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Home Runs and IQs: Moral Issues in Performance Enhancement

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Abstract

The paper examines various methods for boosting human performance, such as pills and technologically altered genes, from a moral perspective. I focus on the cogent arguments concerning steroids and enhancement in general offered by Michael Sandel in The Case Against Perfection (2007). Because Sandel's arguments are based on considerations of moral virtue and the nature of practices, they possess a breadth of moral scope beyond performance improvement. Sandel argues that enhancement treatments jeopardize the virtue of humility by promoting excessive pride and risk distorting such practices as playing sports and parenting children. The paper exposes the limits of Sandel's trenchant critique while indicating ways in which it can also be made more encompassing. It is limited with regard to enhancement in artistic and intellectual endeavors, as well as some sports, because in such practices more is simply better; ratcheted power or prowess does not distort the practice. Yet Sandel's critique is more encompassing because genetic augmentation, for example, can threaten the child's autonomy in ways that Sandel actually dismisses.

Key Words: enhancement; drugs; gene therapy; sports; intellect

Enhancement, Performance and Distortion

In the film *Limitless* (Neil Burger, 2011), a would-be writer takes a magic pill that quite literally makes him smarter, a whole lot smarter. Soon after quickly churning out a large portion of the book he had diligently not been working on, he realizes all sorts of hitherto unknown abilities. Besides almost instantly acquiring foreign languages, he is able to make enormous sums in the stock market. The example of wondrous mind-improving pills invites examination of a variety of methods that have come under philosophical, journalistic and medical scrutiny, such as muscle-growing steroids and technologically altered genes.

The film-story cheats a bit by providing the protagonist with the wherewithal to avoid the debilitating, often fatal, effects the amazing drug has on other users of the concoction. Yet in committing what might be a narrative-dramatic sin, it puts the moral issue in the right perspective: the true moral questions about enhancing techniques do not turn on their safety. To examine whether steroids in sports, pills in intellectual or artistic pursuits, or genetic manipulation for all sorts of excellences are morally problematic, we should set aside or bracket issues of health. We should assume that such strategies could be or are implemented free of health risk. For a parallel, think of sexual morality. If it is wrong to cheat on one's partner, surely the health risks that might thereby be incurred are not central to its immorality. Even if we could be guaranteed non-infectious adultery, were it immoral its wrongness would persist. The assumption I'm making can be reframed as a question: if there were no attendant health risks, would there be anything morally problematic--about steroids (or adultery)?

Privileging liberty or freedom, we might begin from the premise that any means of developing or improving upon our natural endowment is morally permissible unless a pretty good case can be made against it. We already have numerous, uncontroversial examples of innovation in diet and training, for example, that help people perform better athletically and sometimes live healthier lives in the bargain.

But the advent of steroids, which have perfectly acceptable non-athletic medical applications, has raised thorny questions about moral boundaries concerning performance-enhancing techniques. Racing cyclists, for another example, are prohibited from supplementing their blood supply with oxygen-enriched blood. But why?

Besides health issues, one reason often offered is that the techniques in question may not be available to everyone. Fairness of access then may be an objection to doping or enriching the athlete's system. As with health concerns, however, I believe matters of fairness should also be set aside, despite their practical relevance in everyday life. I say this because I think we need to see whether there is something immoral in principle with boosting performance in these ways. So, imagine a world in which the technique in question (drugs and the like) were accessible at little or no cost, like a government sponsored program of vaccination. *Ex hypothesi* the problem then cannot be one of tilting the playing field in favor of the more affluent or more knowledgeable for that matter.

To return to the paradigm case, if steroids were safe and cheap, would it be wrong to take or distribute them? Given that some athletes in today's world have what might be considered an unfair advantage because more health-minded competitors refuse to risk taking steroids, this concern evaporates under the two stipulations I propose. On the face of it, the competitive situation should look identical whether all or none took steroids, unless some competitors (such as those who are naturally bigger, stronger or faster) would gain disproportionately from the treatment in question and thus enjoy a disproportionately greater advantage over others. This is an empirical question and if the answer were that universal steroid use would skew competition to favor one group excessively, then that would seem to be a legitimate reason to object. But if such skewing were not the case, would there remain a moral objection to steroid-taking?

