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## Abortion in/as a Consumer Structure

### **Abstract**

This article argues that the contemporary acceptability of abortion is not solely due to the Liberal imperative to exercise individual choice. Rather, abortion's acceptability needs to be explained with reference to the techniques of consumer culture. This article will begin by explaining how practices in general predispose one to gravitate towards one form of practices rather than another. It will then look at how consumer practices generate a biopolitics of economic efficiency and corporeal commodification which culminates in a politics of visibility. Under such conditions, even basic categories like mere existence is dependent on its ability to be displayed for public view. This article will conclude by reflecting on the necessity of forging the Church not as a subsection of a public framed by consumerism, but as an alternative public in its own right.

## *Abortion in/as a Consumer Structure*

Matthew Tan

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*Your gold and your silver are corroded, and that same corrosion will testify against you and consume your flesh like fire. Jas. 5.3*

### **Introduction**

Much to the chagrin of many a Christian observer, the imperative to increase the availability of abortion has become one of the defining hallmarks of our contemporary cultural context. The propriety of candidates for public office is judged in relation to their stance on the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade*. Even within segments of the Church, abortion also has become celebrated as one of the great advances for Christian women, and even regarded as consistent with being pro-life.<sup>1</sup> This raises the question: what accounts for the acceptability of abortion in contemporary society? Whilst the acceptability of infanticide is well documented across a number of epochs, the acceptability of abortion in our contemporary context is unique in that it goes beyond the culture's support of an individual's right to choose. Other factors are at play here, and it is submitted that the widespread acceptability of abortion cannot be conceived of in isolation from the predominance of consumer capitalism.

The link between abortion and consumerism was identified by D. Stephen Long in a segment of his book, *The Goodness of God*. Long remarked that abortion constituted an exercise in the commodification of human flesh and suggested that many aspects of the processes that lead up to the decision to have an abortion are extensions of consumer practice.<sup>2</sup> However, much of Long's interfacing of abortion with consumer capitalism was confined to the issue of choice, while the exact details as to how the commodification of human flesh ties in with the normalisation of abortion remained undefined. This article seeks to build on Long's observation, but give greater attention to the practices and technologies within consumer culture that exude a cultural logic that renders the choice to have an abortion as natural.

This article will divide its investigation into five parts. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu on social "fields" steering the tendencies of belief or "habitus", the first section will justify the attempt to link the practices of consumer culture with the mindset that normalises abortion by establishing the salience of social practices generally in steering a society in believing one set of knowledge claims over another. A second section will outline how consumer culture institutionalises a regime of knowledge whereby all cultural considerations, including the continuation of the species through childbearing, are filtered through a lens framed by economic efficiency. The remaining three sections will show how the normalisation of abortion is circumscribed by the consumerisation of cultural horizons on three fronts. The third section looks at abortion as the crystallisation of processes of the body's transformation into a commodity, with a special focus on the body's celebration as mere physiology, which paradoxically creates vulnerabilities in whole classes of persons. This exaltation of the body as mere physiology which gives way to severe vulnerabilities paves the way to consider how abortion interfaces with two other tropes in consumer culture. One is the cult of the surface institutionalising a "politics of

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1 See for instance the campaign of the advocacy group "Catholics for Choice" at "Catholics for Choice," n.d., <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/>. See also the less sophisticated "Abortion is Pro life" campaign run by *Capitalism Magazine* "Abortion is Pro Life," *Abortion is Pro Life*, n.d., <http://www.abortionisprolife.com/>.

2 Long, D. Stephen, *The Goodness of God: Theology, the Church, and Social Order* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), pp. 218-22.

visibility". This fourth section will look into how the politics of visibility creates a situation in which the power in decision-making on even fundamental issues of personhood (that of the foetus) is afforded to the class of consumers that are rendered more visible. Another element is the modern transformation of embodied persons into abstract categories of risk to personal integrity, which is then crystallised in consumer culture in its proliferation of relations of warfare among atomised individuals. Before concluding, a fifth section shall briefly consider some of the implications of the monopolisation of space by consumer culture, and the regimes of knowledge that radiate within that space, on the Church's resistance to the practice of abortion. It will assert the need for the Church to avoid being outflanked by the practices of consumer culture and go beyond presenting merely cognitive categories to include the production of its own ecclesial social spaces, its own "fields" to bolster the believability of its claims.

In discharging the burden of this article, it hopes to elaborate also on *Evangelium Vitae's* positing of abortion as a "structure of sin".<sup>3</sup> Rather than posit abortion as merely selfish decisions of autonomous individuals, this article will seek to demonstrate how the normalisation of abortion is more the result of the tutelage of these individuals by embodied social structures than the compelling nature of the argument asserting individual freedoms. It will identify the structures within consumer culture that would qualify the extent to which proponents of abortion regard themselves as really free. It will hopefully also demonstrate the necessity of the Church to do more in its battle for the protection of life than merely posit rational concepts, but also see itself as an ecclesial counter-structure to consumer culture.

### Practice, Field and "Habitus"

To understand how the practices of consumer culture can interface with the normalisation of abortion, one needs to establish how practices can bolster the believability of ideas. One needs more than an idea, but also a belief in its reliability. One needs Pierre Bourdieu's *habitus* or a "community of dispositions"<sup>4</sup> that "acts within [agents]...as the organising principle of their actions",<sup>5</sup> and in turn makes one predisposed to gravitate towards seeing things in a particular way and regarding that as a "possible" or "credible" way of seeing reality. However, this disposition that acts within the person must subsist within what Bourdieu calls a "field". In other words, the *habitus* must exist within a "social universe"<sup>6</sup> or "structure of social positions socially marked by the social properties of [the social universe's] occupants, through which they manifest themselves".<sup>7</sup> This statement is highly significant, for it highlights important prerequisites for the operation of this *habitus* – bodies operating in a particular social configuration *vis a vis* other bodies in a concrete social space. The communal positioning of these interlinking bodies is what determines the "space of social possibles" that make one predisposed to believe in one thing rather than another. This in many ways dovetails with Foucault's notion of biopower, where the application of "techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies"<sup>8</sup> also leads to the normalisation of certain regimes of knowledge over others.

