Philosophy

7-2003

What's Wrong with Computer-Generated Images of Perfection in Advertising?

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> Reality, as usual, beats fiction out of sight. — Joseph Conrad

Computer technology has allowed advertisers to create fantastic images such as an automobile perched at the top of an unreachable mountain, pieces of clothing moving of their own volition throughout rooms, and dogs performing complicated dance moves. These fantastic images, however, are not limited to inanimate objects and nonhuman animals. Often, advertisers use computer technology to create images of humans. They create these images for pure comic effect such as depicting two men with heads that are much too small for their bodies after an encounter with headhunters, and for harmless dramatic effect such as depicting Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech without an audience. Sometimes, however, advertisers use computers to create human images that are problematic.[1] I will call these *computer-generated images of perfection*.[2] Advertisers create these images by using computer technology to remove unwanted traits from models or to generate entire human bodies. They are images of either men or women that portray ideal human beauty, bodies, or looks.[3]

Advertisers' portrayals of such ideals are nothing new. For many years, they have used impeccable models, often with athletic or ultrathin physiques, to portray such images. Moreover, prior to computer technology, they used airbrushing to remove unwanted traits from those same models. These methods raise many of the ethical concerns that are raised by computer- generated images of perfection, and most of the points in this paper apply to these methods as well. Nevertheless, I believe business ethicists should begin to pay considerable attention to the new computer-generated images. They have become quite common and have made portrayals of human ideals easier to produce, more prevalent, and more extreme. Undoubtedly, they will be become more common in the future as technological advances continue.

For some time, business ethicists have debated the ethical status of advertising.'[4] The debate has centered around two main objections: advertising is deceptive and it violates the autonomy of those subjected to it.[5] Because of the new computer technology that either exists today or will come to exist in the future, these objections should be considered anew by examining two questions. First, do these objections effectively challenge computer-generated images of perfection? Second, do computer-generated images of perfection give rise to new issues that business ethicists must explore?

The purpose of this paper is to examine those questions. I will begin by explaining the common objections against advertising and by demonstrating how critics might argue that those objections apply to computer-generated images of perfection. Along the way, I will demonstrate an ethically significant difference between computer-generated images of perfection and the images in ordinary ads. The latter do not subject viewers to virtual realities as do the former. Viewers must make purchasing choices even though they are often unaware of the virtual realities to which they are subjected. I will argue that although critics might use this fact to apply the common objections to the use of computer-generated images of perfection, the objections fail. Finally, I will argue that despite surviving the common objections, the use of computer-generated images of perfection is subject to an objection that it does not survive. It is an ethical objection that is based on aesthetic considerations. Advertisers are ethically obligated to avoid certain aesthetic results that are produced by computer-generated images of perfection.

I. The common objections and computer-generated images of perfection

The two most common objections to advertising are the *deception objection*[6] the *autonomy objection*.[7] Neither effectively challenges computer-generated   images of perfection.

Deception objection

According to the deception objection, an ad is unethical if it is deceptive. An ad is deceptive if it makes a false or misleading claim about a material feature of the product such as price, quantity, quality, or safety. We expect advertisers to portray their products in flattering ways. When it comes to claims about material features, however, we justifiably expect the claims to be truthful. Imagine the narrator of a car commercial making the following claims:

(1) This is the most exciting car you'll ever drive!

(2) The list price of this car is $23,995 and that includes air conditioning!

The first claim is exactly the kind of flattering portrayal we expect advertisers to make. One does not feel deceived if the car turns out not to be the most exciting one ever drives. The second claim, however, is about a material feature. We expect it to be truthful. If it is not, the ad is unethical because of its deception.

Applying this objection to computer-generated images of perfection, however, is complicated by the fact that they are not images of products, nor do they make any explicit claims about the material features of products. To run the objection, one must appeal to implicit claims about products. One could say that such images imply that viewers will look like the models in the ads if the viewers use the products.

This application of the objection, however, is unconvincing. It is highly unlikely that viewers actually believe the implicit claims that the objector must attribute to the ads. In a different but related context, Waide makes the point in this way: "Most of us have enough insight to see . . . that no particular toothpaste can make us sexy. . . . Since we can . . . see clearly what the appeal of the ad is, we are usually not lacking in relevant information or deceived in any usual sense.

