

Magic Babies

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Abstract: In this paper I shall examine the individual and interpersonal psychodynamics operative in the increasing creation via reproductive technology of what I have chosen to call “magic babies”. The motivations of parents to acquire, and of fertility specialists to produce magic babies is examined. As a “solution” to parental concerns, these babies are being treated as manufactured commodities that can be constructed, bought and sold, or disposed of at will. I advance the thesis that conception involves the transfer of psychic information as well as physical information, and that magic babies, because of the manner of their creation by means other than parental sexual intercourse, may retain an “unthought known” of something intangible lost, and something traumatic experienced in their conception. This “unthought known” would contain the same doubts about feeling real, and trusting their lives and souls to their environment, that abortion survivors, including the adoptees among them, often have. To not consider these possibilities may compound these magic babies problems during development, and also make their getting help difficult.

I will also show that similar dynamics are operative in the contemporaneous production of what I have chosen to call “mechanical magic babies,” electronic toys that are marketed and defined as “real live babies.”

I shall deal extensively with the misuse of words by those who wish to deny that there is anything problematic in the current vogue of espousing the production of magic babies, both human and mechanical.

Zusammenfassung: *Magische Babys.* In diesem Beitrag will ich die individuelle und zwischenmenschliche Dynamik untersuchen, die bei der durch die Reproduktionstechnologie erfolgenden Herstellung von dem, was ich „magische Babys“ nennen möchte, von Bedeutung ist. Die Beweggründe der Eltern, „magische Babys“ zu bekommen und von Reproduktionsspezialisten, „magische Babys“ zu produzieren, soll untersucht werden. Als „Lösung“ von elterlichen Problemen können diese Babys die Funktion von herstellbaren Annehmlichkeiten haben, die man kaufen und verkaufen kann, und über die man nach Belieben verfügen kann. Ich stelle die These heraus, daß Konzeption die Weitergabe von seelischer und leiblicher Information gleichermaßen bedeutet, und daß „magische Babys“, weil sie auf andere Weise als durch elterlichen Geschlechtsverkehr entstanden sind, etwas von einem

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„ungedachten Bekannten“, von etwas schwer greifbarem Verlorenen und von etwas bei der Konzeption erfahrenen Traumatischem zurückbehalten werden. Dieses „ungedachte Bekannte“ würde dieselben Zweifel, sich wirklich real zu fühlen und der Umwelt wirklich zu vertrauen, enthalten, die Abtreibungsüberlebende wie auch die adoptierten unter ihnen, oft haben. Diese Möglichkeit nicht in Betracht zu ziehen, kann die Probleme der magischen Babys verunklaren und Hilfe schwierig machen.

Ich möchte ebenso zeigen, daß eine ähnliche Dynamik bei der zeitgenössischen Produktion von mechanischen „magischen Babys“, wie ich sie nennen möchte, wirksam ist, und zwar bei den elektronischen Spielzeugen, die als „wirkliche lebendige Babys“ vermarktet werden.

Ich möchte mich auch ausführlich mit dem Mißbrauch von Worten durch jene befassen, die verleugnen, daß an der augenblicklichen Welle der Produktion von sowohl menschlichen wie auch mechanischen „magischen Babys“ irgend etwas problematisch ist.

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Introduction

In recent years there has been a burgeoning development in the production of what I have chosen to call “magic babies” – babies that are produced by means of various reproductive technologies that bypass their creation through heterosexual intercourse between their parents. These artificial means of reproduction involve such things as the use of sperm or egg donors, in vitro fertilization, gestational surrogates, “multifetal pregnancy reduction,” cryopreservation, the destruction of superfluous frozen magic babies, and their sale as commodities. On the horizon there is serious consideration being given to the possibility that babies might soon be produced by means of the still developing genetic engineering technique of cloning.

In this paper I shall present a thesis that babies are conceived psychogenetically at the same time that they are conceived physically, and that the manner of their conception becomes an “unthought known” as part of their being. I shall also discuss the implications of reproductive technology for the welfare of the babies being produced, for their conceivers, bearers and rearers, for their siblings, grandparents and extended family, for their potential children and grandchildren, and for society.

A review of electronically operated toy babies will also be presented, with an emphasis on the relevance of the production of these mechanical magic babies to the production of human magic babies, both of which are rapidly occurring contemporaneously in our culture.

Words are misused in each instance. The producers and acquirers of magic babies, the legal, medical, and ethical authorities who dehumanize babies by describing them in the early stages of their lives as fertilized ova or “preembryos” who possess only “potential life,” the theologians who argue about defining the exact stage in prenatal development during which the soul enters the body, plus the manufacturers and users who attribute human qualities to mechanical toys, all share in common a presumption of entitlement to define who or what is human, and to bestow or withhold humanness as they wish.

Magic Babies as Commodities

Magic babies are being treated as commodities. I would suggest that it is an open and as yet unanswered question whether or not magic babies are being adversely affected by the manner of their conception. The question of possible adverse effects is one of great importance for a society that increasingly contains a distortion and debasement of the sacred meaning of human life. The feelings we observe in abortion survivors, and the adoptees among them, (Sonne 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 1996a, 1996b, 1997), who often suffer from feelings of being unrooted, not fully alive, real, present, first class, entitled, connected, loved and loving, feelings that are transference derivatives from their experience of ambivalence and disruption in their pre-natal and post-natal parental holding environment, may be a harbinger of things to come with magic babies. In fact, adoptees and abortion survivors in general could be considered magic babies of a sort themselves, since adoptees are magically redefined by law in new birth certificates as the biological children of their adoptive parents, and abortion survivors in general live surrounded by an aura of doubt about their entitlement to an authentic existence, and the knowledge that they could have been magically declared non-existent at any moment during their prenatal lives.

Ney (1983) has postulated that a whole generation of children, what in America we call "generation X," has grown up feeling like abortion survivors just from knowing about the current global legalization of abortion on demand. Many adoptees and other abortion survivors see themselves as commodities that could be returned, discarded or aborted if they proved to be unsatisfactory. If they feel that way, should we not consider the possibility that the current crop of magic babies, who are being technologically created to meet consumer demand, will quite likely feel – even more so than abortion survivors and adoptees – that they are commodities produced to gratify the desires of others, and that they are not truly human?

Prenatal Life

What happens when a child is conceived? What does his or her conception mean, and what are the motivations of those who conceive him or her? Does this matter to the baby, and if so how? These are important questions, and to just talk about "wanted" or "unwanted" children only scratches the surface. As Ney (1983) has emphasized, wanted or unwanted are desire terms of adults, describing what they want, not what the baby needs. A more appropriate term(s) should be "welcome" or "unwelcome." Ferenczi (1929) has used these terms similarly in his classic paper, "The Unwelcome Child and His Death Instinct." Both Ferenczi and Ney have documented the deleterious consequence to children ensuing from their being unwelcome. We are still researching when and how children pick up on and react to the realization that they are not welcome. We have extended our studies of early childhood further and further back into the perinatal and prenatal stages. Researchers of prenatal psychology (Cheek 1968; Verny and Kelly 1981; Fedor-Freybergh and Vogel 1988; Grof 1988; Wilhelm 1988; Chamberlain 1994; Kafkalides 1995; Janus 1997) have demonstrated that there is much more pre-verbal mentation and communication occurring during a baby's prenatal life than

was previously thought. Unborn babies are sentient beings who can be traumatized in a variety of ways at any stage along the way.