Clearly, there is a robust and rich literature weighing in on the moral issues that the various forms of performance enhancement can take.[1] In what follows, I will leave these aside and focus on the perspective and arguments offered by Michael Sandel (2007) for two reasons. First, he offers a distinct and distinctive perspective on these issues, replete with cogent arguments. Second, his arguments are based on considerations of moral virtue and the nature of practices, both of which seem to me to be of independent importance: significant beyond the confines of particular issues of enhancement. Consequently, investigating the morality of performance amplification through its impact on the virtues and various practices increases the depth and value of such investigation. In particular, Sandel argues that enhancement treatments jeopardize the virtue of humility by promoting excessive pride and also risk distorting such practices as playing sports and parenting children. I try to expose the limits of Sandel's trenchant critique while indicating ways in which it can also be made more encompassing. It is limited with regard to enhancement in artistic and intellectual endeavors, as well as some sports, because in such practices more is simply better; ratcheted power or prowess does not create distortion in the practice. Yet Sandel's critique is also more encompassing because genetic augmentation, for example, can threaten or undermine the child's autonomy in ways that Sandel actually dismisses.

In arguing against the athletic use of steroids, Sandel invokes the notion of a practice: in particular its form and *telos* (or end). Sandel points to the proliferation of home runs in the practice of baseball during the rage for steroids and its pharmacological cousins, epitomized by ball players such as Barry Bonds and Mark McGuire (2007: 36-39). Not only these marquee sluggers, but less imposing, yet accomplished ball players were bashing home runs at a record clip in the 1990s. What's so bad about a barrage of home runs? After all, most fans enjoy the devastation of a batter single-handedly producing a score without the help of a teammate by launching a ball beyond the reach of his opponent. Not to mention the aesthetic grandeur of the ball arcing high and far through the air.

The problem comes when we realize that turning a game into a home run derby distorts (or "corrupts") the game, minimizing if not obliterating other aspects of the sport that give it shape, subtlety and complexity. If everyone is swinging for the fences, there is little room for the hit and run play, bunting, stealing or hitting dexterously behind the runner. In Sandel's words, muscle-building drugs turn baseball into a "spectacle." Of course, some people want that, just as some filmgoers want endless explosions, shooting and pummeling. But power surge spectacles are not quite the complete game of baseball. Consider a basketball analog. Imagine a drug or a shoe that enabled everyone to jump four to eight inches higher. Most certainly, basketball would devolve into the spectacle of a more or less continuous slam-dunk contest. Again, many people do enjoy such contests; but the game of basketball would be sorely diminished with the loss of the perimeter and mid-range game. An added irony is this. The very excitement that home runs (or slam dunks) bring to the game that makes the steroidal growth initially attractive after a while, becoming so pervasive, results in boredom--at least for a large number of spectators as well as players.[2]

Sandel's argument from distortion can be made about a variety of other sports; however, a large class of sports appears to be immune to this objection: sports I think of as linear-quantitative, such as swimming and track and field events.[3] Such sports involve the pursuit of numerical advancement in time or space. Athletes strive either to reduce the time it takes to cover a designated distance (as in swimming and foot races), or to increase the distance covered in throwing an object (a javelin or discus, for instance) or launching one's own body, as in jumping or pole-vaulting over a bar. Since the aim of such sports is reducing time elapsed or increasing space traversed, doing so more effectively with the help of drugs (or improved apparatus) does not, at least on the face of it, distort the sport by exaggerating one dimension of it. The sport has only one dimension.

Insofar as we value the athletic practice understood as the full game of baseball or basketball, we should object to steroids and their ilk. But this may not, after all, be a moral objection. We might better consider it an aesthetic criticism, based on a loss of delight in the aesthetic integrity or completeness of the relevant game. The loss of valuable features renders the game less attractive. The debasing of taste that results from feeding the inclination to spectacle, however, could more broadly be viewed as a moral loss. The capacity to appreciate complex patterns, nuance and strategies can be understood as a valuable dimension of our human nature the loss or dimming of which is morally significant. Because we don't make the effort required to understand and enjoy the intricacies and subtleties of the more complete or fully-realized sport, our attention grows slack and our cognitive-emotional responses are short-circuited by the automatic, facile delight in the spectacular.[4]