Autonomy objection

The autonomy objection comes in two basic forms. The first focuses on specific choices about products and the information consumers need to make those choices autonomously. To make autonomous choices to purchase particular products, consumers must make rational choices. Rational choices involve many things, but central among them is that the choices are based on analyses of products' abilities to satisfy particular needs or wants. To contribute to rational choices, advertising must provide consumers with information that is relevant for completing such analyses. Relevant information primarily comprises information about the material features of products such as price, quantity, operating capacities, and safety systems.

Advertising, however, often does not provide that kind of information adequately. Instead, it coerces or manipulates consumers into making purchases by providing them irrelevant information. Advertisers spend little time, if any, on the material features of products. They are more likely to make psychological appeals to capture the attention of consumers and convince them to make purchases. These appeals generally take the form of associating products with deep-seated desires for such things as love, happiness, being a good parent, or being a good citizen, or with athletes or celebrities whom consumers admire. The effect is that consumers are moved by these psychological appeals rather than by the information that is necessary for them to make autonomous choices to purchase products.

Instead of being concerned that advertising prevents consumers from making autonomous choices to purchase products, proponents of the second form of the objection believe advertising is a contributing factor in the failure of persons to achieve the necessary conditions for becoming autonomous more generally. In order to become autonomous, persons must become critical thinkers. They must develop the capacities to critically examine themselves, their own beliefs, the institutions of which they are parts, the societies in which they live, the governments to which they are subject, and the world around them. Persons develop these capacities only through effort and encouragement.

Advertising, however, often discourages the development of these capacities. The last thing advertisers want is consumers thinking too much about the information conveyed in ads. Instead, they encourage consumers to accept things at face value rather than to subject them to critical analysis. Moreover, they encourage consumers to look for quick fixes to any problems they may encounter rather than subject those problems to the difficult and lengthy analysis that typically is necessary to resolve them.

Applying the two forms of the autonomy objection to computer-generated images of perfection is relatively simple. Ads that make use of such images often spend little, if any, time on the material features of products. Since knowledge of these features is what consumers need in order to make rational choices about products and the ability to make rational choices is an integral part of making autonomous choices, advertising impedes consumers' abilities to make autonomous choices. Likewise, ads that make use of such images teach persons to judge themselves and others by appearances, to look for the solutions to problems in products, and to go through life in an uncritical, accepting manner. Such ads reward the failure to develop skills in critical analysis that are essential to autonomy. Autonomous persons examine their own actions, the actions of others, and the activities of institutions with a critical eye. The type of advertising at issue dulls that critical eye. In these ways, it contributes to the failure of persons to develop autonomy.

Defenders of advertising, however, can respond to both forms of this objection. They can argue that consumers are not coerced or manipulated into buying products for two reasons. First, there is more information about material features of products available to consumers through advertising and other sources than critics acknowledge. Advertising often conveys information about the material features of products, and when it fails consumers need only consult publications such as *Consumer Reports* or acquaintances who have used products they are contemplating purchasing in order to discover such information. Second, critics use the term "coercion" too loosely. Advertising lacks the kind of force that is necessary to qualify as coercion. After all, advertisers do not kidnap, torture, or drug consumers. Defenders also can argue that advertisers do not dull the critical evaluation skills of consumers through their use of computer-generated images of perfection. Instead, they respect consumers by providing them with what they want. Through their purchasing practices, consumers demonstrate that they want the images that advertisers portray.

Ethical significance of computer-generated images of perfection

Even if critics of advertising can reply success- fully to the responses I have described, however, the objections fail to capture what is ethically significant about computer-generated images of perfection. These images are significantly different than those in ordinary ads. They place consumers in virtual realities in which they must make choices.

Consider ordinary ads that contain no computer-generated images of any sort. They provide viewers with images of things or events that exist, or did exist, independently of the methods used to depict them. Imagine a car commercial that shows a car zooming along a highway with a narrator extolling its virtues. The image is of an event that actually occurred. Had there not been film in the camera at the time the cinematographer intended to capture the image, the event still would have occurred.

This is not true, however, of ads that contain computer-generated images of perfection. The images do not exist in the world independently of the means used to depict them. They exist only in the virtual realities of the computer technology that produces them. The effect of this is ethically problematic. Consumers are viewing images that exist only in computer technology, and they are making choices based on those images.