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3 John Paul II, "Evangelium vitae: To the Bishops Priests and Deacons Men and Women religious lay Faithful and all People of Good Will on the Value and Inviolability of Human Life," 1995, 59,

[http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html).

4 Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 35.

5 Bourdieu, *Outline*, p. 18.

6 Bourdieu, Pierre, *The Field of Cultural Production* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993), p. 162.

7 Bourdieu, *Cultural Production*, p. 71.

8 Foucault, Michel, *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* (London: Penguin, 1998), p. 140.

Against this backdrop, legitimising any regime of knowledge and entrenching its persuasive power becomes even more imperative in a postmodern environment where universally accessible, cognitive criteria are no longer available or trusted. Because the legitimation and persuasiveness of certain regimes of knowledge can no longer come from recourse to a set of universally valid criteria to be adjudicated cognitively, arguably the most potent legitimating alternative can arise from the ability of that regime to be enfolded or “lived out” into practices. This would explain why Cornelius Castoriadis postulated that “projective schemata and processes have precedence over introjective ones”.<sup>9</sup>

If these reflections linking social practices to the believability of claims is true, then in situations where social space becomes dominated or even monopolised by one set of social practices, one should not be surprised to find the justifications for particular ideas to become framed in terms of the logic set by that dominant context. Within the context of abortion, therefore, one should not be surprised to find the frames of reference for the normalisation of the practice of abortion to be circumscribed by the practices of consumer culture. The question that needs to be asked at this juncture, however, pertains to the content of the links between the acceptability of abortion and consumer culture. In other words, what elements of the contemporary practice of abortion do the practices of consumer culture legitimise?

### **Abortion & the Epistemic Conquest by Economic “Technique”**

Right now, it would be a conceptual leap to go from Bourdieu's point on the link between practices and belief to Long's point about the commodification of human flesh. As important as Long's point is, commodification's acceptability as an organising principle cannot make sense in isolation of the widespread institutionalisation of expediency as a cardinal virtue. Key to understanding this is the genealogy of “technique” as outlined in Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*. What Ellul refers to as “technique” must be distinguished from what the English speaking world understands as “technology”, for Ellul refers not to machines, which are the physical extension of “technique”, but a “totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency [...] in every field of human activity”.<sup>10</sup>

To be sure, Ellul writes that machines cannot be understood conceptually apart from “technique”, since the latter has been deployed by societies in different parts of history. However, one important theme Ellul outlines in *The Technological Society* is the growing disengagement between “technique”, machines and societies beginning from the sixteenth century. While all societies grew, evolved and adapted with “technique”, Ellul says, “technique” had simultaneously “evolve[d] under the pressure of circumstances *along with the body social*”,<sup>11</sup> as part of an organic whole. While “technique” was a legitimate organising principle socially, it was an instrument that served the betterment of the communities’ cultural negotiation with the world, which meant that “technique” existed alongside, and was influenced by, an array of other organising principles. These principles included the religious, cultural and philosophical, the interactions between which constituted a communal tradition.<sup>12</sup> With the increase in technological advancement (by this one means the production of more mechanical solutions to organisational or material challenges), Ellul says, “technique” gradually unglued itself from this web of tradition and society, and had by the twentieth century become completely autonomous of them.<sup>13</sup> “Technique” no longer developed in

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9 Castoriadis, Cornelius, “Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary,” in *The Castoriadis Reader*, ed. David Ames Curtis (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p. 330.

10 Ellul, Jacques, *The Technological Society* (NY: Vintage Books, 1964), xxv.

11 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 14. Emphasis added.

12 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 73.

13 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 14.

tandem with either tradition or the interests of society. Instead, it became a self-referential category and developed only on the back of “previous technical procedures”. In addition, “technique” began to usurp the pride of place given to either tradition or society. “Technique” had by the twentieth century fashioned “an omnivorous world” which subordinated both tradition and society to its own logic.<sup>14</sup> This is nothing short of an inversion of social organisation. No longer was the most efficient means of organisation employed in the interests of society, rather society had to conform to a logic of efficiency. In Ellul's words, “Technique itself, *ipso facto* and without indulgence or possible discussion, selects among the means to be employed [for social organisation].”<sup>15</sup> The horizons for the directions of social organisation thus at one level become confined to terms of efficiency and productivity. “Natural law” slowly gives way to “technical law”.<sup>16</sup>

There are a number of relevant avenues that can be opened up by this brief sketch of the ascendancy of “technique” that could have some bearing on abortion. One could, for example, explore the different psychological and cultural pathologies that arise as a result of this entrenchment of technique.<sup>17</sup> These descriptive accounts of the manifestations of a technological society have been more than competently explored elsewhere, and as such these have deliberately bracketed off from this inquiry. What will be explored instead is what the ascendancy of “technique” does to the horizons of contemporary cultural forms, which then manifest themselves in capitalism and then form or shape the seemingly natural tendency to exercise the individual's choice to have an abortion.

The first impact on cultural horizons brought about by the ascendancy of “technique” is the refracting of all cultural traits via the ideology of positivism. When technique becomes an overarching principle of organisation, the only thing that becomes important for social organisation is the material, the tactile, the concrete, and the methods that could best exercise lordship over them. “Man's life becomes confined to the material” and becomes the foundation for civilisation, rather than philosophy or religion.<sup>18</sup> It may be the case that civilisation, philosophy or religion are categories whose worth are reduced to what is material, and appreciated only to the extent that they entrench the primacy of the material, but in reality a mode of social organisation in which “technique” is the cardinal virtue “forbids every truly philosophical question from being asked [...and] measures out the horizon of sensible thought solely on the basis of survey-able “facts”<sup>19</sup> The horizons of what is good for society become confined to an inert, material reality.