The Moment of Conception

How far back should we go in our studies of prenatal psychology? Can we go further and further back and consider the possibility that babies could be affected at the moment their lives began by the manner in which they were conceived? To some this may seem highly unlikely, but I am not alone in considering this possibility. Noble (1987, p. 351), writes in her book, "Having Your Baby by Donor Insemination," of the transformation of her thinking over time from one of skepticism about such a possibility, to one of conviction and believing.

I quote: "My personal belief is that our thoughts create energy fields that affect our bodies, especially our gametes. Psychiatric research with adults under various forms of facilitated regression (primal therapy, hypnosis, drugs) has shown that people can reach back to their preverbal organic memories. That is, memories and feelings of conception and implantation, which are experienced and stored in the body long before the brain develops its computer-type memory. Thus, the emotional and spiritual attitude of the male and female providing the gametes in conception, whether artificial or natural, are extremely influential. They are just as important as the physical environment of hormones and mucus. Australian psychiatrist Graham Farrant has explored the influence of these early primal events on personality development as well as the implications of reproductive technology at the cellular level of human experience."

Ploye (1973), one of the psychoanalysts who early on directed our focus to a consideration of intrauterine experience, and who also criticized his colleagues for their neglect of this area of research, went so far as to speculate on the symbologenicity of molecules. If, indeed, babies are affected at the moment of conception, and possibly traumatized by the manner in which they are conceived, this would have tremendous relevance to the current vogue of technologically creating babies, and should cause us to reconsider what we as a society are doing.

A Thesis of Psychogenetic Communication at Conception

Relative to the question of whether or not babies are affected at the beginning of their lives by the manner of their conception, I shall advance a thesis in this paper that parents' conscious or unconscious shared mental representation or imagery of themselves and the baby they are about to create, present during or prior to intercourse, is transferred at the time of conception to become an intangible component of the baby created. Another way of putting this would be to say that the baby is conceived mentally as it is being conceived physically, and that the baby's psychological conception permeates his or her whole being, and is an integral and inseparable element of his or her physical conception. Conception would involve not only the negentropic communication in the form of physical information, but also in the form of intangible psychogenetic information. This psychic communication becomes a component of the baby as an anlage of a triadic father-mother-child family image (Sonne and Lincoln 1966; Sonne 1980, 1991),

ideally composed, at conception or before, of shared parental representations of wanting to create a baby to welcome, love, enjoy, care for and respect. Reciprocal communication sent back to the parents by the baby likewise becomes part of their relationship with one another and with their baby, further consolidating the father-mother-child family image.

We could consider that these psychological family communications at conception, because of their triadic relational nature, may be as important – or even more important – to the baby and to the parents as the physical blending of parental DNA. Without life enhancing reciprocal psychological family communications, the baby could remain a monadic isolate that could be moved about at will, which is just about what is happening in today's magic baby world.

A correlate of my thesis of psychogenetic communication, is that this communication, as an inherent intangible ingredient of the baby from the moment of conception, becomes an “unthought known” (Bollas 1987) – something known but out of awareness – that will prenatally and postnatally influence all the baby's postconception experiences, including the baby's relationship with himself or herself, with others, and with God. The “unthought known” will continue its influence even if the child learns the facts in later life of the actual circumstances of his or her creation, unless this conscious knowledge helps the child to access and processes his or her unthought known and the positive or negative feelings associated with it.

Do Magic Babies Know What We Know?

The human magic babies being created today through sexual intercourse split off from loving parental representations, and through various technical means which bypass heterosexual intercourse, are being deprived of an essence that should be theirs as part of their creation. Furthermore, one must also consider that they will be affected prenatally and postnatally, just as every child is, by their parents attitudes and behavior. Some magic babies are aborted, or threatened with abortion. Some are being produced for homosexual men and women. Many are being raised by others than their parents.

Those who assume parental responsibility for conceiving, and/or bearing, and/or raising magic babies usually have a “thought known” knowledge of the circumstances of their babies' conception, in contrast to the babies who have an “unthought known.” This knowledge, plus any unresolved psychodynamics involved in the motivation to have these babies as “solutions” will be communicated in the subtleties of prenatal and postnatal parent-child interaction, whether or not the import of this knowledge is consciously considered by the parents, or is directly verbally conveyed to their babies. As Virginia Satir (1983) so often emphasized, “One cannot not communicate.” For parents, or others, because of their own dynamics, to pretend in the communicational matrix that these magic babies are not “different” and that they were not conceived “differently” would be to further exercise and augment the magical thinking already involved in their babies' creation. To act as if nothing different or unusual had happened would compound the human magic babies' deficiency, and perpetuate their bewilderment. It would add further trauma to the original trauma I have proposed as occurring at the

moment of their conception, and would interfere with their opportunity to heal themselves and integrate their lives.

I have previously made the point (Sonne 1996b, 1997) that many adoptees, though conceived via heterosexual intercourse, experienced a “psychological abortion” because they were kept in a state of ignorance by being deprived of the right to know who their biological parents are or were. There is a special point to be made about human magic babies of today who are being conceived by the use of sperm or ova from anonymous donors. They are worse off than the psychologically aborted adoptees referred to above, who are psychologically aborted postnatally. These human magic babies are psychologically aborted at the moment of conception. They will remain so their entire lives, for they may never be able to know the identities of their biological parents. Nor will their biological parents ever know them. Tobias (1998) reports an interview with two homosexual men who told of how they commingled their sperm to have a baby by a birth mother, and purposely did not have blood test to determine “which sperm swam faster,” because they didn’t want to know which one of them was the father. Aside from the many questions any psychoanalyst would have about the dynamics involved in these men making such a decision, a subject for a separate paper in itself, the main question here is what about the baby who is being used as a “solution.” And what will they do when their baby wants to know?

The Methods Used for Creating Magic Babies

I shall now review some alternate methods of conceiving a baby that are in vogue today. In this discussion, I shall often use the term baby, rather than the terms “fertilized ovum,” “embryo,” or “fetus,” because I wish to avoid the rather sterile nuance conveyed by these latter terms that a real live baby has not yet been created. Technically, in the scientific language of embryology, several different names are given to the developing baby at various stages of development, but in everyday life, when people want a baby, they do not go to the doctor and say that they want a fertilized ovum. They say that they want a baby. It’s when people don’t want a baby, or when they wish to abort him or her, that they then think of it as a fertilized ovum, or a mass of undifferentiated tissue.