This does not mean, however, that the use of computer-generated images in advertising always raises an ethical problem. In many cases, such as when advertisers use computer technology to depict comic images or to create dramatic effect, no ethical problem arises because

viewers are well aware of the virtual realities to which they are subjected. Viewers are well aware that the afore- mentioned men with small heads do not exist independently of the means used to produce the image. Only a very troubled viewer can seriously believe that an encounter with headhunters can leave two men walking and talking with shrunken heads. It would be grossly unfair to hold advertisers accountable for anticipating the irrationality of such people. Likewise, when an advertiser dramatically demonstrates the importance of reaching an audience by depicting Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech to an empty Washington, D.C. mall area, viewers are, or, at least, should be, aware that the image exists only in a virtual reality.

When it comes to computer-generated images of perfection, however, an ethical problem arises because viewers are often unaware of the virtual realities to which they are subjected. When advertisers use computer technology to remove unwanted traits from models, viewers have no way of knowing that the removals have taken place. Likewise, as technology develops, advertisers will become better able to generate images of entire models and viewers will have no way of knowing that those images are not real.

Critics might accept my point here. If they do, however, they are likely to draw a quite different conclusion from it. Instead of providing a defense of computer-generated images of perfection against the common objections, they might argue, my point provides an excellent basis for applying the common objections to those images.

Critics might run the deception objection by arguing that the virtual realities to which viewers are subjected are the most deceptive creations possible. Since the purpose of them is to depict unreal images that are indistinguishable from real images, the very point is to deceive viewers. Unlike ordinary ads where it is often debatable whether advertisers intend to deceive, here there is no such debate. The virtual realities are, by definition, intended to make the unreal seem real.

This argument, however, is not much more effective than the previous application of the deception objection. To consider the strongest case for the critic, suppose that one views an ad that depicts a completely computer-generated model and one mistakes it for a real model. Although the ad likely carries an implicit claim that one will look like the model if one uses the product, one is highly unlikely to be deceived by it. Waide's claim still holds. Most people have enough insight to see through the implicit claim and recognize that no product can satisfy such a claim. Just because one does not recognize the computer-generated model in the ad does not mean one is any more deceived about material facts than one is when the model is real. If one is not deceived by implicit claims attached to real models, one is not deceived by implicit claims attached to computer-generated models. If this argument holds for completely computer-generated models, it holds *a fortiori* for computer alterations of real models.

Consider how critics might run the autonomy objection. The capacity to make rational choices is a necessary condition for autonomy. Since the virtual realities of computer-generated images of perfection prevents consumers from making rational judgments, they prevent consumers from being autonomous. In order to make rational judgments, one must be able to distinguish real from unreal. When one cannot, one is not autonomous.[9] The virtual realities in question, however, are designed to prevent viewers from distinguishing real from unreal.

Perhaps this is best understood by imagining a doctor who is trying to help a patient make a rational judgment about his lifestyle. The doctor has determined that the patient needs to quit smoking, so she shows him a picture of his damaged lung alongside a picture of a normal, healthy lung. The second picture shows what a lung of a typical nonsmoker looks like. This comparison gives the patient the reality of his situation, and helps him to judge rationally his lifestyle. Suppose, however, that the second picture is a computer-generated image of an absolutely perfect lung that has suffered no ill- effects from the actual world. It shows how a lung would look without any exposure to pollution, pollen, second-hand smoke, or any other factors in the actual world that are beyond an individual's control. Obviously, the contrast between the picture of the

patient's lung and the computer-generated picture would be far more striking than the original comparison. Since the patient likely would not know the difference, the computer-generated picture may be very effective at obtaining the end that the doctor wants. It does not, however, result in an autonomous decision on the patient's part should he quit smoking. Since the patient's judgment about his lifestyle is not the result of an understanding of the real facts of his situation in the world, his decision to quit smoking has been coerced by the doctor.[10]

Although this objection is interesting, it fails to defeat the use of computer-generated images of perfection for two reasons. First, the fanciful settings of the virtual realities produced by such images do not preclude viewers from making rational judgments. If it did, we would have to alter dramatically many of the methods employed by philosophers. We ask ourselves and others to make rational judgments in fanciful settings every time we employ a thought experiment. In those thought experiments, it is often unclear what is real and what is unreal. Descartes, for instance, asks one to consider the possibility that one's experiences are the result of dreaming, and, later, the possibility that one's experiences are produced by an evil genius." In both cases, Descartes asks one to make rational judgments about epistemological issues in what is presumably, but, perhaps not, a fanciful world. Likewise, Putnam's "twin Earth" example is a thought experiment in which one is asked to make judgments about metaphysical questions in a fanciful world.[11] Given that we make this demand as philosophers, it would be very odd to hold the view that one cannot make rational decisions in a fanciful setting.

