument would not argue that the main concern with the effects of prostitution on observers is that they later might come to modify or abandon valued norms about sex; instead, such an argument would maintain that the true problem is that people will come to change their respective attitudes or beliefs about sex (or people) and consequently have a lesser view or attitude towards them. The idea here is that the observer might be able to maintain his or her norm, but simply alter his or her orientation towards the human(s) or human good(s) involved.

While Altman considers the two argument types – norm-based arguments and attitude-change arguments – as separable, I believe that they are (arguably) intimately related. For example, it is hard to imagine that progressive changes in an individual's attitudes towards other persons do not subsequently lead to a change in the norms that he or she applies to persons. For example, after repeatedly making changes in one's attitude towards sex (or persons) because of the presence of prostitution, it seems likely that one's valuation of that norm will end up being compromised. Likewise, it is hard to imagine that an individual can manage to change his or her norms about something or someone without a corresponding change in attitude. For example, it is difficult to think of someone abandoning his or her norm about sex without having a lesser attitude towards it,

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or that someone might come to view other persons as normatively the same as objects, however he or she does not consequently treat persons the same as objects, applying the same sorts of attitudes and feelings. However, separable or not, both accounts of modified experience arguments provide good prefatory illustrations of how commodification is thought to affect observers who are not necessarily also participants.

Regardless, this second variation is more similar to what is already present and popular in the commodification literature; so this is where we will focus. The greatest champion of this sort of "dissonance reduction and association" (Altman, 1991, p. 298) argument is Michael Shapiro (although Margaret Radin herself has a similar view (1982)). For Shapiro (1990), the "dissonance reduction and association" comes about as a result of our experiential encounters with technologically-drive fragmentations and reassemblies. While we already looked at Shapiro's argument on the relationship between commodification and fragmentation with respect to personal identity in chapter 4, here we are interested in the sort of broader fragmentation that occurs when we lose our ability to maintain perceptual and moral classification systems with respect to humans and human relationships. In the former, only the commodified and/or commodifying individual is affected; here, *everyone* is affected.

In his paper on "Fragmenting and Reassembling the World," Shapiro's main argument – at least the part with which we are concerned – is roughly the following: First, Shapiro (1990) points out that various biotechnologies – e.g. surrogacy and those biotechnologies that are defined as 'enhancement'

technologies – end up fragmenting "certain natural processes, conditions, or relationships" (p. 333). These resulting fragments, he says, "may not be clearly addressed by our existing normative classification systems – systems of thought central to description, explanation, and justification" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 333). In other words, these new fragments do not fit within our current classificatory systems on which we base how we see, organize, and relate to – especially *morally* – the world around us. Next, he notes that these fragments can in turn be reassembled in various ways, thereby "compounding the classification traumas: more entities not covered by our categories, and more new choices" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 333). He also considers how the new fragments and reassemblies may require new moral and legal understanding, as well as a new understanding of our relationships and duties to them.

Shapiro (1990) then worries that "[t]he set of "fragmentation, classification-challenge, and reassembly" events creates risks of human objectification and commodification by transferring our ideas about objects to persons"; thus: "[w]e may learn to view persons less as persons and more as objects," which may in turn "transform our supposedly mandatory duties of care and respect for persons into contingent ones associated with the success of products" (p. 333). As mentioned in chapter 4, the "descent from person to object" is "the central nightmare of the new biology" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 354); these fragmentations and reassemblies compound our previous worries that this central nightmare might indeed be upon us. Shapiro (1990) concludes that "The

very existence of choice thus may make us normatively worse off in certain respects by risking the erosion of noncontingent bonds" (p. 333).

