

BODY-SYMBOL-PERSON: TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN VALUE

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Can the body symbolize a person? For artists, it obviously can. Says a critic of the most famous sculpture in Florence, “Thanks to a breathtaking iconographic innovation, Michelangelo made the ‘giant’ size expressive of the whole man—of David’s adult self as well as of his youthful self.”¹ Standing in the rotunda of the Academy, David is no callow shepherd boy,² but a tower of manly strength, with a powerful physique and dramatic physical maturity.³

The imposing size and the anatomical frankness of Michelangelo’s rendition call to mind other events in David’s life, projecting him beyond boyhood into the complex and darker chapters of his later life. After defeating Goliath, he becomes a brilliant soldier and king, he lusts after Bathsheba, has her husband killed, dances naked before the Lord. For all this he becomes a symbol of the dangers of desire, and the fatal consequences of a single unfortunate gaze.

This startling presentation is “a confession as well as a celebration in stone.”⁴ Here we find youth and age, strength and vulnerability, innocence and guilt, virtue and vice, sin and repentance—an entire personality—expressed in a single human form. The body of David becomes the symbol of the man, the man in full, and beyond that a symbol of Christ, and perhaps a symbol of Florence itself, during the precarious times when Michelangelo lived.⁵ So, there is no question that the body can be a powerful symbol.

The symbolic capacity of the body has ramifications that reach far beyond its artistic potential. In this discussion, we shall endeavor to show that it also provides a basis for responding to one of the challenges that modern technology poses for human life.

When we think of the relation between science and human values in today’s world, no issue has greater significance than the powerful and problematic role of technology. All of life is now affected by technology, and it has proven to be a mixed blessing. Technology has made

enormous contributions to human welfare, but it also poses a massive threat. On the one hand, it contributes to virtually everything that makes human life worth living. It provides such necessities as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, and communication, along with myriad forms of recreation and entertainment. On the other hand, technology has taken humankind to the brink of extinction. The twentieth century was “the century of death,” as many describe it, thanks in large measure to technological advances in warfare. And, as we are constantly reminded today, the impact of technology on the environment poses a long range threat to all of life on the planet.

As many see it, the effects of technology have become so extensive that human life is not only entirely affected by technology, it is now dominated, colonized, by technique. As French philosopher Bernard Stiegler observes, the direction of technical power is thus inverted: once liberating for human beings in our relation to nature, technology has become a means of political domination.⁶ What began as a means of assisting us has, ironically, taken over our lives. “Technics,” or “technicization,” expresses the human desire to master and possess nature through calculative reason. But, living as we do in a state of “*permanent innovation*,” the rhythms of cultural evolution and the rhythms of technical evolution have come apart. Now that we have thoroughly mechanized our lives, we are no longer masters of the machines we have created; they have mastered us.⁷ Like Prometheus, the god of technics, we are the victims of our own ingenuity.⁸

On an individual as well as a societal basis, technology presents us with a two-edged sword. Advances in modern medicine cure diseases, relieve suffering, and sustain life with unprecedented effectiveness. At the same time, modern medical techniques also enable us to achieve goals that are less physical than psychological and cultural, like transforming our appearance and altering our moods.⁹ When put to these ends, they often manifest a persistent tendency in human ex-

perience, viz., to treat the body as a commodity. And the results of doing so are troubling and sometimes disastrous.

To commodify the body is to regard it as a material entity, and nothing more. We commodify the body when we treat an individual's physical form, or some physical feature or capacity, as the most important thing about him or her. When people look at the body this way, paradoxically, they tend either to over- or undervalue the body, either to exaggerate or disregard its significance, depending on the relative importance they attach to the physical feature in question. Viewed as a commodity, as something merely physical, the body thus becomes either all-important or not important at all, either an end in itself, or nothing but the means to an end. Either way, the significance of the person whose body it is, is lost. The physical is all that matters.