Consider a parallel in the world of art: formulaic art that does not challenge recipients to think, make discriminations, see connections among parts or moments, or use their imaginations. Besides the obvious aesthetic shortcomings of such art, its promotion of habitual laziness and inattention in experience can be morally faulted as sabotaging our sensitivities and detracting from our well-being. As John Dewey argues with regard to the eroding effects of certain aesthetic theories on everyday life, "esthetic perceptions that are necessary ingredients of happiness" are driven away or reduced "to the level of compensating transient pleasurable excitations" (1934: 10). In other words, the degeneration of popular sports into spectacle could have a far-reaching impact on our aesthetic sensibilities, especially if reinforcing similar trends in popular media.

So far so good. But even if we accept Sandel's criticism of the distorting spectacle, we seem confined to such pursuits that possess a structure and *telos* in the manner of (some) sports. In other words, Sandel's objection appears to be limited so as to exclude advantages like the one in *Limitless.* Taking the fabulous pill of *Limitless* to improve intellectual functioning or enlisting genetic manipulation to maximize an artistic talent does not seem to be vulnerable to the distortion/spectacle objection. Such methods of ratcheting up performance seem more like the numerical sports mentioned above; the more the better. As with faster runners and higher jumpers, smarter scientists and physicians, more skillful composers and painters appears to be ideal. There is not a form and *telos*, as in baseball and basketball, in such intellectual and artistic realms, only the prospect of more--greater mastery of a subject or discipline.[5] Wonderful advances in understanding the world, meliorating our lives, creating more aesthetically rich objects. This observation applies to a class of drugs currently in circulation.

The fictional, potent pill featured in *Limitless* has a less dramatic corollary in the actual world, namely, drugs that enable better, albeit not outrageous, brain functioning. Drugs such as Adderall, Ritalin and Focalin are regularly prescribed for individuals diagnosed with "attention deficit disorder." These drugs enable individuals to focus, eliminating or significantly diminishing the welter of perceptions or ideation that too often occludes their thinking. The sorts of objections made to steroid use in athletics are not found here, although concern for over-diagnosis and medication of attention disorder has been voiced. The difference presumably is that in the case of Adderall and its kind the drug aims only to enable normal functioning rather than extraordinary performance. However, an objection similar to the one leveled at steroids could be and is made when such drugs are used by individuals who do not suffer from attention disorder, but wish simply to increase their intellectual performance.

As long as there are no questions of health or fairness (in access) to drugs that improve thinking, there seems to be no moral basis for disapproving of them. They would be on a par with such unexceptional approaches toward strengthening one's mental abilities as proper exercise and sleep, specialized course work, and education in effective techniques or strategies.[6] As indicated, the argument mustered by Sandel concerning distortion of form does not seem germane. Genetic manipulation would also seem immune to this attack. As with attention disorder remedies, genetic engineering aims, in the first instance, to enable individuals who would otherwise be afflicted with disease or disability to function in a normal way.

Erasing debilitating conditions such as spina bifida or Parkinson's disease and correcting for disabilities such as vision or hearing impairment, for example, paves the way for people to function as the rest of us do. Genetic manipulation to achieve normality is akin to drugs to meliorate heart dysfunction or surgery to fix detached retinas. Short of an extreme view precluding interference with "the natural," genetic engineering in the service of normal life functioning should be morally in the clear.

Once again, however, their looms the prospect of tinkering with genetic endowment to promote exceptional performance instead of merely normal activity. Yet this does seem more problematic, at least on the face of it, than our examples of drug-taking to accelerate athletic, artistic or intellectual achievement. Is it just because of the scale of the techniques involved-- resources, knowledge, skill and degree of improvement? Might genetic manipulation far surpass anything possible with the methods presently at our disposal? Perhaps Sandel's worry about distortion would now be pertinent, as humans could perform intellectually at levels so vastly superior to what is now exceptional that we would barely recognize it as human.