Against a backdrop of the subordination of all social organisation to the logic of efficiency, the glorification of the material, and the narrowing of cultural horizons that it entails, the ascendancy of economics, the science of discerning the most efficient distribution of material goods, comes to be seen as a superior, if not natural process. Charles Taylor observes that so natural was the economic seen as the organising principle *par excellence* that by the eighteenth century, the “economic”, like Ellul's “technique”, had become sectioned off and reified as a self-contained social category, able to organise itself independently of other forms of cultural, religious or metaphysical principles.<sup>20</sup> Also, like Ellul's “technique”, the “economic” would eventually subordinate all aspects of social organisation to itself. Under such circumstances, Taylor argues, society comes to be seen as first and foremost an economy, and all manner of human agency becomes regarded as “an

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14 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 14.

15 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 80.

16 Ellul, *Technological Society*, p. 218.

17 Stivers, Richard, *Shades of Loneliness: Pathologies of a Technological Society* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004).

18 Ellul, *The Technological Society*, p. 46.

19 Schindler, David L., *Heart of the World, Centre of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2007), p. 261.

20 Taylor, Charles, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, n.d.), pp. 178-80.

interlocking set of activities of production, exchange and consumption”,<sup>21</sup> coupled with strategic and material maximisation as the sole ethical guide.

When the economic subjugates all other organising principles within a given society, one witnesses a collapse of cultural horizons into economic categories. In the words of Herbert Marcuse, the satisfaction of “nourishment, clothing, lodgement at the attainable level of culture...is the prerequisite for the satisfaction of *all* needs, of the unsublimated as well as the sublimated ones”.<sup>22</sup> Thus in a society circumscribed by “technique”, the metaphysical becomes subsumed into the physical, and the fulfilment of substantive cultural categories that lead to human flourishing becomes coextensive with the entrenchment of quantitative methodologies to facilitate commerce. Indeed, “the more [such] a society turns to commerce, the more “polished” and civilised it becomes, [and] the more it excels in the arts of peace”.<sup>23</sup>

While this article has not yet explored the impact of capitalism *per se*, an exploration of its fundamentals reveals an epistemological factor for the acceptability of abortion that the mere recourse to individual choice cannot fully explicate. The acceptability of the choice to have an abortion, like so many contemporary societal decisions, is one profoundly embedded in a deeply entrenched epistemic conquest. This conquest is facilitated by the ascendancy of “technique” and later economics as hegemonic modes of cultural organisation, and subordinating all political, religious, philosophical or metaphysical epistemic guides. Under such conditions, notions of organisational efficiency, productivity and economic dis/advantage become the sole legitimate means to demarcate the boundaries of civilisational development. This explains why, at one level, the legitimisation of the choice to have an abortion within academic and popular discourse<sup>24</sup> is very often framed within the horizons of financial rationalisation, at both the national and individual levels. This is the reason why factors such as income stress,<sup>25</sup> economic uncertainty<sup>26</sup> and the unpredictable cost of children<sup>27</sup> become powerful discursive forces that refract decision-making in the lead up to an abortion. The ubiquity of economic justifications for the acceptability of abortion is due to the fact that the long rise of “technique” has ensured the neutering of modes of organisation that do not subordinate themselves to the “technical law”, and thus neutralising any other potential epistemic alternatives

21 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 181.

22 Marcuse, Herbert, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, Second. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, n.d.), p. 8.

23 Taylor, *A Secular Age*, p. 180.

24 See for instance Bradley, Michael, “Economics as Reason for Abortion,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 6, 2004, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/05/1091557996755.html>; Marlene Gerber Fried, “The Economics of Abortion Access in the US,” *Conscience Magazine*, Winter 6, 2005, <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/conscience/current/ConscienceMagazine-TheEconomicsOfAbortionAccessintheUS.asp>; Levine, Philip B., *Sex and Consequences: Abortion, Public Policy and the Economics of Fertility* (New York: Princeton University Press, n.d.); Alfred Michael Dockery, *Measuring the "Real" Cost of Children: A Net Wealth Approach*, CLMR Discussion Paper Series (Centre for Labour Market Research & School of Economics and Finance, Curtin Business School, Curtin University of Technology, 2009), <http://www.business.curtin.edu.au/files/09.022.pdf>. See for instance Bradley, “Economics as Reason for Abortion”; Fried, “The Economics of Abortion Access in the US”; Levine, *Sex and Consequences: Abortion, Public Policy and the Economics of Fertility*; Dockery, *Measuring the "Real" Cost of Children: A Net Wealth Approach*; Deyak, Timothy A. and Smith, V. Kerry, “The Economic Value of Statute Reform: The Case of Liberalized Abortion,” *The Journal of Political Economy* 84(1) (1976): pp. 83-100.

25 Adda, Jerome, Dustmann, Christian and Stevens, Katrien “The Career Cost of Children,” in (presented at the Third World Conference of the European Association of Labour Economists, University College, London, 2010), [http://www.eale.nl/Conference2010/Programme/PaperscontributedsessionsF/add128511\\_KSHwU90bWP.pdf](http://www.eale.nl/Conference2010/Programme/PaperscontributedsessionsF/add128511_KSHwU90bWP.pdf).

26 Peatiling, Stephanie, “Cost makes Children a Luxury,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, December 10, 2008, <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/lifematters/cost-makes-children-a-luxury-20090407-9vew.html>.

27 Bradbury, Bruce, *The Price, Cost, Consumption and Value of Children*, SPRC Discussion Paper (Sydney: Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 2004), <http://unsworks.unsw.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/unsworks:1953/SOURCE01?view=true>.

that could identify needs, goals or aspirations that “technique” or economics regards as legitimate.<sup>28</sup>

### **Abortion & the Commodified Foetus**

The previous section looked at how the decision to have an abortion must be placed within the context of a modern imaginary whose epistemological horizons have become hemmed in by a logic of “technique”. Consequently, economic forces become the overarching criterion of thought. The epistemic conquest by both these factors has reduced the potency of other organising principles to provide epistemological alternatives that could, within the modern social context, change the acceptability of the decision to have an abortion. The task of this section is to explore how an economic situation marked by Capitalism, particularly in its postmodern consumer phase, comes to insert other cultural tropes that increase the modern acceptability of abortion. To begin understanding this one must start with one of Capitalism's most fundamental processes, namely commodification.