Body commodification has been around for centuries, but with advances in technology it assumes new and disturbing manifestations. In what follows, we will note some of the forms that commodification currently takes, show how a symbolic construal of the body can counter this tendency, and examine the implications of our suggestion.

The most obvious, and perhaps the oldest, form of commodification is slavery. In its most rudimentary form, slavery reduces the value of human beings to the physical effort their bodies can produce. In inheritance contracts from the ancient Mediterranean world, slaves were referred to merely as *soma* ("bodies"). They were thought of as nothing more than fleshly commodities.¹⁰ Another persistent form of commodification is to use someone's body for nothing more than sexual gratification. Not every sort of commodification is as crassly exploitive as slavery and prostitution, of course, and in our own day, the commodification of the body takes rather distinctive forms.

It is hard, for example, to imagine a time in history when people have been more concerned about physical appearance than they are now. Compare these diary entries by teen-age girls, one from the 1890's, the other from the 1990's. One wrote, "Resolved, not to talk about myself or feelings. To work seriously. To be dignified. Interest myself more in others." The other wrote, "I will lose weight. Get new lenses, already got new haircut, good makeup, new clothes and accessories."

In Victorian times, self-improvement was thought to involve character. A hundred years later, it was all about appearance. "Before the twentieth century, girls simply did not organize their thinking about themselves around their bodies. Today ... they believe that the body is the ultimate expression of the self."¹¹ Several months ago *The Los Angeles Times* drastically trimmed its daily size, but one issue a week still includes an entire section entitled "Image," with pages devoted to "beauty," "style," "fashion." Our bodies now demand more and more attention. In a recent book entitled, *Bodies*, Susie Orbach echoes Stiegler with the observation that science, culture and globalization have upended our relationships to our corporeal selves, "turning us from master into slave."¹²

The most vivid symptom of today's overvalued body may be surgical alteration. Cosmetic procedures have increased fivefold over the past ten years, and cosmetic surgery is now a \$15 billion dollar industry. As some see it, the pursuit of physical beauty through surgery is essentially a cult; its devotees pursue the goal of perfection with all the determination of medieval mystics. Only, in this case the ideal is that of physical, not spiritual, perfection. Their preoccupation is outward appearance, not the inner person.¹³ In its saddest manifestation, the pursuit of an unrealistic physical image can be life threatening. Anorexia affects 2.5 million Americans, and has the highest mortality rate of any mental illness. Only about half of its victims recover, and in the

past few years the age of the youngest victims has dipped as low as nine years.¹⁴ As a result of commodification, the ideal human form has become so unrealistic that some believe it can only be produced artificially. Says the owner of a mannequin factory, “There are no perfect bodies; we make the perfect body.”¹⁵

People commodify the body not only by altering its appearance, but also by exploiting its resources. Several years ago an advertisement appeared in a UCLA newspaper with the heading “Special Egg Donor Needed.” It went on to list the criteria of the “preferred donor”: height, 5’9” or taller, S.A.T. score around 1300, Caucasian, college student or graduate student under 30. The compensation to be provided was \$80,000 (plus all related expenses), with “extra compensation available for someone who might be especially gifted in athletics, science/mathematics or music.”¹⁶ Putting a price on someone’s genetic material reduces a person to her body; it equates the body with a monetary sum.

Another type of commodification involves violent athletic activities. American football players are highly susceptible to injury, many of them permanent and some life-threatening. More than half of the players in the National Football League are injured every year. And on average, seven NFL players a week face potentially life-altering head, spine, or neck trauma. According to a recent cover story in Time Magazine, an NFL study found that due to repeated concussions former players between 30 and 49 years of age were 19 times as likely to receive a memory-related disease diagnosis as the national population, and those over 50 were five times as likely to be debilitated.¹⁷ A journalist who located thirty men who had played for the San Diego Chargers sometime during the past forty years found that every one of them was physically damaged.¹⁸ Even more ominous, the starting quarterback for the Cincinnati Bengals flatly predicts that collisions on the field have become so violent that someone is going to die in an NFL game.¹⁹ High

salaries, high excitement, and the high expectations of the public induce these men to place their health, if not their lives, in jeopardy. They commodify themselves for public entertainment.