Again, setting aside the worry that only the wealthy could afford such procedures, the concern seems to be about distorting something like human nature, as if we could grow a person to be twenty feet tall or see perfectly for five miles. It sounds grotesque. I am not sure what to say here. On the one hand is my repeated point about more being better; so what if we so engineer our make up as to create an astounding race of healthy, athletic geniuses. On the other hand, there does seem to be something lurking in the shadows of such an enterprise that ought at least give us pause. One concern could be that if people were functioning at a much higher cognitive level, for instance, other aspects of their personality might languish or be eclipsed. This is fairly speculative, but it seems worthwhile to ponder the implications of preoccupation with intellectual pursuits for such dimensions of personality as artistic interests, pastimes, emotional sensitivity, caring, or community.[7] A similar concern will surface in relation to the bearing of genetic manipulation on a broader spectrum of human abilities. But first, the prospect of technologically promoted excellence raises another pair of objections: one is grounded in anomalies concerning achievement and pride; another involves what Sandel calls "giftedness."

Magic Pills and Genetic Engineering

If the technique that boosts our natural ability is too extreme, as perhaps steroids or genetic engineering might be, we could be in danger of achieving ends for which we can take little credit. True, the athlete must still train and the scientist must still theorize and test hypotheses. But if too much of his or her success is due to the relevant augmentation, then even the person who achieves the estimable goal could feel as though he or she has cheated. There has been no unfair advantage, by stipulation, as all comers could have availed themselves of the special aid. Although no other person has been cheated, there still seems the worry that a shortcut has been taken and that too much of the credit really goes to the specialists who devised the accelerating technique.

In today's world we do indeed give coaches and teachers, scientists and doctors, credit for helping us attain various ends. Yet it is nevertheless the individual who accomplishes the worthwhile end, the one who is largely responsible for the success. But perhaps it is a matter of degree, twofold: the extent of the assistance combined with the amount of achievement. When the boosting technique *and* the performance both strike us as unusually great, we tend to discount the achievement. This may in fact capture how many viewers react to the protagonist's achievements in *Limitless*. The pill is so tremendous in its potency and the character's accomplishments so extraordinary, that we wonder whether anyone in his position could not have done just as well. He appears to be merely the lucky beneficiary. With the advent of computers, for example, we don't give much credit to people who are able to solve complex mathematical problems if all they have to do is understand a simple sequence of key strokes for getting the computer to crunch the numbers. The computer and its designer are, after all, largely responsible for the terrific outcome. At stake might then be a sense of accomplishment or pride. A world in which too much of what humans achieve is really not all that much due to their own efforts is a world that robs us of an important component of well-being: pride in one's accomplishments or self-esteem.

A conjectural aside. What if instead of a marvelous, scientifically-concocted pill, ordinary people discovered an equally potent property in a ubiquitously growing weed, available to the whole world's population? If eating a few ounces of the weed a week produced such miraculous effects, would we be as disconcerted as we seem to be by the *Limitless* drug? If not, then it appears that the difference between lay persons discovering a naturally occurring substance and scientists fabricating one would be playing a decisive role in our moral reflection. On the face of it, such a distinction seems too slight to bear such a moral weight. So much for a worry and conjecture of my own.

Sandel's second line of argument turns on what he calls "giftedness:" aspects of human life, such as talents, as well as limitations, that are beyond our control. "To acknowledge the giftedness of life is to recognize that our talents and powers are not wholly our own doing… It is also to recognize that not everything in the world is open to any use we may desire or devise" (2007: 27). For Sandel, recognizing giftedness and its moral implications for our orientation in the world is good, and I agree. It promotes the right attitude toward ourselves, other people and the vicissitudes of life. Honoring the gifted dimension of human existence is particularly important for maintaining or even promoting our humility. It does so by constraining or reining in "the Promethean project" or "impulse:" the desire and attempt to assert oneself, to control, to dominate (2007: 88-90). Giftedness demarcates the limits of that for which we are responsible, whether good or bad, and thereby inhibits the perhaps natural human tendency to bend the world to our design, and its attendant hubris .

Sandel's emphasis on giftedness ties back to his athletic example of distortion. The game is distorted or corrupted as a result of the "overriding" of natural gifts; for example, grotesque muscles override or displace the natural gifts of footwork, deftness, quick-wittedness, and small-motor skills. "Supersized" football players degrade the game by making a myriad of athletic gifts irrelevant or less germane to successful competition on the gridiron. Of course, there are still some gifts that are exercised even in the distorted or corrupted game: hand-eye coordination is still needed to hit the baseball a mile and natural size and strength are preconditions for the hyper-bulked football player. Sandel simply protests the dwarfing of all the other athletic gifts that make the game(s) more complex and complete.