Second, computer-generated images of perfection produce virtual realities of a kind with all sorts of virtual realities we encounter. Many of our entertainments such as movies and video games are virtual realities. Because of the blur between news and entertainment, even news programs often constitute virtual realities. We must treat all these virtual realities equally unless there is some relevant difference between them. So, we must hold one of the following views:

> (1) The virtual realities produced by computer-generated images of perfection cause no problems for our autonomy because the others do not.
> (2) The others cause problems for our autonomy because the virtual realities produced by computer-generated images of perfection do.

If we hold the second, then computer-generated images of perfection are the least of our worries about autonomy. The other sorts of virtual realities are so prevalent that we lack the conditions necessary for autonomy without even considering the effects of computer-generated images of perfection. So, assuming we are capable of autonomy, it is reasonable to hold the first view.

One might, however, try to argue that there is a relevant difference between the virtual realities produced by computer-generated images of perfection and the other virtual realities to which we are exposed. The former are forced on us because they are pervasive and often we are unaware of them. One does not choose to be subjected to ads, but, rather, they are interspersed throughout things and events one chooses to enjoy. Movies and video games, on the other hand, are activities in which one chooses to participate.

This reply has two problems. First, there are many people who choose to be exposed to ads. One need only consider the yearly discussions about Super Bowl ads that take place in offices, factories, schools, and bars to see that this is so. Besides, one chooses to accept ads by participating in events and things that have ads interspersed throughout them. If I truly wished to reject the ads at Major League Baseball stadiums, then I would have to forgo watching games. Second, many of the other types of virtual realities are forced on us in exactly the same way as ads. The virtual realities of many news programs are an example. I watch news programs for the *news,* but I often get something that is more akin to entertainment. In fact, I often do not know exactly what I am getting.

If what I have argued so far is correct, the use of computer-generated images of perfection survives the common objections against advertising. There is another objection, however, that I believe it does not survive.

II. Advertisers' ethical obligation to avoid certain aesthetic results

Despite the stance that I have taken on the common objections against advertising and the use of computer-generated images of perfection, I object to the use of such images. The problem with them, I believe, lies in very different ethical terrain than the common objections address. The problem is that advertisers are ethically obligated to avoid certain aesthetic results that are produced by the use of computer-generated images of perfection. If I successfully defend this objection, I will achieve two important goals. First, I will show why advertisers are ethically obligated not to use computer-generated images of perfection. Second, I will avoid raising difficulties with advertisers' use of computer technology to construct perfectly harmless types of fanciful images. The objection attacks the use of computer- generated images of perfection but not the use of computer-generated images generally.

Despite the considerable disagreement among philosophers and business ethicists over the ethical principles that are the source of our obligations, there is agreement over one point that is useful here. To say that person A is obligated to X means that A is required to bring about or avoid certain results that are identified by X. Those results can be harm, practical matters, mental states, or countless others. My ethical obligation to drive on the proper side of the road requires me to avoid the harm that could result from driving on the wrong side of the road. My ethical obligation to submit final grades on time requires me to avoid the practical difficulties that could result for those who work in the registrar's office if I do not submit grades on time.

The troubles of former President Bill Clinton demonstrate the usefulness of thinking of ethical obligations in this way. The ethical status of his affair is irrelevant here. The practical problems his actions created for his political party, sup- porters, and friends, however, demonstrate the broadness of the content of ethical obligations. Because of the support he had received from many people, Clinton was obligated to avoid bringing about practical, political problems for those people. His actions placed an undue burden on those who cared about and supported him, as well as those who hoped to elect a Democratic successor to the Presidency. It was ethically wrong for him to bring about those political problems for others.