#### ***The Commodification of the Body***

In keeping with the trend towards the rationalisation of all social arrangements around a logic of efficiency and “technique”, Capitalism brings with it a unique and culturally potent form of rationalisation, namely commodification. For Capitalism to maximise profitability, all things must undergo a process whereby they can be made into an object for exchange. This is a complex process of rationalisation whereby things are turned into commodities by exhaustively determining the dimensions of that thing, as a means to maintain the integrity of the thing as it passes from one set of hands to another. Vincent Miller has remarked on how things carry with them a whole web of socially constituted meanings. In the process of turning a thing into a commodity, however, such meanings become obscured and shift to the thing itself. In other words, the meanings attributed by the communities that created that thing become obscured by an “aura of self-evident value”.<sup>29</sup> The thing becomes valued not for the culturally constituted meanings that it carries, since the processes of industrial production shear off such meanings and render them invisible. Instead, at least in its initial stages, a commodity becomes valued in its sheer materiality.

This is not to say that commodification did not take place outside Capitalist contexts. It is true that commerce depends very much on turning things into commodities. However, what sets Capitalism apart from other modes of commerce is that, as a process inextricably tied to the imperative to finding the most efficient ways of generating as much profit as possible, it would also commodify aspects of social life that pre-Capitalist societies would not have regarded as objects of exchange, precisely because of the webs of meanings that are attached to them. Capitalism's shearing of meaning from things in order to facilitate their exchange would mean that as Capitalism entrenches its position within societies, more dimensions of our existence then become “preinterpreted” into an economic calculus,<sup>30</sup> and more things within that society become turned into commodities for exchange. The cultural dividend for such a process of entrenchment is that more and more things will become rationalised, and be imbued with the notion of a value that exhaustively resides within the dimensions of the commodity. Why this is significant for the purposes of an article on abortion is that under conditions whereby nothing stops the process of commodification, the commodification of the body becomes the next step in the cultural capture of Capitalism.<sup>31</sup> The body comes to be seen as an object valued for its sheer physiology, rather than its

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28 Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man*, p. 8.

29 Miller, Vincent J., *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2003), p. 36.

30 Miller, *Consuming Religion*, p. 37.

31 One should also note the contributions of medicine to the intensification of the body's commodification, and not lay the blame solely on Capitalism. Peter Linebaugh notes that from as early as the pre-capitalist 17<sup>th</sup> century, “Corpses

being an extension of some religious, cultural or metaphysical matrix. The body is celebrated as a “naked object”.<sup>32</sup>

At first glance, this may appear to be a liberation of the body from ostensibly oppressive instrumentalisation. The notion of freeing one's body from being someone else's tool and having only one's own will to limit the body's horizons easily dovetails into a consumer culture in which individual choice becomes the central trope. But is such a notion real? Is the material body sufficient unto itself in its sheer materiality? Graham Ward notes that the meaningfulness of the body, even in its sheer materiality, comes not from the body *per se*. Rather, the apprehension of a body comes as a result of discursive practices that hang on the body.<sup>33</sup> There is thus no stable body as such. Rather, there is a stable interpretation of a body whose stability is the result of interpretations constantly enforced by interpretive communities. This means that the very idea of sheer bodiliness must still be refracted through a network of interpretive techniques enacted by a particular interpretive community. Thus, in the modern attempt to de-link the body from its traditional cultural contexts and celebrate it as an independent entity, the body *per se* arises as a result of its being inserted into a modern web of significations circumscribed by a community called “the market”. Contrary to assumptions of affirming the humanity of the embodied subject through extricating it from social and cultural constructions, what this so called “liberation” of the body through commodification merely does is re-situate the body from one community of interpretation into another.

Commodification is problematic because it creates a paradox for the body. The more the body's sheer physical presence is celebrated, the more devalued and dematerialised it becomes. Jean Baudrillard notes that the exaltation of the flesh in consumer culture actually “simultaneously [leads to a] negation of the flesh”.<sup>34</sup> If the body cannot have meaning outside some communally constituted interpretive framework, then Capitalism's reification of the body as a stand-alone entity actually strips it away of any significance. When consumer culture strips away any web of meaning and reinserts it into a commercialised web of meaning, the body as sheer physiology becomes a blank slate whose sole worth lies in its ability to exalt the logos that hang off it (the predominance of the fashion industry ensures that this is often literally the case).<sup>35</sup> As shall be demonstrated below, the commodification of the body, its insertion into a consumer-oriented frame of meaning and its consequent devaluation creates a number of vulnerabilities for the body that in turn feed into the contemporary acceptability of abortion.

### ***Abortion and the Politics of Visibility***

The above showed how the body as mere physiology makes the body vulnerable to being extricated and reinserted from one discursive practice to another. Because such processes take place prior to the giving of a person's consent, the commodified body is thus radically implicated in a series of power structures that leave their imprints on the body. Thus, the insertion of the body into

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become a commodity with all attributes of a property. It could be owned privately, it could be bought and sold. A value not measured by the grace of heaven nor the fires of hell but quantifiably expressed in the magic of the price list that was placed upon the corpse”. See Peter Linebaugh, “The Tyburn Riot: Against the Surgeons,” in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1975), p. 72. What can clearly be attributed to Capitalism, however, is the way in which everything becomes subject to terms amenable to free exchange, so much so that the commodification of embodiment becomes yet another acceptable feature of commerce.

32 Ward, Graham, *The Politics of Discipleship*, ed. James KA Smith, The Church and Postmodern Culture (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), p. 222.

33 Ward, Graham, *Cities of God* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 83.

34 Baudrillard, Jean, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: SAGE, 1998), p. 141.

35 Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society*, p. 141.

a commercialised discursive web implicates the body into a commercialised frame of meaning, or what Arjun Appadurai calls “regimes of value”. Contrary to the enthusiastic shrills of much neo-liberally-inclined socio-political commentary, the embedding of bodies within consumer culture and the “regimes of value” that entail it is not a democratic space made up of a single global class of liberated bodies, each afforded the same value as another. Rather, the body's insertion into the “regimes of value” of consumer culture leads to the relativisation of the value of each body, and what is produced is a splintered patchwork of classes of humans. This is a patchwork that is far from organic, egalitarian or harmonious, for certain classes of bodies would be located at the sites of production, while others would be at the sites of consumption. According to Margaret Lock, the conversion of bodies to units of exchange would render many of these classes “at great remove from one another”. Their value as bodies would also be a hierarchical one, with greater value attributed to those with the greater buying power.<sup>36</sup> In other words, when the body becomes inserted into a commercial web of meaning, the worth of each body is made subject to a power structure in which those with greater consumer power determine the value not only of themselves, but of those that lack such consumer power.