1. The first “method” of creating magic babies to be considered should be the conception of babies through sexual intercourse under such circumstances that the parents do not want to raise the baby. Strictly speaking one should probably not call this a method, since it is usually not deliberate, but, for the sake of completeness, I am including it. These magic babies who survive without being aborted, could be considered abortion survivors, bearing in mind the ambivalent parental environment they were in during their prenatal life. Many of these children are ill treated after they are born. Many are abandoned or given up for adoption. Some are killed by their mothers, or by their mothers and fathers, shortly after they are born (McCullough 1997).

2. A second method developed for producing magic babies is artificial insemination, a method whereby semen of a male donor, sometimes known, sometimes anonymous, is introduced into the vagina or uterus of a woman whose husband is infertile. A well researched history of this procedure, and others as well, can be

found in the book by Noble (1987) mentioned earlier. A variation of this method involves the freezing and storage of sperm, to be used later, usually that of donors who have contributed their sperm to a sperm bank.

3. A third method developed is *in vitro* fertilization (IVF), a method whereby ova are fertilized by spermatozoa in a glass petri dish in a laboratory, and then transferred into the uterus of the woman who is to carry the baby. There are many variations in this method. The ova can be obtained from the woman destined to carry the baby, or from a donor. Just recently there have been reports of successful *in vitro* fertilization using frozen ova. If the ova are from the carrying woman, the semen can come from either her husband or a donor. When the carrying woman and her husband are both infertile, the ova and the spermatozoa are both from donors. This method often results in the creation of multiple babies, in which case there can be several scenarios. Either one is chosen and the others discarded, *i.e.* aborted, one is chosen and the others are frozen, or several, or all, are introduced into the uterus of the woman who is to carry the baby.

If several embryos at a time are transferred to the uterus, and as a result of this more babies implant themselves than are desired, a procedure known as “multi-fetal pregnancy reduction” is performed, which involves injecting potassium into the most accessible gestational sac, or into the chests of superfluous babies. “Unfortunately,” says Doctor Selwyn Oskowitz, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Biology, Harvard Medical School, and Director of Boston IVF, a fertility clinic associated with Harvard, “a gestational pregnancy fetus has to be lost.” (Hodder 1997).

What is to be done with superfluous frozen embryos? In England just this year there was a strong protest over the plan of a fertility clinic to dispose of 5,000 “unused” fertilized ova, whom many saw as frozen babies (Andrusko 1996; Washington Post 1996). Despite this protest, these babies were destroyed. There are thousands of similar frozen babies in America, and no one has decided what to do with them. The freezing of these superfluous untransferred babies has resulted in a recent law suit which went from the Trial Court to the Appeals Court and eventually to the Supreme Court of Tennessee (Davis vs. Davis 1992). In this suit, an ex-husband (the father) appealed to the court to prevent his ex-wife (the mother) from keeping or using the cryogenically preserved babies, defined neologically by the court as “preembryos,” that they had conceived prior to their divorce. The Court’s ruling contained a thirty page report which is an educational document in itself. It included testimony from many experts, a summary of the testimony of the parents, and citations of pertinent law. Particularly noteworthy was the citation of pertinent Louisiana law: “At the time of trial, only one state had enacted pertinent legislation. A Louisiana statute entitled ‘Human Embryos,’ among other things, forbids the intentional destruction of a cryopreserved IVF embryo, and declares that disputes between parties should be resolved in the ‘best interest’ of the embryo. 1986 La. Acts R.S. 9:121 et seq. Under the Louisiana statute, unwanted embryos must be made available for ‘adoptive implantation.’”

Other items included in the Tennessee holding were the court’s thinking and interpretation of issues such as the rights of parents, the liberty to procreate or to avoid procreation, embryology and stages of development, abortion, definitions of personhood or the lack thereof, whether the unborn are property or not, com-

elling interest, the rights of the unborn in general, and the potential life and rights of “preembryos.” Judge Daughtrey and his colleagues decided the case on the basis of the competing interests of the father and mother, not on the basis of the best interests, humanity or right to life of the “preembryos,” and granted the ex-husband’s (father’s) petition that the frozen embryos not be kept or used. The Tennessee Supreme Court’s ruling contains the following sentence: “This ruling means that the Knoxville Fertility Clinic is free to follow its normal procedure in dealing with unused embryos, as long as that procedure is not in conflict with this opinion.”

4. A fourth method is the use of a uterine surrogate carrier, or gestational surrogate. This involves a woman other than the woman who is to raise the baby carrying the baby for her and her husband to term. This carrying woman is either artificially impregnated with the semen of the raising woman’s husband, or is the recipient of a fertilized ovum obtained via *in vitro* fertilization as described above. Variations of this method involve lesbian women having children using their ova, and donated sperm, and sometimes using their partner as a gestational surrogate. Gay men can also produce children through the use of gestational surrogates.

5. A fifth method involves the induction of hyperovulation through the use of drugs such as metrodin, that stimulate the ovaries to swell to the size of a grapefruit. This method often results in the release of multiple ova, which can result in multiple conceptions and multiple births occurring. As mentioned above in the section on gestational surrogates, superfluous babies are disposed of (Carton 1997). An instance of multiple births occurring as a result of hyperovulation occurred recently with the birth of septuplets to the McCaughey family (Pressley 1997).

6. A sixth method, cloning – the replication of genetically identical humans – is hypothetical at the moment, since it has yet to be used with humans, but it is important to mention because it is being seriously discussed by some as a possibility (Steinfels 1997). Cloning of animals was first accomplished only recently by Wilmut of the Roslin Institute in Edinburgh, Scotland (Wilmut et al. 1997), who reported his findings in *Nature* early this year. By injecting DNA from an adult sheep into an ovum that had had its own DNA removed, Wilmut asexually created a lamb, Dolly, that was genetically identical with the adult sheep. The comment of bioethicist Arthur Caplan of the University of Pennsylvania (Langreth 1997) about this accomplishment was, “This takes us a step closer to ‘The Boys from Brazil.’” Caplan was referring to a book by Levin (1976) about cloned Hitlers. There are no laws in the United States so far prohibiting the use of this method in humans.

The Motivation to Create Human Magic Babies

Those who create babies through sexual intercourse with little thought about whether or not they intend to bear them or raise them, create magic babies that are “accidents,” or “mistakes.” Although often unrecognized as such by the parents, the creation of these magic babies may have resulted from a life affirming experience in the parents’ lives that they later renounce. These babies are sometimes called “love children,” but unfortunately, all too often they are not loved by

their parents after their creation. Some are aborted, others live on as abortion survivors, and, as mentioned earlier, some are killed after they are born (McCullough 1997). Some are given up for adoption.