The results that one is ethically obligated to bring about or avoid may be matters that fall within the aesthetic realm.[13] A person who owns a famous work of art, say, a Rembrandt, is ethically obligated not to destroy it for pleasure.[14] That person is ethically obligated to preserve the work by properly maintaining it or selling it to someone who is willing to do so. A commissioned artist is ethically obligated to bring about certain aesthetic results that satisfy the terms of the agreement entered with the client. A man who supervises women is ethically obligated not to display a Playboy centerfold collection on his office wall so as to avoid what many of the women may find aesthetically distasteful.[15]

Likewise, the ethical obligations of advertisers require them to bring about or avoid certain aesthetic results. Before fleshing out those aesthetic results, however, it is important to provided a justification for the claim that advertisers have ethical obligations of the sort that I have in mind. There are many ways one might go about providing such a justification, but I will approach the problem by analogy.[16]

Often, we demand particular behavior from persons as the price for making use of certain resources. We see that behavior as required by ethical obligations. Manufacturers use various natural resources and we demand that they make efforts to hold the pollution that results from their processes to acceptable limits. We may disagree over what those limits should be, some manufacturers may not abide by them when we do agree, and we may not always enforce those limits successfully, but most agree that manufacturers are ethically obligated to hold pollution to some level or other.

Likewise, for using the various resources that go into making, printing, and airing ads, we demand that advertisers behave in particular ways. We demand that they do not air ads that are inappropriate for children during children's television programming, that they do not advertise

products that are intended for adults to children, and that they do not produce ads that cause harm to various social goals such as equality among the races and sexes. None of this means that advertisers always do as we demand, nor does it mean that we always enforce these demands with law. Rather, it means that we see advertisers as ethically obligated to behave in certain ways because of their use of a variety of resources.

The behavior that we exact from those who use certain resources is often aesthetic. Think of a new suburban neighborhood carved out of a previously natural environment. Most would agree that those in the neighborhood are ethically obligated to take various steps to achieve certain aesthetic results.[17] Imagine that the area previously contained many trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. Now that the neighborhood is developed, there are none of those things. Those who live there have produced a neighborhood comprising nothing but houses and concrete. To let the area become a blight on the landscape in this way is ethically objectionable. Those who have taken that resource are ethically obligated to provide some sort of aesthetic substitute. Although they cannot completely replace the lost natural environment, they can mitigate the loss by, at the very least, planting trees, shrubs, and flowers.

Obligations of this sort do not arise just from the use of tangible resources like land. Imagine a teacher who is impeccably accurate about the course material. Unfortunately, all agree that he is the most boring teacher imaginable. Even though he makes use of few tangible resources, he makes use of the minds of the students.[18] Although not tangible, these minds are resources. Because of his use of resources, we demand that the teacher do more than get everything right. He is ethically obligated to change aesthetically by being more interesting. If he is unable or unwilling to make the required change, he is obligated to find another profession.

The obligation of advertisers that is relevant here is both aesthetic in general, like that of those in the new neighborhood, and a matter of being interesting in particular, like that of the teacher. Real people in ads are more interesting than computer-generated images of perfection. Advertisers are obligated to portray the more interesting real people.

To understand why real people are more interesting than their analogues created using computers, think of the actress Gillian Anderson who stars as Agent Scully in the television program "The X-Files," and starred as Lily Bart in the feature film *The House of Mirth*. She is an interesting person with interesting features. She is far more interesting than any image those who create computer-generated images of perfection are likely to produce. She is shorter, not as thin, does not have as high cheekbones, has a tiny mole on her upper lip, and the list could go on. The creators of computer-generated images of perfection have in mind images that are far less interesting than real people like Gillian Anderson.

Since real people are more interesting, advertisers are obligated to portray them rather than computer-generated images of perfection. Advertisers make use of considerable resources, and they make use of them profitably. W e can demand that they avoid the aesthetic results that come with the use of computer-generated images of perfection. They are ethically obligated to be interesting, and, to be so, they must avoid the use of computer-generated images of perfection.

III. Some possible objections

Admittedly, the position that I am taking here is rather controversial. Others are likely to raise many objections to it. I will address three possible objections here.