With such a power structure comes a politics of visibility. In a hierarchy of commodities, value can only be located in the surface of a commodity.<sup>37</sup> This is an extension of the logic of Modernity, which glorified the importance of the senses that overcame great distances, such as sight and hearing, as methodologies of knowing and social organisation.<sup>38</sup> The ascendancy of technologies that create visual impressions of close proximity, particularly in social networking software, only serves to crystallise the centrality of appearance in demarcating areas of social reflection. Not surprisingly then, the enactment of a commercially oriented form of social organisation is characterised by a celebration of surface over substance. This celebration of surfaces thereby institutionalises a “politics of visibility”, and makes visibility part of a powerful political calculus in a social mobilisation and configuration. Witness the trend towards the need for hiring high profile actors and musicians to use their visibility as entertainers to bring to public attention otherwise ignored causes, or zones of interests (the most famous being the recent “Make Poverty History” campaign).

This politics of visibility is also played out with respect to the body, as is demonstrated by the pervasive glorification of the body's externalities and the obsession with decorating the commodified body with other commodities. This attention to presentation is made possible because it presupposes the logic of what Foucault calls a society where surveillance has become a norm, not merely in terms of ensuring personal or national security, but also as a mode of sociality. When surveillance becomes the central imperative of social organisation, power is given to the one “who is subjected to the field of visibility, and who knows it”.<sup>39</sup> Visibility thus affords not only the crude power to command the actions of others, but also the ability to shape ways of looking and determine particular angles of illumination on a whole array of knowledge categories.<sup>40</sup> Whilst many celebrate the exaltation of surface as a stepping stone to greater democratisation through the bringing to light alternatives to hegemonic discourses, it is important to note also that the politics of visibility affords a power to the visible which is so great that fundamental knowledge categories can also become obscured. These categories can even include human subjectivity or mere existence. The exaltation of the body as flesh produces a politics where the subjectivity of the body as mere physiology

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36 Lock, Margaret, “The Alienation of Body Tissue and the Biopolitics of Immortalised Cell Lines,” *Body and Society* 7.2-3 (2001), p. 65.

37 Miller, *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture*, p. 37.

38 Howes, David, *Sensual Relations: Engaging the Senses in Cultural and Social Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

39 Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and Punish*, 2nd ed. (NY: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 202.

40 Tkacz, Nathaniel, “Power, Visibility, Wikipedia,” *Southern Review* 40.2 (2007), pp. 16-17.

becomes dependent on two things: performance and an audience. Self itself becomes dependent on visibility.<sup>41</sup>

This plays itself out in an abortion debate that heavily weighs in favour of the mother over the foetus. The visibility of the mother over and against the relative invisibility of the foetus often steers discourses in the direction of treating the mother as the focal point of political, legal and ethical consideration within contemporary societies, for the simple reason that they are somehow treated as more of a human subject than the foetus. The lack of constant visibility leads to a discourse that subsumes the foetus into the body of its mother, and this displaces any discursive thread which treats it instead as a distinct human subject. The fact of the constant visibility of the mother *vis a vis* the unborn child makes her subjectivity the primary material for social, political and ethical consideration, with the more invisible unborn child becoming only an extension of the mother's physiology. Witness the amount of controversy generated (interestingly both by pro-abortion and pro-life sides of the debate) over the ethics, necessity and legality of the use of ultrasounds to generate images of the unborn child prior to the procurement of an abortion,<sup>42</sup> and the linking of the visibility of the unborn child via the ultrasound image with the mother's acknowledgement of a human subject within her womb.

### ***The Foetus as Consumptive Risk***

It was mentioned that a commodity's dimensions must be exhaustively determined if its integrity were to be maintained in the process of exchange, and that ensuring the commodity's transferability makes manageability and predictability highly important imperatives. This transformation of a thing into a clearly delineated, self-contained entity is facilitated by subjecting that thing to a whole array of technologies of organisation, management, analysis and supervision. In situations where capitalism is entrenched as an economic system in a given society, such systems of oversight become pervasive within the cultural fabric of that society, so much so that the body becomes commodified and becomes the site by which such techniques of management become applied.

The commodified body's extension of consumer culture's regimes of intense supervision means that consumer culture is in a way coterminous with the extension of liberal modes of governance into political, social and cultural discourses. These strategies go beyond the mere conceptualisation of objects, and spill over into concrete social practice. Sociality within consumer culture becomes co-extensive with the proliferation of relations underpinned by strategies of management, the core of which is identifying and eliminating significant factors of destabilising risk.<sup>43</sup> The state too becomes coterminous with the prevalence of consumer capitalism, as it distributes "the competitive world market throughout the interstices of the social body".<sup>44</sup> In its consumer phase state and market have extended an economic logic grounded in technological efficiency into every living fibre of society, so that every aspect of every individual becomes enveloped by the logic of the market.<sup>45</sup> This logic of entrepreneurship, streamlining, productivity and risk aversion has extended all the way from the factory right down to the very self. The popularity of Nintendo's "Wii Fit" software, whereby individuals could become their own fitness instructors and keep a close eye on vital statistics within one's own home, is exemplary of this trend.

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41 Turner, Bryan S., *The Body and Society*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), p. 171.

42 Sack, Kevin, "In Ultrasound, Abortion Fight Has New Front," *The New York Times*, May 27, 2010, sec. Health / Money & Policy, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/28/health/policy/28ultrasound.html>

43 Dillon, Michael and Reid, Julian, "Global liberal governance: Biopolitics, Security and War," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 30 (2001), p. 41.

