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The Baby Business

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Debra L. Spar, a professor at the [Harvard Business School](#), has emerged as one of the most influential libertarian enthusiasts for the new reproductive technologies. Her new book, *[The Baby Business: How Money, Science and Politics Drive the Commerce of Conception](#)*, sets forth a case for embracing the Brave New World with unbridled enthusiasm. Even with that in mind, the following paragraph from her book is still quite shocking:

It's no use being coy about the baby market or cloaking it in fairy-tale prose. We are making babies now, for better or worse, in a very high-tech way. We are procuring these babies from a wide array of sources, and we are pushing deeper into the components of their birth. We can moralise about these developments if we desire, ruing the gods who pushed nature aside. We can decry the fate of our manipulated offspring, closing our eyes and trying to make them fade back in time. Or we can plunge into the market that desire has created, imagining how we can shape our children and secure our children without destroying ourselves.

We should just “plunge into the market that desire has created?” This is yet another illustration of the fact that the market economy does not always operate by distinguishing between more and less admirable desires. Instead, desires merely “create” markets, and the markets are there to be exploited.

We are again reminded that a market economy requires a cultural context of moral discernment. When that discernment evaporates, desire is all that remains. When such a desire emerges, someone will move to exploit that desire in order to make a profit. Spar's proposal is a recipe for financial success based in moral disaster.

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