Even activities designed to enhance the body, to liberate it from illness and disease, can wind up commodifying it. According to Sherwin B. Nuland, physicians are often tempted to exploit a patient's physical condition, rather than relieve her suffering. There is a subtle progression, he argues, by which someone who enters medical school wanting only to care for the sick "becomes transmuted unawares into ... a biomedical problem-solver."²⁰ As a case in point, Nuland tells of a 92-year-old woman who initially refused an operation he recommended, but then let him talk her into it. In time, she recovered enough to resent him for not letting her die as she originally desired. "My treatment," he realized, "was based not on her goals but on mine, and on the accepted code of my specialty."²¹ Nuland's preoccupation with his patient's physical condition led him to neglect her personal concerns. Her body became a commodity, an opportunity for him to apply his technical expertise.

All of this brings us to a pressing question. Is it possible to for us enjoy the benefits of technology without succumbing to its liabilities? In particular, can we use technology to improve the quality of our lives without commodifying our bodies? Can we increase physical well-being without exalting physical appearance or ability? To do this we need a way to affirm the body without exaggerating its significance. We need a perspective that avoids both over- and undervaluing the body. Our proposal here is that a Christian view of the human provides just such a perspective. Drawing on biblical portrayals of human existence, the Christian view is sufficiently complex to achieve both objectives: to affirm that the body indeed has great value and to recognize that this value is limited.

The Bible's first reference to human beings provides the central element of this perspective. According Genesis 1, "God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.'"²² Theologians have debated the precise meaning of *imago Dei* for centuries, but that is not our concern here. Our interest lies in the essential fact that humanity has symbolic significance. That is to say, humans not only have a capacity for symbols, humans are themselves symbolic. Their destiny is not to draw attention to themselves, but to signify something beyond themselves, to direct attention to something, or Someone, of greater value and importance. If we apply this insight to the human body, I believe, we can affirm its value without overestimating it, and in doing so we can avoid the dangers of treating the body as a commodity. The essential idea here is that just as humanity as such is representative of some larger and more significant reality, the body, too, represents something of greater, more encompassing, value. Though it is a physical entity, the body's fundamental value consists not in its physical qualities per se, but in its capacity to serve as the bearer of great meaning.

The complex structure of a "symbol" gives us a helpful way to express this perspective on the body. In a famous discussion of the term, Paul Tillich distinguishes symbols from signs. Both signs and symbols, he observes, point to something beyond themselves. But symbols are different because they "participate" in that to which they point. Signs are matters of convention; they can be replaced for reasons of expediency. But symbols cannot. They are much more intimately connected to the objects they refer to.²³ Following Tillich's lead, then, let us describe the body as *a symbol of the person*.

If the purpose of a symbol is to direct attention beyond itself, something serves a symbolic purpose only if it is to some extent "transparent" to its referent, if it allows its referent to emerge with clarity. Consequently, if the object itself becomes the sole focus of attention, it becomes a

distraction rather than a symbol. This is the essential problem with body commodification. By overemphasizing someone's physical qualities commodification obscures rather than revealing the person whose body it is. Paradoxically, the same thing happens when we undervalue the body. We lose sight of its symbolic significance and treat it as nothing more than a physical object. Because they often attract undue attention, physical defects also tend to undermine the body's symbolic function. A striking physical variation, a "handicap" or "deformity," to use unfortunate expressions, often prevents us from seeing the person whose body it is. The physical condition absorbs all our attention and we fail to see beyond or behind it.