Parents who adopt magic babies often do so either because one or both of them are infertile, or because for other reasons they are unable or reluctant to conceive children of their own. The stories of adoption are highly varied, but a common denominator as far as the children are concerned is that they have all experienced disruption of the bond between them and their biological parents, and many, as mentioned earlier, can be considered abortion survivors traumatized in utero. They are “different,” and in addition to their prenatal and postnatal trauma, the often complicated dynamics of their adoptive parents color their postnatal communication matrix, impact on them, and often impede resolution of their early trauma. The denial of access by adoptees to their original birth certificates, which, as mentioned earlier, constitutes a psychological abortion, is but one example of this (Sonne 1996b, 1997).

The motivation of would-be child rearers who want to create or acquire human magic babies via reproductive technology is similar to that of those who adopt, but they go one step beyond adopting someone else’s natural child to the use of whatever scientific means are available to enable them to have a child created specifically for them. We could say that the human magic baby in this instance is in essence a manufactured item made to order. Their desire for a baby is intense, and, as is the case with many adoptive parents, the magic baby is often an attempt on the part of those who want them to assuage what many have described as the intolerable anguish, desperation, or feelings of being half dead, that they have about their infertility.

Incomplete Mourning and Replacement

The desire to acquire a human magic baby can be viewed somewhat similar to the desire to replace a lost child, as occurred in the case of Salvador Dali and Vincent van Gogh, both of whom were replacements for older siblings who had died, but whose deaths had been incompletely mourned. Dali said that every time his parents looked at him he felt that they were looking at two people. Van Gogh was even named after his brother. These children are being used as attempted solutions to unresolved mental conflicts. Seeing themselves reflected in a distorted social mirror, will these children not have a problem knowing their true selves, and expecting to be known as such by others?

Volkan (1988) has written extensively about the deleterious consequences, both to the mind and to human interaction, that are resultant from the incomplete mourning of a narcissistic injury which has caused damage to, or a loss of one’s identity. In the case of nations, the efforts to replace this damage or loss can lead to war. If incomplete mourning, narcissistic injury, and damaged identity are part of what is behind the intense motivation of some potential parents to produce and acquire magic babies, it is no wonder that little consideration is given to the possibility that their magic babies may have problems, that they may have difficulty feeling human, and that they may have difficulty not thinking of themselves as commodities manufactured to meet the needs of others. Furthermore, as far

as the parents are concerned, little consideration is given to the possibility that their problems may not be solved by acquiring their human magic baby. If their mourning is incomplete, how will a replacement solve this problem for them? Yet, many people believe in the idea of using replacements to eliminate and block the need for painful mourning, which of course nevertheless remains uncompleted. One of our baby sitters, in general a loving and caring woman, told our sobbing and stunned children, who were small at the time when their pet cat was killed by a car, "You can get another cat." Skip the mourning, a new cat would make them immediately happy!

Also connected with incomplete mourning are the feelings of shame, failure, demasculinization, defeminization and desexualization that are experienced by many infertile men and women, feelings that can be exacerbated by the acquisition of magic babies by virtues of the fact that they are produced from the sperm or ova of reproductive competitors. There are overtones of feeling sexually inadequate and undesirable in the infertile, and the donors may be viewed by them or their mates as more desirable and complete than they are, and the chosen donor seen as having an unfair and easy victory over the already handicapped infertile partner. Just as many women bond with their obstetricians, could it be that some fertile women might bond with their sperm donor, or fertile men with their ova donor? Jealousy about donor fertility, resentment toward the donor(s), or towards one's fertile partner for having chosen him or her – even if the infertile partner has agreed to this – can occur, and these feelings may spill over to the human magic baby because of his or her heritage. I have observed these dynamics in the marital and parent-child relationships in adoptive families (Sonne 1997). The foregoing dynamics do not help resolve incomplete mourning. They complicate it unless they are recognized and analyzed.

Incomplete mourning in the parents of human magic babies can be exacerbated by multifetal pregnancy reduction because the parents may be unable to mourn the loss of some of their babies because of guilt over their complicity in aborting them. As Carton (1997) has pointed out, "Whereas most ordinary abortions occur when a baby is unwanted, fetal reduction is usually recommended to couples who desperately yearn for children; after long trying to conceive, they usually have resorted to fertility drugs or stretched their finances to the limit for a shot at in-vitro fertilization. Now, suddenly, they face just the opposite move: eliminating a potential child." Their guilt may interfere with their enjoyment of the surviving baby or babies chosen. The surviving baby or babies, their feelings of insecurity already augmented because of their narrow escape from death, may also have difficulty grieving the loss of their siblings because of a combination of feeling glad that it was their siblings and not they who were aborted, and feeling guilty about "benefiting" from the sacrifice of their siblings. La Goy (1993) has written along these lines in her paper on the effects of "the vanishing twin" on the surviving child.

The accounts (Hodder 1997) of parents' elation at the success of acquiring a magic baby are remarkable. They are so happy, and life is so wonderful. Not only is little thought given to some of the problems inherent in the creation of their human magic babies, or the possibility that their magic babies may have an internalized "unknown thought" about the circumstances of their creation, or that the

parents may be conveying magical messages to their magic babies in their communicational matrix, there is also little thought by the parents about themselves. Time will tell how these stories ultimately play out.

The Motivation of Fertility Specialists

It is easy to identify with the empathy fertility specialists say they feel for unhappy childless couples. Yet there is more than empathy at work. Just as obstetricians sometimes speak with pride about the children whom they have delivered, almost as if they had created the children themselves, fertility specialists wax ecstatic at the successful creation of a human magic baby. Accounts in the lay press make it sound as if they had never experienced such joy, as if they had won the Super Bowl, or the World Series, or the lottery. Look what we did, we created this magic baby, we defeated the odds, we defeated nature, we did it, and they thought it couldn't be done. It doesn't matter whether this man or this woman was infertile, we gave them a baby. We are miracle workers!

The wonders of modern science, the computer, the electron microscope, the cryogenic equipment, and the hormonal and genetic knowledge that make the creation of magic babies ever more possible, blind them to a consideration of the other human factors involved that I have described so far, and to the possible risks involved to humanity, human relationships, love, and the production of mentally healthy children, that are part and parcel of what they are doing. They are experiencing the feeling of miracle workers, thinking that they are accomplishing such wonderful things, and not considering the down side of what they are doing. Their thinking might go something like this: "Who says that the method and motivation of creating these magical babies will have any detrimental effect on them? They are going to have loving parents who want them desperately. Anyone who thinks otherwise must be crazy. And besides, although we won't mention it, and don't you either, we must admit that there is a great deal of money to be made in producing human magic babies. There is a great market for them, and we aim to meet the need." As mentioned earlier, some fertility clinics sell unused cryogenically preserved magic babies to infertile couples (Selz 1997), often complete with a pedigree matched to meet the purchasers' desires (Kolata 1997).