Objection 1

One might agree that the computer-generated images of perfection produced today are less interesting than real people, but object that this does not mean advertisers are obligated not to produce them. Instead, advertisers are obligated to take the time to add the various features that would make computer-generated images of perfection just as interesting as real people. They could make some images short and some tall, some thin and some hefty, some with moles and some without, and so on. If we make it clear what we find interesting, then advertisers are sure to

provide it.

Such a view, however, is overly optimistic for two reasons. First, the means for us to demonstrate what we find interesting are few. When the opportunities arise, we can use our purchasing powers to provide advertisers with such information. So many advertisers use computer-generated images of perfection, however, that we rarely have the opportunity to support those who do not. Also, since often we do not even know when such images are being used, we cannot object to them through our purchasing practices. Remember, the very point of computer-generated images of perfection is to make us believe the images are real.

Second, creators of computer-generated images of perfection are unlikely to produce images that have the "flaws" of real people that make them interesting when the point is to remove those "flaws" in the first place. Remember, my objection to computer-generated images is directed toward images of perfection alone. Advertisers create all sorts of computer- generated images of people that are interesting and harmless. Images of perfection, however, are produced so that the models lack interesting features that the creators view as "flaws." Many of the features that make Gillian Anderson interesting are "flaws" when compared to the visions that the creators of computer-generated images of perfection have in mind.

Objection 2

One might also object to my claim that real people are more interesting than computer-generated images of perfection. Although it might express my aesthetic sensibilities, it does not express the aesthetic sensibilities of all people. In fact, there are likely to be people who think the computer-generated images are more interesting than real people.

This objection is unconvincing for two reasons. First, those who find computer-generated images of perfection more interesting are like those who find a neighborhood comprising nothing but concrete and houses more interesting than one comprising those things along with trees, shrubs, and flowers. Certainly, such people exist. They are, however, a small group. Their view should not drive our ethical obligations. We should demand aesthetic results in the neighborhood that differ from the view of the small number of persons who prefer only concrete and houses. Likewise, we should demand aesthetic results in advertising that differ from the view of the small number of people who prefer computer-generated images of perfection.

Second, what one finds interesting is affected by the images to which one is exposed. Consider the phenomenon many encounter when reading a novel or seeing a film for the second time. During the second reading or viewing, one often is able to recognize many subtleties that one does not recognize the first time. A similar phenomenon often occurs when people begin studying a new field. The first time one is exposed to a work of, say, philosophy, one might find it incredibly difficult to glean anything of interest from the work. Often, however, familiarity breeds interest. As one reads more works of philosophy, one learns to find things of interest in the works. Likewise, the more one is exposed to images of real people rather than computer-generated images of perfection, the more one learns to identify what is interesting about them.

Objection 3

One might object that many advertisers see their creations as art and that my position is a kind of censorship of their art. If they are obligated to bring about certain aesthetic ends, then their creativity is censored. The creator of a computer- generated image of perfection may see that image as a work of art that the creator should be free, without ethical restraint, to produce.

This objection is based on two views that I accept. I agree with the claim that art should not be censored. I also accept the view that the images of advertising are often works of art. Many of them are interesting, beautiful, and thought-provoking. Although I accept these two views on which the objection is based, I do not believe that it defeats my position for two reasons.

First, I do not advocate government intervention to impose the ethical obligation that I advocate. Second, the fact that something is a work of art and should not be censored does mean

there are no ethical restrictions on how and where it should be displayed. Graffiti is often art, but that fact does not justify the creator displaying it on property that the creator does not own without permission of the owner. The art world contains many disturbing images that parents justifiably do not want their children to see. The fact that they are works of art does not justify the artists displaying them in elementary schools. On the other hand, we do not prevent the production of such images. To do so would be censorship. Instead, we make demands about where they can be displayed. We demand that the graffiti artist create images only in those places where permission has been granted. We demand that the disturbing images be placed in museums and galleries so that parents have the ability to choose whether their children are exposed to them. Likewise, advertisers are free to create any kind of images they wish. They have the option to display them in many places. This does not, mean, however, that we can make no demands on what they display through the various media. They are making use of resources. We can make certain demands in return for the use of those resources.

IV. Concluding remarks

If what I have argued is correct, advertisers' use of computer-generated images of perfection survive the deception and autonomy objections that are commonly levied against advertising. Despite that, however, their use of such images is ethically objectionable. The problem lies in the aesthetic nature of those images. The images simply are not as interesting as images of real people, and advertisers are obligated to use the more interesting images.