To construe the body this way suggests two things. It points to the intimate connection between the human body and the human person. Someone's body is important because represents the person whose body it is, and it participates in—that is to say, it is essential to—the reality of that person. As Tillich also reminds us, however, symbol and reality are not the same. A symbol points to something beyond itself, but it does not replace it. The reality is greater than the symbol. Although the body is intimately connected to the person, and although it forms an integral aspect of the person's identity, the body not identical to the person. A person is not reducible to his or her body, nor to any physical feature or ability. Remembering that body and person are intimately connected can keep us from undervaluing the body; remembering that the two are not the same can help us to avoid exaggerating its significance.

Several considerations support this complex way of viewing the body. The findings of neuroscience, for example, indicate that human beings are firmly anchored in physical, corporeal existence. Neuroscience now attributes mental functions to certain areas of the brain with astonishing specificity. Cognitive localization studies show "how specific mental processes or even component parts of those processes appear to be tightly linked to particular regions or systems in

the brain.” “Whatever it means to be a person is rooted in the brain and its body.”²⁴ Indeed, mind and body are so closely connected that it is impossible to imagine what disembodied human existence would mean.²⁵ So, as Antonio Damasio explains, Descartes’ influential belief that mind and body belong to separate realms of being was a profound error.

Further evidence that mind and body—person and body—are closely connected comes from cognitive linguistics. Careful investigation reveals that the basic terms and categories with which we think—the essential features of our cognitive architecture—are derived from corporeal experience. As Mark Johnson explains in *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason*, our conceptual system is thoroughly grounded in physical, bodily experience. Many of the “basic metaphors” we use to express ourselves reflect the fact that we exist as physical forms within a physical world. Meaning and rationality thus arise from the recurring structures of embodied human understanding.²⁶

These insights comport nicely with the wholistic view of humanity found in the Bible. For Hebrew thought, *body* and *soul* are not distinct realities, but different ways of referring to the same thing. A living soul—in Hebrew, *nephesh chaya*—is a living person, and the physical body is essential to its existence (Genesis 2:7). In the famous words of H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Hebrew idea of the personality is an animated body, not an incarnated soul.”²⁷ So, a human being does not *have* a body, it *is* a body. Humanity is essentially corporeal. Nothing intrinsic to human life can exist apart from the body.

The biblical accounts of Jesus’ ministry also affirm the significance of the body. Most of the thirty-five miracles specifically described in the Gospels deal with physical illness, and Jesus compared his work to that of a physician (Mk 2:16-17). And as the range of meaning included in

the Greek word *sozo* indicates, salvation and healing are closely connected. Physical restoration and spiritual renewal were aspects of the same transformation.

At the same time, the Bible supports a distinction between the person and the body. We see this in the fact that while Jesus healed the sick, he never equated the sick with their physical condition. He consistently looked beyond it and saw their true identity as something more—as the persons they could become. At the same time, his concern for the person involved caring for physical needs and repairing what was physically damaged. When Jesus cured a woman who had been ritually unclean for years, he described her as a daughter and restored her to her community.²⁸ And he told a woman who was accused of adultery to go and sin no more.²⁹ Though physically and emotionally abused, she was more to him than a specimen of human downfall. Her true identity transcended her unfortunate situation. At the same time, her situation needed to change in order for her to achieve it.

When it comes to the relation between body and person, then, there is a reciprocity of sorts between symbol and reality. The person is not to be equated with the body—the person never reduces to the body—but the body needs and deserves to be cared for because what it symbolizes has great value. We see this reciprocity between body and person as symbol and reality in the writings of the apostle Paul. He condemns fornication on the grounds that such activity is inconsistent with the body’s spiritual significance. “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you Therefore glorify God in your body.”³⁰ Similarly, he says of the Corinthian congregation as a whole, “Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”³¹ As Paul describes it, then, the body is a symbol of God’s presence in the world, and this symbolic significance gives the body great value. It calls us to care for and respect our bodies.