According to Shapiro (1990), in our commonplace understanding of the universe, "[t]here is a givenness and unity about the world that commands our attention, influences our lives, and moves us to judge conduct and conditions in light of their consistency with this fixity" (p. 334). We see the world, by and large, as a collection of people and things that can be appropriately categorized, and, once categorized, we feel we have a general understanding of what our (moral) obligations are to those individuals within each of the categories: we respect and/or love persons, we manufacture products, we use tools, and so on. While our sense of "givenness" may in reality be an overgeneralization (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 334-5) – i.e., our ability to clearly and simply categorize things may in fact not be so clear and simple as we often like to believe – insofar as this sense is not openly challenged, we are comfortable with the givenness as we perceive it, and we are comfortable with how it enables us to organize our world, and understand and make decisions in it.

Moreover, it is our comfort with the givenness that makes the "perceptual/cognitive challenge" wrought by fragmenting and reassembling technologies such a source of discomfort for us. Shapiro (1990) explains that "much of distinctively human thought rests on classification and categorization, establishment of paradigms, and comparison of a problem at hand with the paradigms [and it] is the very stuff of understanding and decision-making" (p. 343). While this classification and categorization "is rarely attended to

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consciously", it provides us with our basic "models for description, evaluation, and action-justification" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 343). Accordingly, those technologies that threaten to undermine our classification systems and thereby disable our "models" for thought are met with a heightened degree of resistance because in assaulting our sense of givenness they risk failure of thought.

The way that these commodifying technologies risk failure of thought is by emphasizing fragmentation and reassemblies, which in turn undermine our current classification systems. According to Shapiro (1990), "fragmentation presupposes knowledge that life forms and processes are alterable, manipulable ("to be is to be manipulable"), and predictable in ways that remind one of made rather than found or received entities (such as babies)" (p. 337); it is therefore seemingly inconsistent with our traditional conception of persons – which are "found or received entities". This means that when considering human beings, this fragmentation in turn affects our classification systems because "[t]he fully understandable and predictable person is a classification anomaly, a monster: it straddles the borders between humanity and the domains of other life forms and of machines" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 338). Because of this straddling of borders and creation of anomalies, we cannot comfortably classify these fragmented humans with non-fragmented humans brought about by technologies into our pre-existing thought-patterns and relation to the world.

Moreover, these fragments can also be reassembled, thereby creating additional problems for our classification systems. According to Shapiro (1990), "With fragmentation comes the possibility of reassembly [whereby w]e can

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construct new unities, new wholes, and new classifications" (p. 346). This "fragmentation and reassembly of the world" ends up "challeng[ing] our classification systems and, therefore…the core of our descriptive and normative thinking [by creating entities] that simply do not fit our forms of thought and discourse" (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 338-9). As Donna Haraway would put it, they create a collection of 'cyborgs', each "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (Haraway, 1991, p. 163). These cyborgs represent "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" (Haraway, 1991, p. 154) and, in virtue of being "boundary creatures…literally, *monsters*", have "a destabilizing place in the great Western evolutionary, technological, and biological narratives" (Haraway, 1991, p. 2).

These boundary creatures in turn challenge our classificatory abilities in that, by existing as boundary creatures, they challenge the idea that there even *are* boundaries. According to Shapiro (1990), this is problematic because "[w]ith the boundaries of set eroded, we are in a continuum or hodgepodge of impressions – not a happy state for creatures needing markers and borders to control their conceptual agoraphobia" (p. 341). In reality, we human beings are the sort of creatures that need these clear boundaries in order to function; without them, we see the equivalent of "flying squirrels" (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 339-40): things not clearly bird or animal, things that defy normal classification.

The blurred boundary that is of main interest in the modified-experience argument is the blurring between 'person' and 'object'. Using the example of surrogacy as our featured "flying squirrel", we can see that surrogacy highlights