A quick note is in order. Although Sandel traces the distortion of sports causally to the overriding of gifts, the objections from distortion and disrespect of giftedness are logically distinct. We could lament the distortion of a sport without being concerned about the gifts that might thereby be given short shrift. Alternatively, we could criticize the suppression or disregard of natural gifts without being bothered about the distortion of sports. In addition, the overriding of gifts does not seem to be the case in the linear sports I noted, such as foot racing, swimming, discus-hurling, or long-jumping. Consequently, no distortion, merely accelerated improvement in performance--faster times, longer distances.[8]

The opposite of appreciating talents and abilities as gifts, accepting limits and acknowledging debts, is, as noted, a valorization of The Promethean Impulse to technical mastery. Sandel acknowledges the value and rightness of asserting ourselves over nature in order to maintain or restore normal human functioning by curing disease and eradicating afflictions, from spina bifida to near-sightedness. But there is a big moral difference between restorative science and enhancing science. The latter expresses the Promethean urge to control what, in some sense, we ought not try to control. Yielding to this urge breeds hubris which, like those bulging muscles that override more subtle athletic gifts, displaces humility. Sandel cites genetic engineering aimed at enhancement as a threatening class of cases and focuses on parenthood.

Parenthood: Humility and Distortion

Sandel argues, "In a social world that prizes mastery and control, parenthood is a school for humility" (2007: 86). Parenthood teaches humility because we cannot choose the kind of children we want. Sandel finds it morally salutary to "abide the unexpected, to live with dissonance, to reign in control" (2007: 86). Using genetic technology to fix such problems as inheritable deficiencies or debilitating conditions does not go too far, presumably because such exercise of control promotes normal human life, within the appropriate sphere of giftedness. It enables people to exercise the range of given talents and abilities distributed more or less randomly, as part of the natural lottery. But when we strive toward perfection, we surpass such randomness, and assert ourselves in a morally unwholesome way.

Consider people who could choose to have their children (or themselves) be taller, stronger, smarter, or more talented in some art or sport. The pumping up of hubris would follow, argues Sandel, because under such conditions it is "difficult to view our talents as gifts for which we are indebted rather than achievements for which we are responsible" (2007: 86-87). But why should this follow? Wouldn't individuals have to give credit to the scientists and technicians who are collectively responsible for our, or our children's, genetically modified abilities? Wouldn't the situation mirror that of the protagonist of *Limitless,* the credit for whose accomplishments should, rationally, be shared with (if not given over to) the creators of the fabulous drug?

Sandel argues that if we can "replace chance with choice," then "the successful would become even more likely than they are now to view themselves as self-made and self-sufficient, and hence wholly responsible for their success" (2007: 92). But surely this would be deluded. Once children, for example, realized that their advantages were due to genetic manipulation, they could not be too prideful, at least insofar as they were rational. Were adults able to choose genetic engineering to improve their performance, they too would rationally feel indebted to scientists and technicians for their heightened gifts. The giftedness would now be shaped more by socio-biological conditions than it had been. But social conditions of all sorts always influence the natural lottery: everything from educational opportunities, neighborhoods, family and socio-economic position down the line. The natural lottery spiked by human invention and intervention would now include manipulation of DNA. As long as people did not deceive themselves, humility would not be lost. And in its wake would come the appropriate gratitude. Gratitude would flow to the social and medical institutions that enable the genetic improvement, just as it now flows (or ought to flow) to conventional medicine, educational institutions, caring parents, and supportive social networks: for all the benefits derived from the social lottery that enable us to perform well or exceptionally in the relevant domain.[9]

Sandel's worry about loss of humility and inflation of hubris due to the success of acting on The Promethean Impulse seems more plausible if directed at a society, scientific community, or class rather than to individual beneficiaries of its fruits. Scientists or societies that husband the research might, after all, be puffed up with overweening pride. But that is a different direction than the one Sandel himself pursues.