The notion that the body is intimately connected to the person thus has solid biblical and scientific support. While the body is essential to human existence and to human identity, a person's significance never reduces to the body. Human identity involves the physical—it never leaves the physical behind—but but it never ends with the physical; it always involves something more.

If we view the body, then, not as an end itself, but as symbolic of something more, we can affirm the body's significance without exaggerating the physical or diminishing the personal. If we recognize that the body is less than the person, we will avoid overemphasizing the significance of some remarkable physical quality, such as athletic ability or striking appearance. Other dimensions of the person's life are just as important. At the same time, remembering that the person is more than the body will prevent us from reducing someone to his or her physical qualities or capabilities. This is especially important when someone's physical appearance or abilities are comprised in some way.

Viewing the body as symbol—a perspective that affirms the body's importance but does not exaggerate it—could have profound consequences. It might, for example, lead us to alter the attempts we sometimes make to extend life. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services estimate that 5% of the beneficiaries who die each year take up 30% of the \$446-billion annual Medicare budget. About 80% of that money is spent during the final month, on mechanical ventilators, resuscitation and other aggressive life-sustaining care. Often the aggressive steps taken to save someone's life are futile... [J]ust 18% of adults older than 65 who received cardiopulmonary resuscitation in the hospital survived the procedure long enough to be discharged."³² Our perspective suggests that the person's significance is not wholly dependent on physical survival. Death does not end the value of one's life.

Another consequence would be to affirm the full humanity of the physically challenged and to provide them the resources they need to flourish. Distinguishing between body and person supports the view that the person may be whole, though the body is in some way diminished. The symbolic significance of the body also has important implications for the way we treat bodies. Because the human body as such has symbolic value, we should avoid mistreating the body, no matter whose body it is. Respect for something that in some mysterious way serves as a bearer of God's image precludes all forms of violence to the human body, including torture and capital punishment.

While the thesis that the body is the symbol of the person has wide ranging implications, it is particularly relevant to an important issue in current philosophy of technology. This is the much debated question of biological enhancement. We can do much more with medical technology today than just treat disease. The question is whether we should use this technology to alter the qualities of those who are healthy. "Should we use science and medical technology not just to prevent or treat disease, but to intervene at the most basic biological levels to improve biology and enhance people's lives?" That is, "live a longer and/or better life than normal."³³ The possibilities that now exist for doing so generate a wide range of opinions. For some, biological and genetic enhancement is objectionable; for others, it is permissible; and for still others, it is not only permissible but obligatory.

One consideration that favors enhancement is the difficulty of drawing a sharp distinction between enhancement and therapy. If therapy is acceptable, the argument goes, there seems to be no reason to object to enhancement. Immunizations, for example, enhance our resistance to disease rather than curing it. And many of the goals of enhancement techniques, such as gaining height and improving memory, are perfectly acceptable if achieved by other means. So, why

should anyone object to achieving them through medical means?³⁴ In other words, if it is permissible for us to “override” nature in the case of treatment, why should it be objectionable to override it in the case of enhancement?³⁵ After all, environmental interventions, such as education, diet, and training have essentially the same function as biological interventions: both alter brain chemistry and have irreversible results. Furthermore, enhancement and treating disease have the same ultimate objective, viz., to lead a good life, not just to achieve or maintain health.³⁶

If there is no essential difference between treatment and enhancement, some insist, enhancement is not just an option, it’s an obligation. We have the same mandate to seek enhancement as we do to cure, and choosing not to provide enhancement is just as wrong as failing to treat an illness. Lazy parents, Julian Savulescu argues, are just as irresponsible as neglectful parents.³⁷

This doesn’t mean that anything goes when it comes to enhancement, of course. There are a number of factors to consider beyond its mere effectiveness. To quote Savulescu again, a parent’s decisions should be based on “a plausible conception of well-being and a better life,” and consistent with “the development of the child’s autonomy and a reasonable range of future life choices.”³⁸ In other words, what’s good for the child, not simply desirable on the part of the parent, should govern the choice of enhancement measures.