Three important points should be noted in closing. First, although the use of real people is likely to capture the attention of more viewers and result in more sales, that is not why advertisers are obligated to use them instead of computer-generated images of perfection. The obligation results from demands that we reason- ably can make given their use of certain resources.

Second, although I have not raised an objection to the use of images of perfection that are not computer-generated, it does not mean that there are no ethical problems with such images. Since there is extensive literature on such images, I have chosen to focus on what I find to be a problematic technological development. With respect to those images, I hope that advertisers will heed the warnings sounded by other philosophers and business ethicists and find other ways to attract our attention and sell products.

Third, my objection to computer-generated images of perfection does not apply to other types of computer-generated images used by advertisers. Most of the fantastic images depicted with the help of computer technology are unobjectionable. Such images are often harmless and effective because they make good use of humor and drama. In fact, such images are so effective that it is unclear why advertisers feel the need to use computer-generated images of perfection. My hope is that advertisers will continue to produce the harmless types of computer-generated images and use them to replace computer- generated images of perfection.

Notes

1 Advancements in computer technology have added new dimensions to the ethical issues of virtually every area of business they have touched. For a nice discussion of these added dimensions, see DeGeorge (2000).

2 For a related concept, see Bishop (2000). As a category of advertising images. Bishop's "self-identity image ads" include, but are not exhausted by, what I refer to as "computer-generated images of perfection."

3 Many of those who have addressed related images have focused on the effects they have on women. Although I do not mean to minimize the importance of those effects, I will not limit my discussion to them. For a good starting point to examine those effects, see Bishop (2000) and Peterson (1987).

4 There is an abundance of literature that relates, either directly or indirectly, to computer-generated images of perfection. See Arrington (1982), Attas (1999), Beauchamp (1984), Bishop (2000), Camenisch (1991), Carson et al. (1985), Crisp (1987), Hare (1984), Hyman and Tansey (1990), Jackson (1990), Lippke (1989 and 1999), Machan (1987), Paine (1984), Peterson (1987), B. Phillips (1997), M. Phillips (1994),

Santilli (1983), Sneddon (2001), and Waide (1987).

5 These are not the only objections that have been made, but the others tend to work in connection with either deception or autonomy. For example, some have charged that advertising is manipulative, but either it is so because it deceives or in being so it violates autonomy. For some examinations of the manipulation charge, see Arrington (1982), Beauchamp (1984), Crisp (1987), Hare (1984), Lippke (1999), and M. Phillips (1994).

6 For some examinations of this objection, see Attas (1999), Carson et al. (1985), Jackson (1990), and Machan (1987).

7 For some examinations of this objection, see Arrington (1982), Bishop (2000), Camenisch (1991), Crisp (1987), Lippke (1989), Sneddon (2001), and Waide (1987).

8 Waide (1987, p. 74).

9 This point is recognized in our judicial system. The insane are treated in special ways in that system precisely because they are not autonomous.

10 One might argue that since the patient likely is suffering from an addiction, the doctor is right to use coercion to help him regain his autonomy.

11 For his explanation of those thought experiments, see Descartes (1977, pp. 308-311).

12 For his explanation of this example, see Putnam (1975, p. 223).

13 Ethical analysis of the aesthetic realm is complex and often controversial. For a nice survey of the issues in recent literature, see Carroll (2000).

14 I do not mean to imply that there is universal agreement about the position that I take on this example or those that follow, but, rather, that most would agree with my position on at least one of the examples.

15 Such a man may be guilty of sexual harassment as well, but it is beyond my purposes here to examine that possibility.

16 Although my approach has many affinities with the approaches of those who apply social contract theory to business ethics, that is not what I have mind here. For examinations of those approaches, see Conroy (1995), Donaldson (1982), Donaldson and Dunfee (1994 and 1999), Douglas (2000), Hodapp (1990), Husted (1999), Keeley (1995), and Rowan (1997).

17 Some might argue that the very construction of the neighborhood in such a place is ethically wrong. Although that position raises many important issues, I cannot address them here.

18 I am using the term "minds" loosely here. I do not intend to beg any questions about the metaphys- ical issues surrounding the mind/body problem.

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