44 Gordon, Colin, "Governmental Rationality: an Introduction," in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 45.

45 Hardt, Michael, "The Withering of Civil Society," *Social Text* 45 (1995), p. 35.

But more specifically, the proliferation of the techniques of management into social discourses has a profound cultural bearing on the discourses on abortion.

First, the implication of state and market into society leads to the proliferation of techniques of control into the very fabric of sociality. This is not to imply a loss of freedom by individuals. Indeed, Foucault suggests that the power of such processes comes about precisely because it presupposes the freedom of individual agents.<sup>46</sup> However, these free individuals have become agents for the spread of a ubiquitous network of supervision. With the permeation of this extensive network of supervision, and the focussing of that supervision on the commodified body, comes an obsession with security. This obsession with potential threat is the crucial point of convergence between the process of commodification and liberal politics. Both are underpinned by a politics in which the central concern is the maintenance of the pristine integrity of an object. Furthermore, with the consolidation of post-industrial societies, the kind of protection being sought has shifted from a curative one against an existing threat to a preventative one against a threat that may (but not necessarily) come into existence in the future.<sup>47</sup> This desire to maintain the integrity of the status quo plays itself out in the extensive employment of what Francois Ewald calls an “insurational imaginary”, in which all things are rationalised into a series of calculable probabilities.<sup>48</sup>

Why the obsession with integrity and its insurance? The easy answer, according to Ewald, is that the insurational imaginary is fundamentally constituted by risk. This should not be surprising, since the vast majority of things in this world will always exceed the rationalised categories that the insurational imaginary will give them. But because such conceptual iron cages seep into every aspect of existence within the liberal cultural context, it means that every aspect of existence, including every single person, will unavoidably become recast into a factor of risk.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, this fear of risk is more than merely a fear of having something fall outside our categories of manageable surveillance. Indeed, the risk of lack of surveillance is intimately tied to the risk of violence, since “the principle of war is assimilated into the very weft and warp of...socio-economic and cultural networks”.<sup>50</sup> The perception of the pervasiveness of violence is not surprising, since consumer culture constitutes a hyper-modern liberal form of sociality which is founded on an originary violence. Operating within such forms of sociality is a Modern ontology of an autonomous individuality that precedes any communal membership, whose relations are established and sustained by a hierarchy of contracts, which have embedded within them mechanisms designed to prevent any transgression to an individual’s integrity by those that the individual has established contractual relations with.<sup>51</sup> This sociality between isolated, pristine monads can only proceed from a Hobbesian ontology of violence, where relationships are inherently conflictual and thus must necessarily be governed by domination, capture, possession and war-making.<sup>52</sup>

Relations of warfare play themselves out in the form of a tension within consumer culture

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46 This is not to imply a loss of freedom by individuals. Indeed, Foucault suggests that the power of such processes comes about precisely because it presupposes the freedom of individual agents. See Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: an Introduction,” p. 5.

47 For a detailed survey of the shift from actual danger to potential risk, see Castel, Robert, “From Dangerousness to Risk,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 281-298.

48 Ewald, Francois, “Insurance and Risk,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1991), p 198.

49 Ewald, “Insurance and Risk”, p. 203.

50 Dillon and Reid, “Global liberal governance: Biopolitics, Security and War,” p. 42.

51 Cavanaugh, William T., *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (NY: T & T Clark, 2004), pp. 45, 234.

52 Milbank, John, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 278-325; Bell Jr, Daniel M. *Liberation Theology After the End of History: the Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 34.

where everything is commodified. On the one hand, the commodification necessary to facilitate exchange requires a policing of the commodity's borders, so that its integrity is maintained in the process of exchange between the parties. Relations between consumers thus begin from a billiard-table-like situation of pristine isolated monads. However, the purpose for which the processes of commodification were designed would not be fulfilled unless the creation of such finely policed units of exchange eventually become broken apart, either in direct consumption or in its transformation into another product. Where the body becomes commodified and celebrated for its sheer physicality, not only do the invisible become marginalised and vulnerable *vis a vis* the visible who set the terms of relations. The permeation of the combative logic of the market throughout the social sphere and within the fibres of each living individual means that the visible themselves are thrust into an arena whereby their own worth is made dependent on their capacity to be rendered a consumable product, made to be possessed and taken apart (that is, consumed) by others. Looking at the film *American Psycho*, Brian Jarvis brilliantly remarked how the film's protagonist Patrick Bateman, a wealthy Wall Street yuppie by day who engages in a series of brutal murders and mutilations by night, epitomises the convergence between the consumer and violence. In his daytime behaviour as a yuppie, Bateman reflects the desire to be "cut up" that is externalised through his night-time behaviour of killing, dissecting and eating his victims. He is constantly aware of his body image and tone, obsessively on the lookout for the latest fashions in clothes, food and entertainment and longs to be a model for those fashions, whether in movies or pornography.

While it is easy to dismiss Bateman as the product of a writer's fantasy, many observers now turn to Bateman as a demonstration of the way the violence that seemingly occurs "out there" through resource wars in third-world countries<sup>53</sup> is actually a more explicit reflection of what is occurring "in here", coursing within every capillary of a consumer society.<sup>54</sup> This is why Thomas Friedman remarked that the "free hand of the market would not work without a hidden fist",<sup>55</sup> or why Baudrillard argued more ominously that "consumerism may go so far as...pure and simple destruction".<sup>56</sup> A playful but nonetheless telling example can be seen in a recent advertising campaign for a fragrance line by the label Donna Karan New York (better known as DKNY), where the key slogan is an exhortation for customers to "be delicious" by using a product of the same name.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the logic of the market, the processes of commodification and the concomitant processes of subjecting all aspects of existence to micro-policing to insure maximum integrity, generate on the one hand an insurational imaginary whereby the central concern is protection from risk. On the other hand, the combative logic that underpins that same market also generates a sociality between commodified bodies underpinned by the perpetuation of that very risk. This is because of the pervasive exhortation from one consumer to another to see him or her as him- or herself a product to be broken apart, consumed and even destroyed.