Helping Magic Babies

Some magic babies who, as unwelcome children, abortion survivors, and adoptees, suffer from a deficiency of the inherent component referred to earlier in this paper, may be helped to acquire a positive sense of self and a joy in life by coming face to face with their losses, and claiming and valuing their own conception and identity despite the manner in which they were conceived. As for the magic babies created by the ever more sophisticated technologies which have been developed since the first "test tube baby" was created only thirty years ago, we have to date only an extrapolation from our experiences with unwelcome children, abortion survivors and adoptees to help us speculate and anticipate what the consequences of our advanced technology may be as this new batch of magic babies enters our social structure. Our magic babies are headed for trouble, and so are we as a

society. In fact, we are already in trouble, and we are ignoring this at our peril, blindly carried away by a fascination with our technology. What is technologically possible, or legally permissible, when exercised in the creation of magic babies to satisfy adult desires, may mitigate against the creation of children possessing the very characteristics that make us human and able to love and be loved. The use of technology in such an endeavor is itself open to question as to whether this is an act of love or not, despite its being often presented as such. A worst case scenario for our future society, worse than magic babies and their families being troubled, would be for them to be untroubled. We would then have spawned a generation of pseudohappy, unfeeling, ignorant human robots who are blithely unaware that there is anything the matter with them.

An unanswered question is whether or not magic babies created by our advanced technology will have serious problems in life because of their “unthought known” and, if they do, whether we will be able to help them process and integrate this “unthought known” with later, more adult knowledge of the circumstances of their conception and the family dynamics operative during their development. We do know a great deal about the positive results of such an integrating process when this occurs in therapy with abortion survivors and adoptees (Sonne 1994a, 1994b, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). We do not know at this time what the result might be of such a process occurring in magic babies, since, to my knowledge, none have yet come for therapy. I know of only one case where therapy is probably needed, which I learned about indirectly from one of my patients who reported on twins who were conceived by in vitro fertilization and born to his female cousin. The mother was miserable for the last four months of a precarious pregnancy that required continuous hospitalization. Her marriage is not going well, and both of the children have severe learning disabilities.

Considering that the “unthought known” of human magic babies would be composed of a wide variety of unusual parental representations, it is a fair assumption that the “unthought known” of magic babies would have strong negative feelings associated with it and that the magic babies would have unusual difficulties processing it. Their difficulties would likely be far greater than those encountered by abortion survivors and adoptees, even if they were repeatedly told by those who raised them – as abortion survivors and adoptees often are – that they were ever so much wanted.

The “Unthought Known” and the Unconscious

Those who dismiss the notion that magic babies might be affected adversely by the manner of their creation seem to be operating from the premise that “What you don’t know can’t hurt you.” First of all, this is not true. We may not know that a hurricane is approaching, but it still may arrive and wreak havoc. Secondly, there is a question as to what is meant by the word “know.” As Solms (1997) has so well emphasized, in underscoring the importance of the mind and the basic tenets of psychoanalytic theory in this “decade of the brain,” conscious knowledge only scratches the surface of what we unconsciously “know” or are only dimly aware of. How often have most of us said that we don’t quite know what is bothering us, but that we don’t feel right? Much of what we think we know either about our inter-

nal state, or about the external world, is really no more than the often unreliable and untrustworthy interpretation that our mental apparatus gives to us about the sensations we receive from both our external and internal worlds. "Knowledge" of both these worlds is influenced by our unconscious, which is essentially unknowable, or only partly knowable, and which includes a multitude of influential past experiences, which, depending partly on the mental mechanisms of defense used to process them, color our perceptions. Many experiences may have had an impact on us "out of conscious awareness." The saying "What you don't know can't hurt you," has to be corrected to "What you don't know may hurt you, may have hurt you, and may still be hurting you." It is an axiom in psychoanalysis that "If you are treated badly and don't know it you will act out."

All of this reasoning is pertinent to a consideration of magic babies and the trauma that they may have experienced at the time of their creation because of the manner of their conception, and thereafter because of the dynamics of their parents in the child-parent(s) communicational matrix. What will their parents eventually tell them about the circumstances of their creation, if they ever do? Will they tell them who their biological parents are? Do the parents even know who their magic babies' biological parents are? Just as with many adoptees, questions will surely be asked such as "Where did I come from?" The truth cannot likely be hidden forever. Just as many adoptees today are searching, and are on the verge of winning their legal battle to change the law and claim their right to know who their biological parents are (Sonne 1997), won't these human magic babies do the same? And when they do, in addition to struggling to integrate the knowledge of their conception, will they be able to find out who their biological parents are, even if this is legally permissible? Are there complete records of the names of sperm or ovum donors? How many donors are listed as anonymous? And even if a sperm or ovum donor is identified, will the magic baby not likely feel like Susan Ariel (Noble 1987, p. 321), who was aghast, ashamed and cheapened at the thought that she might have come from semen from a father who thought so little of himself and his potential offspring that he had sold his semen for twenty-five dollars to a sperm bank? The cover of the recent Harvard Magazine in which the article by Hodder (Hodder 1997), quoted earlier, appeared, shows a happy, smiling couple holding two not-so-smiling magic babies. Also on the cover is a bold headline reading, "New Fashioned Babies." What will ultimately happen to these families that are so glowingly presented in lay press articles describing the wonders of modern science and the happiness of childless couples who now have a child?

Mechanical Magic Babies

I would like to turn now to an examination of what I have chosen to call "mechanical magic babies", electronic toys that are presented as having human characteristics. The arrival of a wide variety of these mechanical magic babies has occurred in the same time frame as the current production of human magic babies. I would propose that these phenomena are interconnected, and that each mutually reinforces, stimulates, and is an expression of an underlying societal dynamic of dehumanization.

These mechanical magic babies are marketed using such terms as “binary bundles of joy” and “virtual reality,” and they have become so popular recently that toy stores can scarcely keep up with the demand for them (Mirabella 1997). Their forerunners were probably Coleco’s Cabbage Patch Kids of some years back, that came complete with adoption papers (Lifton 1997), and that have returned within this last year as Cabbage Patch Snacktime Kids, who voraciously turned on their little mothers, attempting to eat their fingers and hair. Since the dolls had no on and off switch, and the parents were cutting off their children’s hair to rescue them, the manufacturers belatedly advised parents to rip off the backpack of batteries or to dismantle the doll.