The intimate connection between giftedness and distortion in Sandel's account seems borne out by the implications for the parent-child relationship should parents opt to have their children's abilities genetically enhanced. When we enlist the help of genetic engineering to bolster our children's memories or muscles, intellect or talent, we jeopardize the unconditional love that is ingredient in ideal parenthood. Jeopardizing unconditional love therefore distorts the practice or parental relationship by making parental affection contingent on the performance of their offspring. Unconditional love is caring for and about one's children simply as they are, irrespective of what they accomplish. However, if parents have their children's attributes and abilities manipulated toward desirable ends, then the attaining of those ends is liable to condition the parental love. It will depend on the children fulfilling the promise of the genetic manipulation and this would distort parental love.

We might also ask: Why, after all, would parents choose to have one or more their children's abilities heightened? And why choose this ability rather than another? Surely, it is more for the parents' sake than the children's. Excellence of their offspring is an end in which the parents' could take delight. Genetically modifying an embryo to promote a normal life seems aimed squarely at the children's well-being; however, altering genes to achieve stellar performance risks turning children into projects, like a fast horse or beautiful show dog. So, perhaps this could indirectly feed the hubris about which Sandel is so exercised: the undue pride of parents in their children's success that they, the parents, helped orchestrate by arranging for the genetic modification. Yet even here, the parents' role is so minimal that it ought to serve as a curb on outsized self-congratulation.

Interestingly, Sandel seems to miss the implications of this very genetic intervention for children's autonomy, going so far as to dismiss its potential danger for children's future choice. Sandel puts altered genetic endowment on a par with the natural lottery. Because children themselves have no choice in either the natural lottery or the genetic modifications wrought at their parents' request, the latter would not compromise the autonomy of children any more than the former does (2007: 80-81). But here Sandel overlooks the impact on parental child-rearing engendered by parents choosing to have certain traits magnified through scientific ingenuity. Children are likely to be funneled more vigorously in the very directions for which their genes have been modified, more so than would be (or is) typically the case given the existing natural lottery. True, parents can and do tend to encourage, sometimes to an unhealthy degree, the abilities their children exhibit due to their naturally occurring genetic makeup. But it seems reasonable to suspect that genetic engineering would exacerbate such proclivities and thereby restrict children's life choices even more. To the extent that overbearingness on the part of parents with regard to their children's decisions and futures distorts the parent-child relationship, then Sandel could actually avail himself of this further argument against genetic engineering.

I also wonder whether another distortion might not take place. This time, for the children themselves. I wonder whether being primed to excel in this or that pursuit could distort the personalities of the children. To the potential distortion posed by the gigantic, but undifferentiated, intellectual ability that is central in *Limitless,* is now added a similar worry for all augmented abilities for which genetic engineering might be enlisted.

Giving oneself over to a particular pursuit, or having one dimension of one's make-up predominate, could result in children neglecting important areas of personality and life--important for their moral character, their happiness or society. The spectre of a horde of Bobby Fischers with lop-sided personalities is a contingent worry, but one that might be worth reflecting upon.

Conclusions

Where does all this leave us? Sandel's concern that sports are distorted by extreme muscle amplification seems warranted for many sports played as competitive games, such as baseball, basketball and football. However, without further argument, quantitative sports--foot-races and high jumping for instance--don't seem liable to such distortion. I argue that Sandel's claim about the potential erosion of humility due to genetic manipulation is actually backwards. Clear-minded individuals are more likely to lose the basis for genuine pride as a concomitant of heightened achievement issuing from genetic intervention or drugs to boost natural abilities. However, Sandel is astutely wary of the distorting effects of genetic manipulation on the parent-child relationship. Unconditional love appears to be jeopardized by parentally instigated redesigning of their children.

I suggest supplementing Sandel's troubling projection with two dangers. First, the child's loss of autonomy as parents push them in the direction dictated by their genetic enhancement. Second, distortion of the child's personality due to the exaggeration of certain of the children's abilities at the expense of other talents or personality traits--traits that may be vital to individual or social flourishing. The *hubris* that Sandel foresees strikes me as less likely for individuals than for scientists or societies. The loss of humility that concerns Sandel would occur only if parents erroneously gave themselves credit for effecting the genetic modifications rather than merely deciding to have them carried out. Members of social institutions can revel in their Promethean status at controlling the fate of their fellows, but individual beneficiaries can suffer untoward pride only if they ignore the actual conditions that determine their achievements.