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the association between 'person' and 'object', thereby blurring the proposed boundary between the two – in at least two ways. Reusing terminology from Shapiro in chapter 4, namely with respect to 'bundling' and 'unbundling', these two ways are basically the following: first, surrogacy does so by unbundling from the parent-child relationship the ideal of non-contingent bonds; second, surrogacy does so by bundling to the parent-child relationship the notion of 'commerce'. Since the hallmark of a person-person relationship is, for Shapiro, non-contingent bonds, the apparent dissolution or absence of such bonds is often an indication of the lack of a person-person relationship. So with surrogacy, in response to the question, "[D]oes the revision of traditional reproduction and its replacement with surrogacy (standard or gestational) threaten the noncontingent bonds of affection we owe to our offspring?", Shapiro (1990) answers, "Maybe. The surrogate is, after all, giving up the baby. It is an alarming picture – parents deliberately parting from their children for reasons that do not "track" within existing normative schemes" (p. 364). So, because in our understandings of human relationships contingent bonds are the sort that occurs with person-object relationships, not parent-child relationships or person-person relationships, the presence of such contingent bonds in surrogacy would seem to indicate a person-object relationship.

Second, surrogacy might present an association between 'person' and 'non-person' by bundling into the parent-child relationship the idea of monetary compensation. As Shapiro (1990) points out, so long as there is payment, surrogacy leads to a highly problematic understanding of motherhood, family,

children, and so on, because "whatever else it is, paid surrogacy is a purchase of services" (p .363). He says that this "intersection of commerce with what is viewed as noncommercial" – that is, the tie between a child and money - produces "an anomalous child…and polluted families with mothers who are baby machines, fathers who are traders in human flesh, and children who are commodities" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 363). This view of human beings as "machines" and "commodities" does not track with our understood classification of persons – our "existing normative schemes" – but is instead the sort of attitude that we have towards objects.

Moving away from this example of how the fragmentation and reassembly caused by surrogacy threaten our classification systems and our corresponding separation of humans and things, let us now turn to the matter of human enhancement technologies and how they provide an equal – if not greater – threat. As with surrogacy, there are two manners according to Shapiro in which human enhancement technologies highlight an association between 'person' and 'object': by undermining non-contingent bonds (i.e. unbundling) and by taking a person and associating him or her with one or more features generally associated with objects (i.e. bundling). Focusing initially on the changes in our understanding of human relationships and non-contingent bonds that occur when parents enhance their children, Shapiro (1990) asks us to consider the example of "the ideal of the parent-child bond" (p. 348). According to Shapiro (1990), "in our finer moments" we tend to believe "that we are supposed to accept unconditionally whatever children we receive, whatever traits they have. Our compromises with this ideal –

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adoption, abandonment, abuse, and infanticide – are at best suspect and at worst criminal" and we really only allow for the "severing of the bond and the termination of obligations…when it promotes the best interests of the child" (p. 348). Once we start engaging in the ""reassembly" of persons (or persons-to-be) through trait specification," however, the risk "is that our acceptance and fidelity will become contingent on the success of our augmentative plans, as measured ultimately by the success of the persons designed" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 348). Moreover, according to Shapiro (1990), "[t]his contingency-devaluation risk exists for any important trait we single out – physical or mental – including the child's sex" (p. 349). As discussed in chapter 5, both Kass (2003) and Sandel (2007, 2004) find that this risk carries with it the concern that parents view their children as mere products of manufacture. This in turn may cause us to "replace the (felt) absolute nature of our duties of care and respect for natural persons with the contingency of respect and care we generally accord to artifacts" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 349).

While Shapiro focuses on this sort of "contingency-devaluation risk" with respect to children, the ramifications are arguably much broader. In fact, it seems that whenever we emphasize discrete traits and their prospective changeability (e.g. their ability to be enhanced), we run the risk of seeing any individual – including *ourselves* – with these traits as thereby subject to the contingent bonds we owe only to objects. Reconsider chapter 5, where we discussed the attitude of an individual commodifying another individual as being essentially that of a manufacturer. As stated there, this attitude necessitates that the 'manufacturer'

perceive of the other as a potential product of manufacture – a mere object. Thus, the former individual cannot conceive of the latter in terms of non-contingent bonds; the product of manufacture is valued only in terms of its fulfilling the wishes of the manufacturer. This sort of attitude is not limited to the parent-child relationship (even if it is sometimes conceived to be so limited); instead, it may present itself any time that we view someone – whether ourselves or someone else – as fragmentable and open to broad commodification, thereby making the associated relationship contingent. Thus, the commodifying attitude is essentially one that blurs the person-object boundary in our classification system, because persons are being viewed as objects in a relevant sense.