Another issue to consider is that of social justice. Enhancement techniques should be reasonably available to all, not just to a wealthy minority. And they should not create unfair competition, nor “unreasonably” reinforce or increase unjust inequality and discrimination.³⁹ The risk that enhancement techniques will do exactly that, however, gives many people pause. Some also fear that the sort of qualities people choose to pursue through enhancement may reinforce questionable cultural stereotypes.⁴⁰

Then there is the complicating influence of the marketplace. In a free market system pharmaceutical companies want people to buy their products. They have a vested interest in having conditions identified as disorders so their medications will be prescribed to deal with them. What is initially viewed as an optional enhancement can thus easily morph into a required form of therapy. Prozac and other SSRIs, for example, began as a treatment for clinical depression, but they are now used to treat a wide range of problems, from PTSD to sexual compulsion.⁴¹ So, what people view today as an optional means of enhancement, they may regard tomorrow as a necessary form of therapy.

Michael J. Sandel presents another sort of critique of enhancement technology in an article that appeared several years ago in *The Atlantic Monthly*. In “The Case Against Perfection,” Sandel argues that the familiar language of autonomy, fairness and individual rights is ill-equipped to deal with the complex issues raised by genetic engineering. Instead, he maintains, the crucial questions involve the “moral status of nature” and the “proper stance of human beings toward the given world.”⁴² The most insidious danger presented by enhancement technology 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 satisfy our desires.” This “drive to mastery,” he warns, threatens our appreciation of the “gifted character of human powers and achievements.” It represents “the one-sided triumph of willfulness over giftedness, of dominion over reverence, of molding over beholding.”

Nowhere are the consequences of this tendency more regrettable than in the case of parenting, or “hyperparenting.” Instead of receiving children as gifts and accepting them as they come, hyperparents strive to master the mystery of birth by genetic engineering. Their efforts are

another manifestation of the sort of “heavily managed, high pressure child-rearing that is now common.”

This doesn’t mean that parents should avoid treating a child’s illnesses. “Medical intervention to cure or prevent illness or restore the injured to health,” he says, “does not desecrate nature but honors it. Healing sickness or injury does not override a child’s natural capacities but permits them to flourish.” The key to good parenting, he argues, is to manifest “accepting love,” as well as “transforming love.” Accepting love resists the demand for performance and perfection, which is “the deepest source of the moral trouble with enhancement,” and misses the “sense that life is a gift.”

To embrace giftedness, Sandel argues, is to regard special abilities as gifts, rather than achievements. It means being “open to the unbidden,” rather than trying to bring everything under our control. There is a great deal about us that we are not responsible for, and this should evoke a sense of gratitude, not fuel a determination to extend our mastery over nature. Such an attitude, he concludes, would transform our moral landscape. If we accept our genetic endowments as gifts, rather than achievements for which we can claim credit, then we should feel an obligation to those who, through no fault of their own, do not enjoy such gifts.

Sandel’s article has generated a great deal of discussion, including an extensive critique by Frances M. Kamm in *The American Journal of Bioethics*. Kamm takes issue with Sandel’s condemnation of the desire for mastery. Focusing on the objectionable qualities of those who seek mastery, she observes, fails to demonstrate just what’s wrong with acts of enhancement themselves. After all, certain aims may be permissible because they have beneficial results, regardless of the “aims, attitudes, or dispositions” of the agents who pursue them. Actual mastery may lead to goods, such as curing diseases, even if someone is motivated by a desire for mastery. Kamm

also objects to the flip side of Sandel's critique of enhancement, viz., the refusal to accept the givenness of nature. To the contrary, she argues, trying to improve "what comes in life" is not necessarily bad in itself.⁴³ After all, the natural can be bad, and the unnatural can be good.