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Notes

[1]. Here are a few of the many worthwhile discussions of the subject: "Ought We to Enhance our Cognitive Capacities?" Torbjorn Tannsij, *Bioethics,* Vol.23, #7, 2009, 421-432; "Some Problems with Genetic Emotional Enhancement," Felicitas Kraemer, *Journal of Value Inquiry,* Vol. 46, #4, 2012, 435-447; "Smart Drugs for Cognitive Enhancement: Ethical and Pragmatic Considerations in the Era of Cosmetic Neurology," Vince Cakic, *Journal of Medical Ethics,* Vol. 35, #10, 2009-10, 611-615; *The Ethics of Human Enhancement: Understanding the Debate,* Steve Clarke, Julian Saculescu, et.al. (Oxford: Oxford U. Press, 2016); *Enhancing Technologies in Sport: Ethical, Conceptual, and Scientific Issues,* Eds. Thomas Murray, Karen Maschke, Angela Wasunna (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 2009); "Biomedical Enhancement and the Kantian Duty to Cultivate Our Talents," Colin Hickey, *Journal of Value Inquiry,* Vol 51, #1, 2017, 165-185; *Athletic Enhancement, Human Nature and Ethics Threats and Opportunities of Doping Technologies,* Eds. Jan Tolleneer, Sigrid Sterckx, Peter Bonte (Netherlands:Springer, 2012); "Ethical Issues of Human Enhancement Technologies," Ivana Greguric, *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society,* Vol.12, #2, 2014, 133-148.

[2]. Sandel's argument is vulnerable to what might be called structural insensitivity. Some people can always argue that they prefer games in which home runs proliferate to the more varied, complex game that fans like Sandel and I favor. In the face of such intransigence, Sandel and I could retreat to a conditional injunction: if the more complex game is desired, then techniques such as steroids ought to be prohibited. To this fairly weak argument, however, a stronger caveat could be enjoined, viz., that the more complex game is in fact more desirable; it *ought* to be preferred. The argument for this caveat can be purely aesthetic: that sacrificing the complexities of the game through steroid use robs people or would rob people of enjoyment they would have by attending more carefully to the full range of what the sport has to offer. Just as people would actually get more out of a Raphael or Cezanne painting than velvet renditions of Elvis, if they only took the trouble to look thoughtfully at them. The argument can also be cast in moral terms, as I try to do in what follows in the text.

[3]. Sandel offers the further example of exceptionally large but immobile players in American football, to which I add tennis. With super strong athletes, the game could easily be reduced to predominantly an affair of horrific serves, followed by the occasional volley. This would dramatically reduce extended rallies and all the strategic maneuvering and shot-making they can generate, such as lobs, drop-shots, and feints. An all-power game in tennis would also discourage clever and subtle serving, such as serves with spin or that change pace in order to keep the opponent off-balance.

[4]. As may be apparent, I am taking the moral to include full human flourishing.

[5]. Of course, there is a form and telos within particular endeavors. Good musical compositions and paintings, for for example, have form and their end is beauty or some other aesthetic result. When well done, science meets objective standards of empirical investigation and theorizing, and strives for knowledge as a telos. However, accelerating one's abilities to create art of produce scientific excellence does not translate into compromising such form or telos. The acceleration simply enables its realization to a greater extent or more quickly.

[6]. The same caveat made with regard to the athletic effects of steroids would hold for the intellectual enhancement resulting from the respective drugs. If such drugs disproportionately favored a particular group, then their use would be similarly unfair, even if fairly distributed or accessible.

[7]. We might speculate here about a possible accompanying social distortion: that important economic, social or communal functions would be neglected in a society of individuals each of whom enjoys some particular boosted ability or talent.

[8]. This class of sports would conversely bear out the connection Sandel draws between overriding gifts and distortion: no distortion because no overriding gifts.

[9]. I do realize, all too well, that many people are lacking humility because they fail to acknowledge the extent to which their accomplishments, great or pedestrian, depend on natural and social conditions beyond their control. Nevertheless, it seems a mistake, from a philosophical perspective, to predicate a (Sandelian) projection on such mistaken judgment or myopia, no matter how engrained in the habitual ways actual people assess themselves.

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