Additionally, while Shapiro views the unbundling of non-contingent bonds as a sort of separate identifier that the person-object divide has been breached, this sort of phenomenon may in fact be best viewed as the bundling of contingent bonds to 'person', where contingent bonds are more or less another feature of 'object' (such as fungible, exchangeable, and so on). Logically, insofar as continent and non-contingent are strict opposites, the bundling of the former and the unbundling of the latter is the same. However, I believe that it is easier to witness the true risk of the modified experience version of commodification when we think not in terms of 'splitting from' but rather 'cleaving to'; the true risk is not that the 'person' becomes barren of non-contingent bonds but that it is debased and objectified. Moreover, the slippery slope association of ideas is more obvious when we point out the directionality in this fashion.

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It is this "slippery slope" to which we will now turn. Recall that part of our main reason for being concerned with the idea that fragmenting and reassembling human beings, blurring the boundary between human and non-human and undermining – if not destroying – the person-object division in our classification system, is the worry that "if human beings or human material are dealt with in ways associated with objects, the fear is that we will transfer the object status to humans generally" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 351). This worry is, as Shapiro points out (1990), "a slippery slope argument based on association of ideas" (p. 351): if we find ourselves associating humans and human goods with the sorts of things, states, functions, and so on, typically reserved for non-humans (namely, objects), we might thereby transfer these views of objects to our views of humans. From our earlier analysis in chapter 3, as well as the one so far in this chapter, this means that if we find ourselves associating humans and human goods with such 'object' things as, e.g., fragmentability, reassembly, exchangeability, non-contingent bonds, and so on, then we might begin to treat humans like objects as well.

This devolution and debasement happens because of the "association of ideas" that pushes us along the slippery slope from person to object, as resulting from available fragmentation and reassembly, is basically the following: since "[f]ragmentation and reassembly are processes ordinarily associated with the manufacture of products or the rendition of services for a price, and with the use of nonhuman life," our innate "associative abilities" end up connecting things like ""assembly," "design," and "construction" with what we build, use, eat, or

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discard" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 352). Corresponding with what we saw in chapter 3, this means that since exchangeability and other forms of commodification are ordinarily associated with non-human objects, we associate these sorts of features only with non-human objects, to the exclusion of humans, which are brought about "by dimly seen and ill-understood natural processes" rather than "assembly" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 352). As such, "Even the perceived possibility of dividing and reconstituting [humans] may cause the association of persons with objects. There is thus some risk that we will come to view and treat persons as artifacts that are to be priced or tinkered with" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 352).

The basic outline of this argument is the following: Some of the biotechnologies that we are currently being confronted with (e.g. reproductive technologies, enhancement technologies, and so on) function by fragmenting – and sometimes subsequently reassembling – various parts, aspects, functions, and so on, of human beings. These need not be limited to physical and mental attributes (e.g. Shapiro, 1990, p. 349), but can instead include all (or many) of those elements integral to personhood (see e.g. Radin, 1987, p. 1906; also chapter 3). However, our understanding of fragmentation and reassembly is that these processes apply only to non-humans (primarily objects, but certainly also to plants and animals). Because these processes *should* (as per our accepted classification system) only apply to non-humans, *but* we see them being applied to humans also, this causes for us a sort of cognitive confusion. Our expected boundaries between humans and non-humans, persons and objects, are now blurred. As Shapiro (1990) puts it, "The "discontinuities" between ourselves and the kingdoms of

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things, animals, and plants thus wither away" and we begin to see ourselves rather like "strange beings that straddle personhood and thingness (or animalness or plantness)" (pp. 371-2). With this withering away comes a dilemma: How do we maintain the person-object paradigm, at least with respect to moral obligations?