Today, in addition to the Cabbage Patch Snacktime Kids, we have mechanical magic babies with such names as Tickle Me Elmo, Sesame Street Tickle Me Babies, ABC Elmo, Musical Elmo, and Sing ’N Snore Ernie from Tyco, Interactive Barney from Microsoft, Beanfuls and Nano from Playmate, and My Lickety Treats and Newborn Diaper Surprise from Hasbro. The advertisements for some these mechanical magic babies, the descriptions of them, and the instructions for playing with them, are summarized below:

- Microsoft’s Interactive Barney is described in advertisements as “Your child’s best friend comes to life like never before.” It has a “2000 word vocabulary,” and “Lifelike head and arm movements.”
- Playmate’s Beanfuls are described as having “Bean Babies Inside.” They are “Full of beans, full of babies, and full of surprises,” and the “Bean babies have surprise babies inside.”
- Hasbro’s My Lickety Treats “Licks her lollipop and magically sips from her fun and fruity juice cup.”
- Hasbro’s Newborn Diaper Surprise “Really wets and soils her diaper,” and her purchase “Includes a diaper surprise center, bottle, diaper cream, plus three color change diapers and six diaper liners.”
- An advertisement for Tyco’s Sesame Street Tickle Me Babies reads, “Tickle their tummies for a giggle and a shake,” and “Auto shut-off for longer battery life.”
- Tyco’s ABC Elmo reads, “Press Elmo’s tummy to start the learning fun,” and “Hear Elmo sing the entire alphabet (Batteries Included).”
- The ad for Tickle Me Elmo reads, “Tickle Elmo once to make him giggle. Tickle him a second time to make him laugh longer. Tickle him a third time to make him shake and laugh uncontrollably.” (Did anyone ever hear of “Shaken baby syndrome?” This sounds like a prescription for sadism.)
- Baby So Real, by Toy Biz, reads, “Baby’s face magically changes as she goes from sad and crying to happy and laughing as you cuddle her.” Baby Did It, from Kenner, reads, “When you feed her she ’dirties’ her diapers. Then you change her with no diaper mess.” (bold italics in the original).
- Loving Tears Baby from Gerber is described as “Your Child’s First Nurturing Doll.”
- The instructions for Mommy Make Me Feel Better, from Laurel Dolls, T.M., which has numerous tiny red spots on its face, read, “1. To Make Her Feel Better Rub Her Cheek And Forehead And the Symptoms Of Her Cold Will Disappear. 2. Lay Her Down And She Will Close Her Eyes For A Short Nap. 3.

To Make Her Cold Symptoms Reappear, Just Rub Her Cheek And Forehead With Cold Water.”

- Instructions for the Nano Baby, by Tyco, which incidentally is a small plastic object with push buttons and a screen that bears no resemblance whatsoever to a baby doll, tell the child “The object of the game is to take care of your Nano Baby just like you would a real baby. If you take good care of your Nano Baby it will grow into a happy family. If you neglect your Nano Baby, the game will end prematurely with an unhappy family. The game takes about one month to play successfully.”

Mechanical Magic Babies Entropically Limit Creativity

One of the many problems with the use of mechanical magic babies as transitional objects, in the sense that dolls, teddy bears, and other toys have been used for ages, and which have been described as such by Winnicott (1949), or as selfobjects a la Kohut (1977), is that the electronic programming in mechanical magic babies puts prescribed and limiting demands on children that interfere with the use of their own capacity for imagination and creative fantasy. They do not help children with issues of separation and individuation, identity formation, identification, initiative, frustration, restraint, differences, boundaries, empathy, meaning, love, art, or the development of the capacity for using and understanding symbols, semiosis, metonyms, metaphors, synesthesia and other figures of speech. Furthermore, although we know that mechanical magic babies are not alive, we all, children and adults alike, tend to become so hypnotically entrapped by playing with these toys that we are coopted into thinking and behaving as if they were really alive. The narrowly prescribed fantasy becomes our reality. This virtual reality is better than reality, and worse. Better because it is easy, and worse because it is ultimately empty. Among the devotees of virtual reality who are fascinated with mechanical magic babies – and they are not all children – are many who are so fascinated by Lara Croft (Croal and Hughes 1997), the immensely popular PC and videogame action heroine, and so convinced that she is real, that they have been bombarding Core, the producers, with letters asking who her boyfriends are, who her favorite bands are, and what she would look like without her clothes.

We need to remind ourselves that these virtual reality figures are not alive. They do not have the characteristics of living organisms as described by von Bertalanffy (1967) and myself (Sonne 1979), i.e. they are not active organisms whose behavior is new, emergent, instantaneous, spontaneous and unpredictable, and who have constitutive characteristics which are dependent on specific relations within a complex and open system. They are preprogrammed to respond predictably to their internal electronic mechanism, or to respond predictably to specific external signals. The interactive process between the child and the mechanical magic baby is not a morphogenic, negentropic, creative communicational process, it is an entropic, cybernetic one, similar to processes involving the use of a governor or thermostat. I am reminded of my Danish grandmother’s syntactical error in occasionally asking, “Who belongs to this?” She was saying more than she knew. Although the child may be under the illusion that he or she is controlling the mechanical baby, the opposite is true. The mechanical magic baby controls the

child. Hence, we would have to conclude that mechanical magic babies limit the child's use of creative fantasy, and falsely present him or her with a virtual reality which does not, and cannot conform to how a real baby might or might not act.

Responsibility, Death and Resurrection

Not only do mechanical magic babies fail to teach children about what real babies are like, or give them an opportunity to play at how they someday may be real mommies or daddies, they burden them unduly at too young an age with the responsibilities of parenthood. As mentioned earlier, the instructions that come with Nano Baby warn the child that bad things, including "an unhappy family" might happen if they don't respond to the Nano Baby's signals. The mother of a nine year old girl was very concerned that her daughter was constantly worrying about whether or not she would be a good mother, at an age when she was in no way ready to be one. The daughter become so obsessed with caring for her Nano Baby that she practically abandoned socializing with her friends and family, and neglected her pet dog. In time, becoming exhausted because her Nano baby was too demanding and too much trouble, she eventually let it die. She also took the batteries out of her Baby Real because she got so tired of getting up in the night to care for it.

The secretary of one of my lawyer friends was so concerned about caring for her daughter's Nano Baby that she took it to work with her. Her child's teachers had complained about the disruption of the class room by the Nano Baby's beeping, and had forbidden the little mother from bringing it so school with her. Her mother agreed to "baby sit." Needless to say, the transfer of beeps to her place of work did not lead to the Nano Baby being placed in the firm's day care center, but to a threat to fire the secretary. One of my employees told me that his wife has had an electronically operated mechanical dog that she has kept with her constantly for five years. She felt "terrible" when she let it die a few times, and hastened to bring it back to life.