Against this backdrop, persons generally become seen not as real unique individuals from which real capacities could be discerned, but rather abstracted into variables of risk regardless of any consideration of the reality of the individual case.<sup>58</sup> This regime of abstracting persons into elements of risks becomes intensified even further when it comes to abortion because the calculus of the politics of visibility will weigh the balance of favour against the invisible foetus, and make the foetus even more vulnerable to the technologies of naming by the visible class. The foetus,

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53 Renner, Michael, *The Anatomy of Resource Wars* (Washington: Worldwatch Institute, 2002).

54 Jarvis, Brian, "Monsters Inc: Serial Killers and Consumer Culture," *Crime, Media, Culture* 3 (2007), p. 334.

55 Friedman, Thomas, "A Manifesto for the Fast World," *New York Times* (New York, March 28, 1999). Cited in Budde, Michael and Brimlow, Robert, *Christianity Incorporated: How Big Business is Buying the Church* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2002), p. 18.

56 Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, p. 43.

57 DKNY's campaign can be viewed on <http://www.bedeliciousfragrance.co.uk/>

58 Castel, "From Dangerousness to Risk", p. 283.

hidden from the public gaze, becomes even more vulnerable than any visible person to being considered not as a human being but an abstract risk variable. More specifically, the foetus becomes classified as an element of risk because it presents a disruption to the integrity of the autonomy of the more visible mother. Indeed, because of the imperative to consume and be consumed within late Capitalism, the invisible foetus can become vulnerable to being categorised by the mother as a risk insofar as it threatens to consume the mother, whether in terms of her financial resources, future plans or body image. In the face of the foetus' being considered such a risk, the insurational imaginary posits abortion as a form of insurance against risks to the mother's integrity.

### **Abortion as Structure & the Church as Counter-Structure**

The preceding sections have demonstrated that the widespread acceptability of the practice of abortion is profoundly tied to a number of cultural tropes that are woven into deeply entrenched practices of consumption. The celebration of the individual choice of the autonomous agent appears to be a smokescreen that masks an array of very concrete structures that steer the direction of the exercise of that choice. The question must be raised then: is it going to be enough for discourses aimed at the defence of life from conception to merely articulate what may be reasonable knowledge claims in social spaces whereby practises militate against their credibility, and rely merely on sheer cognitive reflection? Because the direction of the cognitive reflections of agents is greatly circumscribed by its surrounding structures, bolstering the credence of discourses defending life from conception requires also the production of social spaces within which the symbols that make that discourse recognisable can be 'executed', to borrow Baudrillard's terminology.<sup>59</sup> The executability of the symbols of such pro-life discourses requires inculcating the necessary habitus through socially mediated 'fields'. Because such 'fields' are never self-apparent givens, attention must be given to their production and maintenance, in order to sustain the believability of any project attempting to challenge the monopoly consumer culture has on refracting the discourses circulating within it.

The production of zones of credibility must be the task of the Church. It is important to note that Jesus spoke of the possibility of his message being heard and not heard, seen and unseen.<sup>60</sup> Having 'ears to hear'<sup>61</sup> were not self-evident givens but rather the result of a carving out of a field, that is, a mode of temporality enacted in the corporeal life the disciples and later, the *ecclesia*. To produce ears capable of listening, the Church must review not merely what it says to other social settings, but actually carefully review where it sits with respect to other social configurations and concrete social practices. If Bourdieu is correct, and each set of practices can create a field to steer one's disposition to believe a particular set of claims rather than another, then it would be naive for the Church to regard its consumer context as innocent of steering bodies towards behaviours that estrange and impute evil intent.<sup>62</sup> The Great Commission to 'make disciples of all peoples'<sup>63</sup> would encompass more than achieving agreement in the minds of those disciples to a corpus of belief. It would involve training the bodies of these disciples into becoming ecclesial 'fields' to nourish the necessary habitus that in turn makes believable the claims of the Gospel of life.

To accomplish this, attention must be given to its own corporeal technologies, particularly its sacraments and especially the Eucharist, which position bodies in concrete spaces the Church can call its own. It must pay attention to the capacities of these corporeal arrangements to recruit the body into an ecclesial counter-structure, housing within its practices a counter-logic to the logic of

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59 Baudrillard, Jean, *Symbolic Exchange and Death* (London: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 77.

60 Mt. 13.17

61 Mk. 4.23

62 Col. 1.21

63 Mt. 28.19

consumerism. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to outline the entirety of the inner logic of a sacramental counter-structure to that of consumerism, it is important to note how the Eucharist, for instance, undoes the logic of efficiency within consumer culture by challenging the logic of resource scarcity that mandates the need to ensure efficient management. The Eucharist challenges this by positing a counter-logic of plenitude<sup>64</sup> where people ‘receive without charge [and] give without charge’.<sup>65</sup> The boundless generosity of God flows into and transforms all temporal experience, particularly the experience of resource scarcity, which the calculus of scarcity seeks to resist through stockpiling and streamlining. The Christian calculus of plenitude is willing to countenance threats to the viability of what is available in the world, because “out of weakness” one is “made powerful”,<sup>66</sup> through their being incorporated into the Christ that has “overcome the world”,<sup>67</sup> the good shepherd under whose wing one lacks nothing.<sup>68</sup>

There are many other ways in which the Eucharist (and the entirety of the Church's sacramental economy) can undercut some of the foundational concepts of a consumer culture that has so thoroughly captured the state and civil society.<sup>69</sup> What is important to note is that the Church's sacramental economy, in particular the Eucharist, can challenge the very foundations on which contemporary sociopolitical arrangements are grounded. Because of this, Church's task of producing its own fields via sacramental practice will ultimately call into question the Church's own political positioning. If Cavanaugh is right and the Eucharist does challenge what are deeply rooted sociopolitical presumptions, then it should also question the Church's self-conception of being merely a subsection of “larger society”, which more often than not is always circumscribed by notions of civic belonging. In so subordinating itself to the authority structures of state or civil society, the church risks two strategic setbacks. At best, the Church would have ceded monopoly over concrete bodily practices to the state/society/market complex, which in turn would deprive itself of the production of the sphere of social possibilities that would have otherwise bolstered the the credibility of the Church's own pro-life discourses. At worst, allowing the Church to remain a subsection of “larger society” would risk the Church actually becoming an extension, rather than a challenge to the consumerist status quo, for in order to carry out its evangelical task, the Church would have to do so as a “chaplain” to consumer culture, as Michael Budde and Robert Brimlow would put it. In other words the Church's attitude must, in the words of John Howard Yoder, be “‘positive’ toward the rulers of the particular unity of society which [s]he serves, towards its aims and towards its preservation”. If the Church were to undertake any critique, it must first “be filtered through [her] fundamental acceptance of the system at it is”.<sup>70</sup> The Church becomes *co-opted* into sustaining and ultimately extending the Capitalist order.<sup>71</sup> In other words, the Church's role