Of course, neither Altman nor Shapiro actually considers this question to be particularly problematic (although Altman more so than Shapiro). According to Shapiro (1990), a given technology only becomes "morally intrusive when it eludes or straddles categories that guide the application of moral criteria" (p. 357). Because "[t]he idea of persons as fully manipulable physical systems is an anomaly" due to its generated "intersection between sets – objects and persons – that we normally (if unreflectively) view as disjoint" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 357), we therefore have cause for moral concern. This is why the fragmentation and reassembly of 'persons' is potentially more problematic than that of other things: we have more important moral obligations to persons. The worry, therefore, is that "[t]he very possibility of fragmentation and reassembly of life processes thus creates (in theory) the risk that we will slip toward viewing and treating persons as artifacts or products" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 373) – as mere objects. It is a general terror that with the dissolution of the person-object paradigm we might enter a moral freefall, ending with persons being conceived of as, morally, not much different from objects.

Ultimately, the risk of a universal commodification in society at large (including those individuals not actively commodifying or commodified) will depend on precisely *how* we respond to the dissolution of our person-object

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categorization. For one thing, as Shapiro (1990) points out, "The new forms of reassembly are not, after all, entirely one with commercial models of manufacture. Why, then, should we assume that human design always entails human thinghood?" (p. 353). What he means is that it is not the case that simply making traits or features of some person either exchangeable or commodifiable entails that he or she becomes *exactly the same as* an object, so it is not obvious that we need to be worried about a mass commodification attitude. According to Shapiro (1990), then, as long as "[t]here are major differences that accompany the major similarities" (p. 353), we should not hastily conclude that the similarities present will completely overshadow the differences and thereby lead us to conclude that the fragmentation and reassembly of human beings is functionally identical to the manufacture and commodification of human beings.

Indeed, this is Altman's primary concern with modified experience arguments as well. According to Altman, all of these arguments have a problematic underlying assumption: namely, they presuppose too fragile a view of reality. By contrast, he maintains that "[t]hough reality is socially constructed, it is somewhat resistant to either accidental or purposive revision" (Altman, 1991, p. 297). As such, "Arguments for making important decisions based on concern for preserving sensibilities, especially observers' sensibilities, should be greeted with great caution" (Altman, 1991, p. 297). After all, Altman (1991) says, "Why would knowing about sales transform attitudes so dramatically?" (p. 301). Consider, by contrast, the example of playing tennis, which he claims "does not lead people to conceive of their partners as tools for exercise. Much less does merely knowing

about tennis playing have this effect" (Altman, 1991, p. 301). Accordingly, he wonders, "Why would pricing and selling overwhelm our thinking and feeling?" and concludes that "[s]omething very powerful is being attributed to selling and pricing" (Altman, 1991, p. 301). This means that in order to explain the difference in "observers' sensibilities" we will need to explain how pricing is somehow meaningfully different from, say, playing partners' tennis in terms of how we view the other person or persons involved.

The most powerful explanation, according to Altman, can be found in schema theory. According to schema theory, "[p]eople collect and retain information, as well as associated attitudes and feelings" (Altman, 1991, p. 301). Since "[t]hese schemas have strong associative tendencies…Someone who regards an object as falling under a schema automatically and unconsciously associates other aspects of the schema with the object, including beliefs and feelings" (Altman, 1991, pp. 301-2). According to this theory, then, it may be the case that "many people have a powerful market schema [and w]hen they perceive something as belonging in a market because someone sells it, attitudes and feelings associated with markets simply follow the object" (Altman, 1991, p. 302). Thus, part of our explanation accounting for the above difference between pricing and playing tennis would be that people have stronger schemas for pricing than for playing tennis, thereby making it more like that "pricing and selling overwhelm our thinking and feeling".