Implicit in the message of excessive parental responsibility conveyed by mechanical magic babies is also a message of hostility to babies. They are defined as so impossibly demanding that no one in his or her right mind would possibly ever want to have responsibility for a baby, and might even be tempted to kill it. In the instructions for Nano baby there is an emphasis on actions, behavior, and bodily functions. Such things as eating, "messaging," cleaning, care taking, sleep, sickness, and discipline, are stressed, with little or no word about feeling, enjoying or loving. Discipline has a high priority, and is mandatory, "If your baby misbehaves, you must discipline it." This blends with a sense of power over life and death. One eleven year old girl, when asked how she could stop playing the game, and how the game ends, responded, "You can kill it. Watch, you push the discipline button, and keep pushing, and you can discipline it to death." She kept pushing the button to demonstrate, until the Nano baby died. When asked if she could bring it back to life, she responded, "Yes, then its life starts all over," and demonstrated this also. Here we see a game purported to help children learn about how to be parents, teaching them about killing and magical rebirth, a step further than the sadism fostered with Tickle Me Elmo. A life can be destroyed in an instant, easily and

impulsively, on a whim, by pushing a button. Such thinking can be seen in the behavior and comments of children who have committed the recent school yard shootings and other juvenile homicides (Adler and Annin 1998; Bahls, Graham and Giordano 1998; Howlett 1998; McFadden 1998; Thomas 1998) These mechanical magic babies also teach children that the consequences of killing can be ignored, because the life taken can just as easily be restored by pushing another button. In real life, such actions are irreversible.

Dehumanization

Human magic babies and mechanical magic babies have in common the fact that they both were created, or in effect manufactured, by mechanical means. The fact that human magic babies are created by technological means is either minimized or glorified by the would-be parents and fertility specialists, and is in no way presented by them as implying a mechanical view of children. The parents want a baby, and the fertility specialists aim to supply them with one, so any hint that the baby's creation is done by mechanical means, or that the manner of his or her creation might possibly be harmful to the baby at the time of conception or thereafter is dismissed. Mechanical magic babies, in contrast to human magic babies, are clearly manufactured from inanimate materials. Nevertheless, though obviously mechanical in construction, they are called real babies by their manufacturers and users.

In short, human magic babies are mechanized humans, and mechanical magic babies are humanized mechanisms. The human magic baby is treated like a mechanical toy, even though it is human, and the mechanical magic baby is treated like a human baby, even though it is a mechanical toy. In each instance the usual definitions of what it means to be a human being, and what it means to love and be loved as a human being in relation to other human beings, are implicitly altered so that they are weakened and drained of their authenticity, spontaneity and creativity. The essential qualities that mark us as human become precious sentimental pretensions and tacked-on superficial attributes that are defined capriciously and deceptively, and true humanness is lost sight of.

The current vogue of manufacturing both human and toy magic babies is reflective of a dehumanizing trend in our post-modern culture that is characterized by a tendency to worship molecular biology and electronics, and to play God in our aspirations to strive for total control and the capacity to predetermine events. The comment by the fertility doctor in the current movie, *Cloned* (1997), who offers a mother a replacement clone for her eight year old child who had recently drowned, speaks to this. The mother had found out that her doctor had repeatedly cloned her child. He protests that what he had done was in the service of humanity, and that if she keeps quiet he will provide her with the last remaining embryo. If she talks and exposes him he will destroy it. He tells her, "God can't help you, Skye (the mother), but I can!"

Only a movie? The artists who created *Cloned* (1997), *Gattica* (1997) and *The Third Twin* (1997) and the novel, *The Multiple Man* (Bora 1987) are in the same league as Huxley, who wrote *Brave New World*, and Orwell, who wrote 1984. They are sensitive to what is happening around them, and are harbingers of things to

come, while the rest of us are asleep, the production of magic babies goes on, the courts argue about definitions and the fine points of current law, and legislators are not moving fast enough to develop a new body of law to deal with the explosive use of reproductive technology. Behaviors and attitudes such as we see in these movies are indeed becoming more and more prevalent in our society, and with them we are devaluing the mind, the soul, love, poetry, music, beauty, creativity, humanness, and the uniqueness and potential of every individual human being, whether baby or adult.

The Misuse of Words

I would like to make some final comments on the way words are misused to distract us from examining the true significance of what is happening in the creation of magic babies. I have already referred to the tendency to use scientific embryological terms to describe babies at various stages of development in such a way that we do not think of them as human. These terms distract us from thinking that the baby is already conceived, and is on its developmental course, no matter what distinctions are made about its stage of development. As if the use of traditional embryological terminology was not already sufficient to use for the purpose of dehumanizing the unborn, the court in the case of *Davis vs. Davis*, as mentioned earlier (*Davis vs. Davis* 1992), found it necessary to coin the neologism “preembryo” to dehumanize the unborn even further.

A further example of how words can minimize looking at the baby as a baby is the use of the term pregnancy. A woman is not considered pregnant until the baby has become implanted in the uterus. Is the baby not a baby before that? In what other category do we define someone by whether or not they accomplish something? Is a student not a student if he fails? Is the *Voyager* not a *Voyager* until it lands? A baby who becomes implanted was a baby before it became implanted and after implantation it is a baby who is now implanted. Only the state of the baby has changed – as the state of a seed in a packet differs from the state of a seed in the ground – not the baby’s identity. A baby who does not become implanted has had a mishap. It is not not a baby.

Another example of the misuse of words was mentioned earlier, one in which an intentional abortion was described as a “multifetal pregnancy reduction.” It is not the pregnancy that is reduced, it is the number of babies, called fetuses or embryos, who are reduced. A “multifetal pregnancy reduction” is an abortion, The protestations of lament, such as that of Oskowitz (Hodder 1997), “Unfortunately, some fetuses have to be destroyed,” sound like hollow pap to forestall or dismiss potential critics. Ironically, though probably not intended by the coiners of this terminology, the use of the words “pregnancy reduction” implies that the mother is also reduced when her “superfluous” babies are aborted.

The misuse of words is evident in the way the noun “abortion” and the verb “abort” are used. There is something wrong with the use of the noun abortion to denote a procedure which the mother has, without mentioning the baby. The mother had the abortion, the baby did not, even though it is the baby who was aborted. We do not say that the baby had an abortion, we say that “the mother had an abortion,” or “her pregnancy was aborted.” If, instead of saying that the mother

had an abortion, we say that the mother's pregnancy was terminated, again we are still giving short shrift to the fact that the baby was aborted. The fact that the words mother, abortion, and pregnancy are all nouns omits the essence of what a deliberate abortion is, an active interruption of the growth of the baby, and the rupture of the contiguity and continuity of the mother-baby relationship.

If we say that a baby is not even a fetus or an embryo until implantation, and that a mother is not a mother until implantation, at which time she is defined as pregnant, and not before, we are leaving out a lot. Both the baby and the mother are on their way to one another well before implantation. The fertilized ovum baby is an active seeking organism, and a receptive mother is also active in so far as she is physically and mentally anticipating company and is preparing a safe and secure spot in her uterus and in her heart so that the baby can have a safe landing, implant himself or herself in her fertile soil, take root and settle in.