Kamm devotes the longest section of her article to Sandel's treatment of parenting. For her, accepting love is not inherently incompatible with transformative and enhancing measures, whether these include "ex ante" or "ex post" designing, that is, measures taken before or after a child's conception. Furthermore, many people, parents in particular, exercise control over other people's lives in areas where chance one ruled, and this may lead to greater, rather than less, autonomy, as when the child has enhanced traits of self-control and good judgment.⁴⁴

For Kamm, the more troubling aspect of enhancement is neither the desire for mastery, nor the unwillingness to live with what we cannot control, but the problematic goods that enhancement seeks to achieve. Because our imaginations are so limited, the improvements we have in mind may be limited, restricted types.⁴⁵ On this point, Kamm and Sandel probably agree: what nature provides is often richer and better than human ingenuity can produce. So we should not be overly confident in our judgment as to which qualities we should use enhancement to promote.

It seems clear that biological enhancement easily becomes a form of body commodification. Because we can do so much to alter the body, we have a natural tendency to view the body as an end in itself, to equate the value of the person with his or her physical qualities. Our view that the body is the symbol of the person provides a perspective on enhancement that resists this tendency. By emphasizing the symbolic function of the body we can affirm the value of the body and welcome all that promotes bodily well-being without exaggerating the body's importance. Since the body is essential to all that we are, an interest in physical well-being, indeed, in physical excellence, is fully understandable and fully justified. As we have seen, however, the body does not

exhaust our significance. The greater repository of human value is not the body itself, but the person whose body it is. And a preoccupation with the body can obscure the superior value of the person. This is the essential problem with body commodification, and it is the potential problem with enhancement. Without some way to distinguish acceptable from unacceptable forms of body modification, enhancement easily commodifies the body: it emphasizes whatever particular quality is enhanced at the expense of other qualities and at the expense of the person to whom it belongs.

Bearing in mind the symbolic function of the body can help us draw a line between acceptable and unacceptable forms of body modification. The essential function of a symbol is to point beyond itself, not to attract attention to itself. When someone's physical features or abilities totally absorb our interest, the body fails to serve as a symbol and becomes a distraction. It obscures the person, instead of presenting, or representing, him or her. When body and person are in proper relation, the body is, so to speak, "transparent" to the person. Both its condition and its appearance enable an individual to project his/her person effectively, to fulfill his/her potential as a person. Aside from pain, the basic problem with physical incapacity, whether due to illness, injury or inheritance, is the fact that it interferes with one's ability to function as a person, to fulfill the human potential for physical, mental, emotional and social flourishing, and to project, or communicate, the self effectively.

When it comes to enhancement, then, the question is whether the enhancement will draw undue attention to some feature of the person, or direct attention to the person as a whole? In other words, will it obscure or reveal the person whose feature it is? If the body is the symbol of the person, then we should rely on medical resources to modify the body to the extent that they enable the body to function as the vehicle through which the person is effectively expressed. When

the condition of the body interferes with the expression of the person, then medical treatment is of great value. When medical measures which improve the quality of personal life, they are desirable, whether they technically fall under either category, treatment or enhancement. At the same time, enhanced or unenhanced, the condition of one's body should never be equated with one's value as a person. Whether the symbol is damaged or not, the reality to which it points never loses its value.

Thinking of the body as the symbol of the person thus keeps the physical dimension of human existence in its proper perspective. No matter how impressive an object may be, if it serves as a symbol, it will direct us to something more important than itself. Returning to Michelangelo's masterpiece, we are reminded of another moment in its subject's life—David's first appearance in the biblical narrative, his belated introduction to the prophet Samuel as the youngest, and least significant, of Jesse's eight sons. David's physical form must have been impressive on that occasion: according to the biblical text, "he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome." But the author takes pains to assert that that was far from the most important thing about him. "Man looketh on the outward appearance," God reminded Samuel, "but the Lord looketh on the heart."⁴⁶

¹ James Hall, *Michelangelo and the Reinvention of the Human Body* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 52.