In order to determine whether or not our given schema is somehow overwhelming, what we should do is consider the role that perception plays in that

schema as to whether we focus more on the similarities or on the differences. Shapiro offers as an example the case of in vitro fertilization (IVF), which "looks like a manufacturing process," but for which "the idea that it drives our minds toward viewing the resulting children as manufactured objects, while worth considering, is not obviously correct" (Shapiro, 1990, pp. 353-4). He claims that "[t]here are other visions of IVF [that] focus on what follows it in a successful effort at reproduction – pregnancy and birth, which look like any other pregnancy and birth" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 354). Accordingly, when we focus on the technical aspects of IVF, its similarity to manufacture is what stands out; however, when we focus on the more "natural" or "human" aspects (i.e. pregnancy and birth), it is IVF's difference from manufacture that stands out. This is why Shapiro (1990) emphasizes that "[e]lements of planning, assembling, and rearranging are not sufficient conditions for objectification" (p. 354).

In evaluating the potential impact of certain technologies on our ability to categorize humans and non-humans, Shapiro (1990) believes that it is important to keep in mind that "not all processes of decomposition and reconstitution are the same in structure or effect" and, accordingly, "[e]ach may create different risks of replacing noncontingent bonds with the weaker ones associated with objects" (p. 353). As such, it may be that the perception of these risks is ultimately rather subjective, depending on whether one focuses – as in the IVF example – on the similarities to or differences from manufacture. According to Shapiro (1990), "It appears, then, that our very aptitudes at thinking by association create dangers, which are in turn compounded by our deficits in judging categories and drawing

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distinctions" (pp. 352-3); when we associate the same processes (e.g. fragmenting and reassembling) with what we believe should be two distinct categories – namely humans and non-humans – it may be that our minds focus on this similarity, rather than noticing the presence of some relevant difference.

This is why Shapiro (1990) believes that "[t]he characteristics of the perceiving audience are crucial" (p. 354). He points out that "differences and similarities clear to some may not be apparent to others" and "[t]he fact that a perception of manufacturedness may move some minds to assimilate human reproduction to the production of widgets does not mean that the whole human audience will do so" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 354). This account of difference in human perception is similar to Radin's (1987) description of the "imperfect practitioner" (p. 1878). According to her description, "The rhetoric of commodification might lead imperfect practitioners to wrong answers, even if the sophisticated practitioner would not be misled. In other words, commodification-talk creates a serious risk of error in certain cases" (Radin, 1987, p. 1878). By parallel, we might say that even if some (i.e. "sophisticated") perceivers of the person-object association that corresponds with fragmenting and reassembling technologies are able to focus on the differences between this association and actual commodification, we may still find cause for concern if other (i.e. "imperfect") perceivers are more inclined to focus on the similarities, thus heralding that "human devolution from person to object is well on its way" (Shapiro, 1990, p. 354).

But, I do not think that it is even necessary to resort to argument based on

imperfect perceivers; on my account, even *perfect* perceivers will be driven to see

commodified squirrels everywhere. It is here that our previous discussions of

enhancement as a technology and commodities as socially-driven entities become

most relevant. Given that enhancement technologies constitute "modern" and

"Promethean" technologies (from chapter 2), we have very good reason to expect

that they will declare themselves to become a transcendent end, thereby

compelling the minds of men to cater to their every need (and perhaps whim).

Similarly, given that these technologies are of a "commodifying" sort, we have

very good reason to suspect that societal pressures will drive the technologies to

be ever more central to our human action, discourse, and ideology (from chapter

3). Hence, it is inherent in the nature of the type of technology with which we are

confronted that it will command attention from everyone in a society, not merely

"imperfect" persons who suffer from sort of misunderstanding; they understand

all too well, and even if they did not, the technology would soon gladly teach

them.

Human Flourishing

But now the question we have before us is: what kind of future does this really

hold? If enhancement technologies are Promethean and commodifying, and if

they lead to pots, potters, and pot(ter)s-by-association, what would be our final

consequence for opening the initial Pandora's box? To get a better picture of this

potential future, we will first consider the example of the super-Benthamites

proposed by Hilary Putnam (1981), and then consider the parallel example

pertaining to our super-Enhancers future. To allow for both due reference and

reverence, I will include Putnam's passage in its entirety, and hope that my dear

reader will bear with me on this (as it is my only long quote). In laying out the

example of the super-Benthamites, Putnam (1981) states the following:

> This time let us imagine that the continent of Australia is peopled by a
>
> culture which agrees with us on history, geography and exact science, but
>
> which disagrees with us in ethics. I don't want to take the usual case of
>
> super-Nazis or something of that kind, but I want to take rather the more
>
> interesting case of super-Benthamites. Let us imagine that the continent of
>
> Australia is peopled with people who have some elaborate scientific
>
> measure of what they take to be 'hedonic tone', and who believe that one
>
> should always act so as to maximize hedonic tone (taking that to mean the
>
> greatest hedonic tone of the greatest number). I will assume that the super-
>
> Benthamites are extremely sophisticated, aware of all the difficulties of
>
> predicting the future and exactly estimating the consequences of actions
>
> and so forth. I will also assume that they are extremely ruthless, and that
>
> while they would not cause someone suffering for the sake of the greatest
>
> happiness of the greatest number if there were reasonable doubt that *in*
>
> *fact* the consequence of their action would *be* to bring about the greatest
>
> happiness of the greatest number, that in cases where one knows with
>
> certainty what the consequences of the actions would be, they would be

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willing to perform the most horrible actions – willing to torture small children or to condemn people for crimes which they did not commit – if the result of these actions would be to increase the general satisfaction level in the long run (after due allowance for the suffering of the innocent victim in each case) by any positive ε, however small.

I imagine that we would not feel very happy about this sort of super-Benthamite morality. Most of us would condemn the super-Benthamites as having a sick system of values, as being bureaucratic, as being ruthless, etc. They are the 'new man' in his most horrible manifestation. And they would return our invective by saying that we are soft-headed, superstitious, prisoners of irrational tradition, etc.

The disagreement between us and the super-Benthamites is just the sort of disagreement that is ordinarily imagined in order to make the point that two groups of people might agree on all the facts and still disagree about the 'values'. But let us look at the case more closely. Every super-Benthamite is familiar with the fact that sometimes the greatest satisfaction of the greatest number (measured in 'utils') requires one to tell a lie. And it is not counted as being 'dishonest' in the pejorative sense to tell lies out of the motive of maximizing the general pleasure level. So after a while the use of the description 'honest' among the super-Benthamites would be extremely different from the use of that same descriptive term among us. And the same will go for 'considerate', 'good citizen', etc. The vocabulary available to the super-Benthamites for the

description of people-to-people situations will be quite different from the vocabulary available to us. Not only will they lack, or have altered beyond recognition, many of our descriptive resources, but they will very likely invent new jargon of their own (for example, exact terms for describing hedonic tones) that are unavailable to us. The texture of the human world will begin to change. In the course of time the super-Benthamites and we will end up living in different human worlds.

In short, it will not be the case that we and the super-Benthamites 'agree on the facts and disagree about values'. In the case of almost all interpersonal situations, the description we give of the facts will be quite different from the description they give of the facts. Even if none of the statement they make about the situation are *false*, their description will not be one that we will count as adequate and perspicuous; and the description we give will not be one that they could count as adequate and perspicuous. In short, even if we put aside our 'disagreement about the values', we could not regard their total representation of the human world as fully rationally acceptable. And just as the Brain-in-a-Vatists' inability to get *the way the world is* right is a direct result of their sick standards of rationality – their sick standards of theoretical rationality – so the inability of the super-Benthamites to get the way the human world is right is a direct result of *their* sick conception of human flourishing. (pp. 139-141)

What we see in this example is an illustration of how an attitude or ideology, seemingly innocent on the surface, becomes a defining feature for a given culture

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or society. Having accepted the "fact" that humans are manipulable, enhanceable, exchangeable, and so on, what follows are the "values" that they are precisely that. The human world is transformed into a world of, essentially, pots and potters; commodified and commodifiers; objects and sadists and masochists. Since we know (from chapter 2) that the only freedom of choice we can truly guarantee comes with our first choice of "yes" or "no" to our proposed new world, we must now ask ourselves whether or not we are truly ready to descend together into the dust, and whether or not the bars of Sheol await us.

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