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64 Bell Jr, Daniel M., “Only Jesus Saves: Towards a Theopolitical Ontology of Judgement,” in *Theology and the Political: the New Debate*, ed. Creston Davis, John Milbank, and Slavoj Zizek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 211-2.

65 Mt. 10.8

66 Heb. 11.34

67 Jn. 16.33

68 Ps. 23:1

69 One could also look at how the Eucharist undoes one of the pillars of consumer culture, namely commodification. Rather than accept the inevitability of the consumerist social fabric occupied by self-enclosed commodities requiring constant protection of its integrity, the Eucharist undercuts the basis of Capitalist economics by instituting a new divine economy where the gift is not alienated from the giver, but rather joined with the gift. Collapsing the borders between gift, giver and recipient that maintain the integrity of subjects that in turn act as the insurance against insecurity, and opens one's self up to the transformative and, in cases where integrity becomes compromised, redemptive work of the Triune God. See Cavanaugh, William T., *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 48-9. See also Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008), pp. 53-8.

70 Yoder, John H., *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 119.

71 Budde, Michael, *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and the Global Culture Industries* (Boulder: Westview,

inevitably becomes one of “helping society with questions of shared ‘values’ and ‘meaning’” (with “society” here being defined by patterns of consumption),<sup>72</sup> or being a guide to “empower individuals to find the proper balance as the individual negotiates his or her way within the consumerist cycle”,<sup>73</sup> whilst still leaving that cycle intact. If this cycle is, as was demonstrated above, implicated in promoting the normalisation of abortion, then part of the Church's strategy of resistance must be in interrupting that cycle. Given that cycle's grip over the public imagination via the channels of state and society, one has to undergird the notion of the Church as a counter structure with the notion of the church as a public in its own right to challenge the public circumscribed by state and society.

## Conclusion

In the finale of the cinematic adaptation of Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go*, Kathy H, a clone whose sole purpose in life was to have her vital organs harvested for a national organ donation program till her “completion” (an oft-repeated code word used to describe death), reflects on her life of inescapable disconnect from the world occupied by the recipients of their “donation”. Kathy considers the dismemberment of her body and eventual death as an unavoidable fate, as she does that of another clone, Tommy D. This is despite the fact that she had developed a romantic attachment with him (in fact Kathy, in her role as an organ donation program functionary, even oversees the organ extraction that eventually kills Tommy). In her final reflections, Kathy wonders if her blinkered existence, book-ended by birth into a regimented program of constant monitoring on the one hand and inevitable ending on a surgery table with the tearing of that last vital piece of flesh on the other, is really so different from those of the beneficiaries of the organ donation program. While Kathy confined the parallels she draws to the certainty of “completion”, this article sought to show the profundity of the parallels that exist between the commodification of her body and the commodification of the contemporary individual formed by the practices of consumer culture. This article explored these similarities as crystallised in the normalisation of abortion.

Having demonstrated the link between the monopolisation of social practice and the normalisation of belief, this article first demonstrated how consumer culture was the outgrowth of an epistemic conquest that refracted all societal considerations through the lens of economic efficiency. The article then sought to show, as part of the imperative to maximise economic efficiency, a logic of commodification had seeped into the social fabric to the point where individual bodies could be celebrated as self-enclosed entities, a celebration which ironically leaves the person vulnerable to being formed in the image of those with larger consumer power than they. This played itself out in a power imbalance between the foetus and the mother, where the relation was framed by class divisions in which the power to determine even fundamental claims of personhood was weighted in favour of the more visible. Most sinister of all, the content of the relations not only between these classes but within them was characterised by the warfare of consuming others on the one hand, and regarding reducing every embodied person into an abstract risk to integrity on the other.

Finally, this article sought to show how addressing the bioethical issue of the acceptability of abortion could not be separated from the larger political issue of discerning the Church's place with respect to a social condition dominated by the state/society/market complex. If the public imagination has been so comprehensively captured by the market, then the Church's task of defending the Gospel of life would be blunted so long as it contents itself with being only a

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1997), p. 120. See also Budde and Brimlow, *Christianity Incorporated*, p. 140.

72 Budde, *The (Magic) Kingdom of God*, p. 120.

73 Wright, J.T., *Telling God's Story: Narrative Preaching for Christian Formation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2007), pp. 133-4.

subsection of “wider society”. Bolstering the defence of life would need more than claims for the defence of the personhood of the foetus, but a whole series of technologies that would create a distinct ecclesial space that fosters the Church as a public in its own right. The sense of tragedy articulated by the clones in *Never Let Me Go* is magnified by the audience's realisation that it could have been so easy for the clones to flee from the donation program, were it not for their lack of an alternative public space outside their training regimen that could form them into conceiving of a world that is anything but an extension of an organ extraction program.

Every micro-practice is important in nourishing this alternative public, in generating the Bourdieuan field to legitimise a new set of relations outside a commercialised status quo. This alternative structure is one in which the imperative to consume others is seen as an aberration rather than the norm. If the structure of consumer practice is implicated in the normalisation of abortion, the Church can only comprehensively undercut that normalisation by supplementing its discourse asserting the personhood of the foetus with its own counter-structure. In doing so, the Church would need to go beyond making claims that are allegedly recognisable to all endowed with reason. Through its own sacramental economy, it would need to be engaged in the production of practices that declare an allegiance that is contrary to the state/society/market complex.