² Unlike previous presentations, David is depicted before, not after, his defeat of Goliath.

³ Hall, 52-53.

⁴ Hall, 59.

⁵ See Anton Gill, *Il Gigante : Michelangelo, Florence, and the David, 1492-1504* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003).

⁶ Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*. trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3, 10.

⁷ Stiegler, 15.

⁸ Cf. Stiegler, 184.

⁹ Carl Elliott reviews a number of the problems with enhancement technology, in "What's Wrong with Enhancement Technology?" in *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, ed. David M. Kaplan (2nd ed.; Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 431-37.

¹⁰Jennifer Knust, review of Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) and J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), (*Journal of Religion*, vol. 89, no. 3 [July 2009], 406).

¹¹Laura Shapiro, writing on Joan Jacobs Brumberg's, *The Body Project*, in *Newsweek*, September 22, 1997.

¹²*Newsweek*, March 2, 2009.

¹³Rebecca Mead, "Proud Flesh: The Cult of Cosmetic Surgery," *The New Yorker*, November 13, 2006, 89-90.

¹⁴*Newsweek*, December 5, 2005.

¹⁵The owner of Patina V Mannequin factory, quoted in "34x25x36," a film by Jesse Epstein.

¹⁶*Daily Bruin Classified*, April 27, 2001.

¹⁷Sean Gregory, "The Problem with Football," *Time*, vol. 175, no. 5 (February 8, 2010), 38.

¹⁸Patrick Daugherty, *San Diego Reader*, January 25, 2007.

¹⁹"The truth of the matter is, somebody is going to die in the NFL. It's going to happen. Guys are getting so big, so fast, so explosive. The game's so violent" (Carson Palmer, Cincinnati Bengals, in response to the question, "What do you say about the criticism that the league is too protective quarterbacks?" (Peter King, "Hardest, Riskiest, Toughest, Greatest Job in Sports," in *Sports Illustrated*, vol. 111, no. 9 [September 7, 2009], 83).

²⁰Sherwin B. Nuland, *How We Die: Reflections on Life's Final Chapter* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 247.

²¹Nuland, 253, 252.

²²Genesis 1:26.

²³Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 41-42.

²⁴Philip Hefner, "Imago Dei: The Possibility and Necessity of the Human Person," in *The Human Person in Science and Theology*, edited by Niels Henrik Gregersen, Willem B. Drees, and Ulf Gorman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 74.

²⁵Malcolm Jeeves, "Brain, Mind, and Behavior," in *Whatever Happened to the Soul? Scientific and Theological Portraits of Human Nature*, ed. Warren S. Brown, Nancy Murphy, and H. Newton Malony (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 79.

²⁶Mark Johnson, *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 209.

²⁷Quoted in John A. T. Robinson, *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 14.

²⁸Mark 5:34.

²⁹John 8:11.

³⁰1Cor 6:19-20.

³¹1Cor 12:27.

³²"The Last Chapter," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 2010, E1.

³³Julian Savulescu, "Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings," in *Readings in the Philosophy of Technology*, 417.

³⁴Carl Elliott, 431-32.

³⁵Frances M. Kamm, "Is There a Problem With Enhancement?" *The American Journal of Bioethics*, 5(3): 5-14, 2005, 8.

³⁶Julian Savulescu, 420-21.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 425.

³⁹Ibid., 429.

⁴⁰Kamm, "13. Cf. Elliott, 433.

⁴¹Elliott, 433-34.

⁴² Sandel's article, "The Case Against Perfection," originally appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* (Vol. 293, No. 3 [April, 2004]). It is currently available on the website of the Catholic Education Resource Center.

⁴³ Kamm, 8, 7.

⁴⁴ Kamm, 11-12.

⁴⁵ Kamm, 13.

⁴⁶ 1Sam 16:7.