In the foregoing discussion of abortion, I have not mentioned the father, but it must be kept in mind that although the mother is physically pregnant, both the mother and the father are pregnant psychologically, and their relationship is pregnant as well, assuming that the mother, who has the unilateral power to abort, has decided not to exercise it. The conjoint journey of the father-mother-baby triad started with conception, before implantation, and will continue conjointly thereafter unless interrupted.

It is interesting that we use the verb "abort" more precisely when we use it in reference to contexts or categories other than that of mothers, fathers and babies. We seldom use the noun "abortion" in these instances. When we say that plans for a project were aborted, or a space mission was aborted, or a construction project was aborted, we don't say that the plans, or the mission, or the construction had an abortion, or that the planner, project director or the one who financed the project had an abortion. We use the verb "abort," which connotes more of a sense of dynamic, alive, affect laden, human and powerful movement than does the rather static term "abortion." This usage is similar to the way that the verbs "die, to die or dying" connote a process different than that of death as a state, or to the way the verbs "love, to love or loving" connote a process differing from love as a state. It is clear to almost everyone when the verbs "abort, to abort, or aborting" are used in contexts such as mentioned above, that what was done in aborting was something active. To abort in these contexts connotes, as it should in the father-mother-baby context, a striking and definite move that prematurely and deliberately interrupts the forward motion or progression of the developmental process of a living project, either when it is a "pregnant idea," anticipated as possible, about to begin, or when it is moving further along on the time continuum trajectory of its ongoing flow.

The misuse of words by the promoters of mechanical magic babies is grossly obvious. "This is your real live baby." "Watch it come to life." "If you don't take care of it you will have a difficult baby or an unhappy family and the game will be over" How about "If you don't take care of it, it will die, and then, having invested your feelings in your toy magic baby as if it were real, a virtual reality, you will not only have sorrow at the loss of your baby, you will have guilt as well.?" The falsity, the metaphorolytic use of words in a way that drains them of their emotional import, the lack of precision, and the redefinition of words, is so off-handedly done, and

done with such a seductive air of justification, and innocent virtue and caring, that unless one takes time out to really look, one's sense of reality and truth are lost without one realizing it. What is happening in the descriptions and use of magic babies, both human and virtual, is reminiscent of Hayek's (1944) warning in "The Road to Serfdom," that the easiest way to destroy truth, which he emphasizes is the basis of all morals, is to use words in such a way that people will think that these distortions are what they already believe in.

A further example of the misuse of words is about how so-called ethics committees or advisory boards define ethical behavior when, as authoritative bodies they sanction the creation of magic babies. Many would take exception to the use of the words "ethics" and "ethical" which some of these committees and boards use in defining themselves and their decisions. In addition to this dubious designation, the definitions of other words these committees and boards use to describe how they arrived at their decisions are fraught with errors, distortions, omissions and contradictions, not only moral, but factual as well. Hodder (1997) tells of an example of a forty two year old woman with terminal cancer who wanted to have a baby even though she could not conceive on her own or carry the baby, and might very well not live to raise the child, or live even until the baby would be born. This woman's request had been denied by many fertility clinics before Doctor Selwyn Oskowitz of Boston IVF, mentioned earlier in this essay, accepted her. The comments about the advisory board are noteworthy: "At Boston IVF, the priest, rabbi, ethicist, social workers, and pediatricians on the board reviewed Bennett's case, concluding that her wish to perpetuate her genetic heritage through IVF in spite of her cancer was ethically sound. They found her arrangements for the loving upbringing of her potential child by her family to be responsible and she began IVF treatment." Several babies were created by in vitro fertilization from Bennett's ova. There is no mention of where the sperm came from, no mention of Bennett's marital status, and no description of the composition of her family who was to raise her child. These babies were placed in a gestational surrogate, but none survived. Bennett died shortly thereafter.

The sentence describing the outcome of this so-called ethical recommendation contains such confusing language that it boggles the mind. It reads as follows: "The embryos were placed in the surrogate, but she did not conceive." The alert reader will have picked up the atrocious error of implicitly attributing conception to the gestational surrogate. A further error is in the use of the phrase, "did not conceive," to describe what obviously was a failure of implantation and pregnancy. There is also an internal contradiction in this sentence. The authors describe conception as not having occurred, yet they have immediately before used the word embryo(s) – obviously already conceived and alive – in describing the transfer. This story, and the convoluted language and reasoning contained therein, speaks volumes.

Conclusion

Crucial in all the foregoing discussion of human magic babies and mechanical magic babies is the issue of dehumanization and mechanization of society, and the diminution of a sense of sacredness about human life. Why are we doing this?

What are the dynamics of this process? It has occurred to me that all of us are caught up in it because we want instant gratification and perfection in human relationships, and are impatient with the trouble, work and pain that go along with the joys and pleasures that they can provide. Virtual reality gives us what we mindlessly think we want, without the inconvenience and burden of dealing with real people. Also, computers and other feats of electronic and genetic engineering give us power and a competitive advantage over those who may be busy just tending their gardens. A recent advertisement for Microsoft (Microsoft 1998), poses the question, "Are you living under the threat of change or in the hope of it?" and proposes that "A 'Digital_Nervous_System' makes you ready. And very very hopeful."

Sartre (1956) said early in his career that human relationships were hell. Later, in his eighties, after misleading several generations that were influenced by his writing, he changed his mind, and said that life was empty and meaningless without human relationships. In *Zorba the Greek* (Kazantzakis 1952), there is an exchange in which Zorba is told by his intellectual employer that he doesn't want any trouble. To this admonition, Zorba, an irrepressible earthy man, responds by saying, "Boss, life is trouble." The quotations by Joey, a boy suffering from childhood schizophrenia who believed that he was a machine run by electric currents and by remote control, as reported in Bettelheim's (1959) case study, *Joey: A Mechanical Boy*, were that he wanted to be rid of his humanity, that he did not want to be a human being, that he didn't want to have anything to do with humans because human experiences are much too painful, and that he wished he were a papoose or could be entirely reborn in the womb, are elegant expressions of how it feels to want to avoid the world of trouble. Joey's mother acknowledged to Bettelheim the degree to which she had excluded the fact of her pregnancy from her consciousness. With Bettelheim's help, Joey eventually entered the human condition.

There is another dynamic that has occurred to me, that our fascination with modern technology and the computer represents a regressive wish for perfect mothers to replace our imperfect ones. The problem with this is that, just as users are controlled by their computers, transferring this search to the world of real mothers, can result in our being overly controlled by mothers. The "perfect mothers" in our increasingly matriarchal society are becoming the persons who in most instances have the singular power of life or death over babies, including magic ones, and fathers are having less and less of a say. A troubled life is thought a wasted one, and troublesome men are becoming superfluous. Our modern technology offers us the promise of a trouble free life, but what will the meaning of such a life then be? Society's fascination with magic babies is not a fascination with a technology that can make life richer, it is a fascination with a technology that can deaden us, drive us crazy, control us, or kill us.

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